



PRACTICAL CAREER GUIDE | AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

From PhD to Industry

A detailed guide to translating doctoral expertise, navigating the New Zealand employment market, and building a credible pathway into industry, government, consulting, policy, innovation and entrepreneurship.

For: PhD candidates, recent graduates and experienced doctoral researchers

Includes: opportunity maps, skill translation, CV and interview tools, networking scripts, a 90-day plan and live NZ resources

Prepared by: PhDtribe - TribeCareers



Scan to explore TribeCareers | questions@phdtribe.com | www.phdtribe.com

WELCOME

Your PhD is evidence, not a job title

Industry does not hire a thesis. It hires people who can solve problems, make sound decisions, work with others and create value. Your task is to translate the evidence already contained in your doctoral journey.

PhDtribe describes the move beyond academia as a strategic evolution, not a failure. This guide turns that principle into a practical New Zealand career process. It is designed for doctoral researchers who want clarity without minimising the emotional, professional and identity shift involved.

Use the guide in sequence if you are starting from uncertainty. Use individual sections as a toolkit if you already know your direction. The best results come from doing the worksheets, speaking with people in your target market and testing your positioning before sending large numbers of applications.

1. Clarify

Choose a small number of career hypotheses rather than searching every possible job.

2. Translate

Convert academic activities into evidence of commercial, policy, operational or social value.

3. Connect

Learn the market through people, not job boards alone.

4. Demonstrate

Show results, judgement and relevance through targeted applications and visible proof.

How to use this guide this week

- Block two 60-minute sessions to complete the opportunity and skill-mapping exercises.
- Select three target role families and identify ten New Zealand organisations to investigate.
- Book two conversations with people already doing work that interests you.

Start with a tailored conversation

PhDtribe can help you identify realistic pathways, translate your experience and decide what to prioritise next.

**Email your
questions**

NAVIGATION

Contents

Use this map to move directly to the stage of your transition that needs attention.

Section	What you will do
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RESOURCES	Useful New Zealand links, source notes and PhDtribe contact details

A useful rule

- Do not wait for perfect certainty. A strong career transition is built through small, low-risk experiments that create better information.

Begin where the friction is highest

If you are unclear, start with direction. If you are not getting interviews, focus on positioning and applications. If interviews are not converting, strengthen evidence and selection practice.

[Email PhDtribe](#)

PART 1 - DIRECTION

1. Reframe the transition

A move into industry is not "starting over". It is a change in context, language, incentives and evidence.

Doctoral training often rewards depth, originality, independence and methodological precision. Employers also value these capabilities, but they usually frame them around outcomes: speed, risk, customers, policy decisions, revenue, service quality, innovation, stakeholder confidence or public impact.

The transition becomes easier when you separate your identity from the academic job title. You are not only a specialist in a narrow topic. You are also a person who has repeatedly worked through ambiguity, designed evidence, learned quickly and delivered a difficult multi-year project.

Common identity traps

Trap	What it sounds like	More useful reframe
Waiting for permission	"My supervisor has not suggested industry."	You own the decision and can build a portfolio of options.
Credential dependence	"The employer should recognise what a PhD means."	Make the value explicit and relevant to the employer's problem.
Seniority confusion	"I have a doctorate, so I should enter at senior level."	Seniority depends on relevant context, delivery scope and organisational judgement.
Topic fixation	"I must find a role that uses my exact thesis."	Look for roles that use your methods, domain insight, judgement or stakeholder experience.
Failure narrative	"Leaving academia means I did not make it."	Choosing a values-aligned career is an intentional professional decision.

Reflection prompt

- What do you want more of in your next role: influence, income, stability, teamwork, pace, purpose, leadership, flexibility, technical depth or public impact?
- What do you want less of: precarity, isolation, grant pressure, relocation, narrow specialisation, teaching load or uncertain progression?

Need help separating identity from direction?

A PhDtribe discovery conversation can help you move from "What can I do?" to a focused set of career options.

**Explore
TribeCareers**

PART 1 - DIRECTION

2. Map the New Zealand opportunity landscape

Search by problems and functions, not only by discipline. In New Zealand, PhD capability appears across private companies, public agencies, research organisations, professional services, charities and startups.

Research and development Examples: R&D; scientist, research engineer, product development scientist, clinical research specialist, technical lead, laboratory or field specialist. Value: experimentation, technical depth, validation, product improvement.	Data, digital and insights Examples: data analyst/scientist, insights analyst, AI/ML specialist, quantitative researcher, UX researcher, business intelligence analyst. Value: turning complex data into decisions.
Government and policy Examples: policy analyst, senior adviser, evidence and evaluation specialist, science adviser, regulatory analyst, intelligence analyst. Value: evidence, systems thinking and public outcomes.	Consulting and professional services Examples: management consultant, research consultant, economic analyst, risk adviser, technical consultant, evaluation consultant. Value: structured problem-solving for clients.
Innovation and commercialisation Examples: commercialisation manager, technology transfer adviser, IP analyst, innovation programme manager, partnerships or business development manager. Value: moving ideas from research to adoption.	Health, biotech and regulation Examples: medical affairs, regulatory affairs, health research, epidemiology, quality, clinical trials, health analytics. Value: rigorous evidence in regulated settings.
Climate, primary industries and infrastructure Examples: sustainability adviser, environmental scientist, agritech specialist, energy analyst, geospatial analyst, resilience or infrastructure researcher. Value: applied science and long-term systems thinking.	Programmes, operations and learning Examples: programme manager, project manager, research manager, operations improvement, learning designer, knowledge manager. Value: coordinating complex work and enabling others.
Non-profit, community and impact Examples: monitoring and evaluation, social researcher, advocacy adviser, programme lead, impact measurement, foundation or philanthropy roles. Value: mission-aligned evidence and delivery.	Entrepreneurship and portfolio careers Examples: founder, independent consultant, fractional research lead, technical writer, educator, adviser. Value: creating a role around a problem or market need.

Search principle: the job title may not contain "research" or "PhD". Read the problem, outputs and decision-making responsibilities.

Turn this map into a shortlist

Choose three role families, then find five real vacancies or profiles in each. Look for repeated language, tools and outcomes.

**Visit NZ
Government Jobs**

PART 1 - DIRECTION

3. Build three career hypotheses

A career hypothesis is a role direction you can test. It is specific enough to guide action, but flexible enough to change when you learn more.

Use three hypotheses rather than one perfect answer. For example: (A) evidence and evaluation in government, (B) customer insights in a technology company, and (C) research commercialisation at a university or public research organisation.

Score each option from 1 to 5

Criterion	Question to ask
Interest	Would I still want to learn about this work after the novelty fades?
Transferable fit	Which parts of my PhD already match the core work?
Evidence	Can I show examples, results or credible work samples?
Access	Can I reach people and organisations in this market?
Demand	Do multiple organisations appear to hire this capability?
Practical fit	Does the location, salary, work pattern and visa situation work for me?
Values	Would the work and organisation support what matters to me?

Hypothesis A: role family / sector	Total /35	First experiment
Hypothesis B: role family / sector	Total /35	First experiment
Hypothesis C: role family / sector	Total /35	First experiment

Good first experiments

- Analyse ten job descriptions and record repeated outcomes and keywords.
- Interview two people in the role family about their actual week, hiring pathway and success measures.
- Create one small work sample that resembles the role: a policy brief, dashboard, market scan, evaluation plan or commercial case.

Unsure which options are realistic?

PhDtribe can help you compare pathways against your evidence, values and the New Zealand market.

Email questions@phdtribe.com

PART 2 - POSITIONING

4. Translate doctoral work into employer value

Skill translation is not exaggeration. It is the disciplined act of describing what you did, how you did it, and why it mattered in language the reader uses.

Academic activity	Industry language	Value statement
Designed a methodology	Research design; problem framing; experimental or evaluation design	Built a defensible approach to answer a high-uncertainty question.
Completed a literature review	Market/environment scan; evidence synthesis; due diligence	Synthesised fragmented evidence and identified decision-relevant patterns.
Collected and analysed data	Analytics; insight generation; quality assurance	Turned complex qualitative or quantitative data into credible findings.
Managed a PhD	Long-term project delivery; planning; risk management	Delivered a multi-year project with changing constraints and limited supervision.
Presented at conferences	Executive communication; stakeholder presentation	Explained complex work to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
Published papers	Technical writing; review management; quality control	Produced rigorous outputs through iterative feedback and high standards.
Taught or supervised	Facilitation; capability building; coaching	Adapted technical material and supported others to perform independently.
Won funding or ethics approval	Proposal development; governance; compliance	Built a persuasive case and navigated formal approval requirements.
Collaborated across disciplines	Cross-functional collaboration; stakeholder management	Integrated different perspectives, methods and priorities.
Recovered from failed experiments	Problem-solving; learning agility; risk response	Diagnosed failure, changed the approach and preserved project momentum.

Translation test

- Remove jargon that only your discipline understands.
- Name the scale: people, data, budget, time, geography, partners or complexity.
- Name the result: decision, improvement, adoption, publication, funding, efficiency, quality, insight or risk reduced.

PART 2 - POSITIONING

5. Create an evidence inventory

A claim becomes credible when you can attach an example, scale, result and reference point.

Complete the inventory before writing your CV. Capture examples from research, teaching, employment, consulting, volunteering, committees, community work and life responsibilities. Industry employers do not require every example to come from paid corporate work.

Problem I faced	What I did	Result / evidence
Decision I influenced	Stakeholders involved	Result / evidence
Complex project delivered	Constraints managed	Result / evidence
Process I improved	How I measured change	Result / evidence
Failure or uncertainty	How I responded	Result / evidence
Communication example	Audience and format	Result / evidence

Useful evidence includes

- Scale: analysed 200 interviews, managed a three-year programme, coordinated six collaborators, worked across four institutions.
- Quality: passed peer review, met regulatory or ethics requirements, reduced errors, improved reproducibility.
- Influence: informed a policy, changed a process, secured buy-in, enabled a funding decision, trained a team.
- Delivery: completed ahead of deadline, recovered a delayed project, created a reusable method or tool.
- Recognition: award, grant, invitation, citation, stakeholder feedback, adoption or repeat engagement.

PART 2 - POSITIONING

6. Build a clear professional narrative

Your positioning should help a recruiter understand your direction in seconds, without reading your thesis title.

Use this formula

I am a [professional identity] with expertise in [methods/domain] who helps [type of organisation or stakeholder] to [outcome]. I bring [two or three differentiators].

Examples

Policy and evaluation

I am an evidence and evaluation specialist with expertise in mixed methods and complex social systems. I help public and community organisations turn research into practical decisions, bringing rigorous analysis, stakeholder facilitation and clear communication.

R&D; and product

I am a materials researcher who translates experimental evidence into product and process improvement. I bring advanced testing, cross-functional collaboration and a record of solving ambiguous technical problems.

Data and insights

I am a quantitative researcher who turns complex data into decision-ready insight. I combine statistical modelling, careful validation and the ability to explain uncertainty to non-technical stakeholders.

Commercialisation

I am a research-to-impact professional who can assess emerging technologies, build evidence for market decisions and connect technical teams with commercial partners.

My 35-word positioning statement

Test your narrative before applying

Share it with three people: one in your target sector, one recruiter or hiring manager, and one intelligent non-specialist. Revise what they cannot repeat back.

[Contact PhDTribe](#)

PART 3 - MARKET ACCESS

7. Learn how the New Zealand market works

Aotearoa New Zealand is a relatively small, connected market. Reputation, relationships, relevance and practical judgement often matter as much as credentials.

What this means for your search

- Research organisations, not only vacancies. Build a list of employers working on problems related to your skills and interests.
- Expect broad roles. Smaller organisations may need one person to analyse, coordinate, communicate and deliver, rather than remain in a narrow speciality.
- Show collaboration and humility. Expertise is valuable, but employers also need people who listen, learn the context and work without status barriers.
- Demonstrate cultural awareness. Learn how Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori, Māori data sovereignty and partnership may be relevant to your sector. Do not treat this as a decorative competency.
- Make work rights clear. State your current right to work and any relevant timing without making the employer guess.
- Follow through. In a connected market, responsiveness and professionalism compound quickly.

A practical employer map

Employer type	Where to look	Typical signals
Public service and Crown entities	jobs.govt.nz; agency career pages	Policy, evidence, regulation, data, programmes, science advice
Companies and professional services	SEEK, LinkedIn, company pages, recruiters	Product, customers, delivery, growth, risk, technical outcomes
Universities and public research organisations	Institution career pages; KiwiNet network	Research management, commercialisation, partnerships, technical roles
Startups and scaleups	Founder networks, incubators, events, LinkedIn	Speed, ambiguity, ownership, customer learning, broad capability
Charities and NGOs	Sector newsletters, Do Good Jobs, organisation pages	Impact, community relationships, evaluation, fundraising, programmes
Local government and regional organisations	Council career pages; jobs.govt.nz	Planning, policy, environment, community, infrastructure, insights

Build a 30-organisation target list

Include ten obvious employers, ten adjacent organisations and ten smaller or emerging organisations. Track people, problems and recent activity.

Explore career ideas

PART 3 - MARKET ACCESS

8. Use relationships to learn and be remembered

Networking is not asking strangers for jobs. It is a structured process of learning, contributing and staying visible.

A strong informational conversation

- 1 Prepare: read the person's profile, understand the organisation and choose five specific questions.
- 2 Request: ask for 20 minutes to learn about their work and pathway, not for a referral.
- 3 Listen: focus on real tasks, problems, hiring signals and language used in the sector.
- 4 Contribute: share one relevant insight, resource or thoughtful observation when appropriate.
- 5 Close: ask who else you should learn from and what capability would increase your credibility.
- 6 Follow up: send thanks, record what you learned and stay in contact only when you have a reason.

Outreach scripts

Situation	Message
Alumni or second-degree connection	Kia ora [Name], I am completing / have completed a PhD in [field] and am exploring [role family]. Your move into [organisation/role] stood out. Would you be open to a 20-minute conversation about the work and what helped you become credible in the sector?
Cold but relevant contact	Kia ora [Name], I am researching career pathways in [sector] and appreciated your work on [specific project/topic]. My background is in [brief relevance]. I would value 20 minutes to understand the problems your team works on and the capabilities that matter most.
After an event	Thank you for your comments on [topic] at [event]. Your point about [specific idea] was useful. I am transitioning from doctoral research into [area] and would like to stay connected. I have included [relevant resource/observation].
Follow-up	Thank you again. I acted on your suggestion by [specific action]. It helped me [result]. I wanted to share the update and thank you for the direction.

Weekly relationship target

- Five thoughtful outreach messages.
- Two learning conversations.
- One event, webinar or professional community interaction.
- One follow-up that shows action rather than asking for more help.

Need a networking strategy that feels authentic?

PhDtribe can help you identify who to approach, what to ask and how to follow up without sounding transactional.

Ask PhDtribe

PART 4 - APPLICATIONS

9. Replace the academic CV with an industry resume

An industry resume is a targeted evidence document. Its purpose is not to record everything you have done; it is to make the hiring decision easier.

Recommended structure

Section	What to include	Common mistake
Header	Name, location, phone, email, LinkedIn, work-rights statement if helpful	Full street address, photo, unnecessary personal details
Headline and summary	Target identity, years/context of experience, relevant strengths and outcomes	"PhD graduate seeking opportunities" without direction
Key capabilities	6-10 role-relevant capabilities using job-market language	A generic list copied into every application
Experience	Reverse chronological roles/projects with outcome-led bullets	Long descriptions of duties or thesis detail
Selected projects	Relevant consulting, technical, policy, volunteer or commercial work	Hiding non-academic evidence
Education	Degree, university, year; concise thesis line when relevant	Abstract-length thesis description
Technical tools	Only tools you can discuss and use	Listing every software package encountered once
Publications	Selected or linked separately when relevant	Several pages of publications for a non-research role

Write bullets using Action + Context + Method + Result

Before Conducted qualitative interviews and analysed data for my doctoral thesis.	After Designed and delivered 42 stakeholder interviews across three organisations, synthesising conflicting evidence into a decision framework adopted for the final research programme.
Before Taught undergraduate tutorials and marked assignments.	After Facilitated weekly learning sessions for 120 students, redesigned explanations for varied ability levels and improved consistency through a shared marking guide.
Before Published papers in academic journals.	After Led three peer-reviewed publications from concept to acceptance, coordinating co-authors, responding to critical review and delivering to strict quality standards.
Before Managed laboratory experiments.	After Planned and executed a 14-month experimental programme, introduced quality controls that reduced repeat testing and maintained delivery through equipment disruption.

Your resume should change for each role family

Do not rewrite everything for every vacancy. Maintain a strong master evidence bank, then select and reorder what best supports the specific decision.

Get resume guidance

PART 4 - APPLICATIONS

10. Write a cover letter that answers the employer

A good cover letter is not a biography. It connects the organisation's need to your evidence and motivation.

Four-paragraph structure

- 1 Opening: name the role and the specific reason the work or organisation interests you.
- 2 Fit: connect two or three priority requirements to evidence, scale and outcomes.
- 3 Contribution: explain how your approach, domain insight or methods would help with current problems.
- 4 Close: reinforce motivation, work rights or availability where relevant, and invite discussion.

Application paragraph model

Your need: The role requires [priority capability/outcome].

My evidence: In [context], I [action] using [method], resulting in [outcome].

Relevance: This experience would help me [contribution in the new role].

Before you submit

- Have you addressed the top three outcomes rather than every minor requirement?
- Does each claim have evidence?
- Could this letter be sent unchanged to another organisation? If yes, it is not specific enough.
- Have you removed academic jargon, defensive explanations and excessive detail?
- Have you used the organisation's language honestly without copying entire phrases?

Role-specific opening paragraph

Strongest evidence paragraph

Want a second pair of eyes?

Send your career question or ask about application support through PhDtribe.

[Email PhDtribe](#)

PART 4 - APPLICATIONS

11. Make LinkedIn support your transition

Your profile should signal a clear future direction while making your doctoral credibility understandable.

Profile element	What strong looks like
Headline	Role identity + speciality + outcome. Example: Evidence & Evaluation Specialist Mixed Methods Turning Research into Public Decisions
About	A 150-250 word narrative: problems you solve, evidence, target direction, sectors and a human closing.
Experience	Outcome-led bullets. Add relevant doctoral projects, consulting, teaching and leadership without overexplaining.
Featured	A short policy brief, dashboard, portfolio, recorded talk, article, project page or public-facing research summary.
Skills	Prioritise skills recruiters search for in your target market; secure relevant endorsements where appropriate.
Activity	Comment thoughtfully on sector issues, share useful synthesis and demonstrate curiosity. Avoid announcing expertise without evidence.

A useful About structure

- 1 Problem space: the kind of problem you care about.
- 2 Evidence: what you have done and at what scale.
- 3 Capabilities: methods, collaboration and decision support.
- 4 Direction: the roles or sectors you are exploring.
- 5 Invitation: a simple reason to connect.

Visibility without self-promotion anxiety

- Summarise one useful paper or report for a non-academic audience.
- Explain a method or concept through a practical example.
- Reflect on a sector event and identify one implication.
- Show a project artefact with context, limitations and learning.
- Congratulate and meaningfully engage with people in your target ecosystem.

Create one visible proof this month

A credible work sample can reduce the employer's uncertainty more effectively than repeatedly stating that you are transferable.

Explore
TribeCareers

PART 4 - APPLICATIONS

12. Decode job descriptions strategically

Treat a job description as evidence of the organisation's current problem, not a perfect portrait of the person they will hire.

Read in five layers

Layer	Question
Outcome	What must be different because this person is hired?
Core work	What will occupy most of the week?
Stakeholders	Who must trust, approve, use or fund the work?
Evidence threshold	Which requirements are essential, teachable or negotiable?
Risk	What is the employer afraid could go wrong?

Use a requirement-evidence matrix

Requirement / outcome	My evidence	Gap / action
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Apply when

- You can credibly meet most of the high-priority work, even if your title or sector differs.
- The gaps are learnable and you can explain a plan.
- Your evidence offers a useful adjacent perspective.

Do not self-reject because: you lack every tool, your PhD title is different, or the role asks for fewer formal qualifications. Do pause when the role requires a regulated licence, deep commercial ownership, security clearance or people leadership you cannot yet evidence.

PART 5 - SELECTION

13. Prepare for industry interviews

The employer is assessing whether you can transfer your judgement into their environment, work with others and deliver at the required pace.

Prepare eight evidence stories

Ambiguity A situation where the problem was unclear and you created structure.	Delivery A complex project completed under time, resource or quality constraints.
Stakeholders A disagreement, resistance or competing priorities you navigated.	Influence A decision you shaped without formal authority.
Failure A setback you diagnosed, owned and learned from.	Communication Complex evidence explained to a non-specialist audience.
Leadership A team, student, collaborator or process you enabled to succeed.	Ethics and judgement A decision where quality, integrity, safety or public interest mattered.

Use STAR, but make it decision-focused

Element	Keep it focused on
Situation	Essential context only; avoid a five-minute academic preface.
Task	Your responsibility, success measure and constraint.
Action	Your decisions, trade-offs, collaboration and method.
Result	Outcome, evidence, learning and relevance to the new role.

Likely transition questions

- Why are you moving from academia into this sector?
- How will you adapt from a long research cycle to faster delivery?
- Tell us about a time you influenced a non-expert or senior stakeholder.
- How do you decide when evidence is sufficient to act?
- What commercial or public value did your research create?
- How do you work when priorities change and the answer is not perfect?
- Why this organisation, and why now?

Practise aloud, not only in your head

Record answers, reduce background detail and make your decisions visible. PhDtribe can help you reframe examples for non-academic panels.

[Explore support](#)

PART 5 - SELECTION

14. Handle cases, presentations and technical tasks

Selection tasks test how you think with incomplete information. Strong candidates clarify the objective, state assumptions and communicate trade-offs.

A six-step approach

- 1 Clarify the decision: Who is the audience and what must they decide?
- 2 Define success: What outcome, metric or constraint matters most?
- 3 Structure the problem: Break it into a small number of logical questions.
- 4 Use proportionate evidence: Do not over-research a task designed to test judgement.
- 5 Recommend: Give a clear answer, explain uncertainty and name the next step.
- 6 Communicate: Lead with the message, then evidence, implications and limitations.

Presentation structure for a 10-minute task

Time	Content
0:00-1:00	Objective, context and recommendation
1:00-3:00	What the evidence says and key assumptions
3:00-6:30	Options, analysis and trade-offs
6:30-8:30	Recommended action and implementation
8:30-10:00	Risks, measures and next steps

Avoid the thesis defence pattern

- Do not lead with the literature review.
- Do not present every caveat before the recommendation.
- Do not fill slides with text to prove depth.
- Do show prioritisation, audience awareness and proportionate confidence.

Translate rigour into executive clarity

Your advantage is not maximum detail. It is knowing what evidence matters, what remains uncertain and what should happen next.

[Contact PhDtribe](#)

PART 6 - CREDIBILITY

15. Bridge the "industry experience" gap

You do not have to wait for a job to create relevant evidence. Build small, bounded experiences that resemble the work you want.

High-value bridge options

Consulting micro-project Help a small organisation answer a research, data, customer, policy or evaluation question with a clear scope and deliverable.	Work sample Produce a two-page policy brief, market scan, dashboard, technical memo, evaluation plan or product evidence review.
Industry collaboration Ask a research partner, lab, supervisor or alumni contact for a short applied problem or stakeholder-facing task.	Committee or governance work Take responsibility for risk, reporting, stakeholder engagement, events, budgets or decisions, then document the outcome.
Short course with output Choose learning that produces evidence: SQL project, product case, project plan, regulatory submission exercise or data visualisation.	Volunteer with boundaries Contribute a defined professional skill for a limited period. Avoid open-ended unpaid work that substitutes for a paid role.

A 30-day credibility sprint

Week	Output
1	Choose one role family and identify a realistic work product used in that role.
2	Interview two practitioners and collect examples of quality standards and common mistakes.
3	Create the work sample using public, simulated or permissioned data.
4	Request feedback, revise and publish or share privately with target contacts.

Make your capability visible

A focused artefact gives networking conversations substance and strengthens your CV, LinkedIn profile and interview examples.

Discuss your plan

PART 6 - CREDIBILITY

16. International PhD graduates: add market and visa clarity

Your international experience can be a strength, but employers should not have to infer your work rights, New Zealand context or local networks.

Immigration New Zealand states that a Post Study Work Visa can allow eligible graduates to work in New Zealand for up to three years. Its current guidance says graduates who completed a Master's or Doctoral qualification in New Zealand and studied here for at least 30 weeks can receive a three-year Post Study Work Visa. Eligibility is individual and rules can change, so verify current requirements directly with Immigration New Zealand. [5][6]

Practical positioning

- State work rights clearly: for example, "Open work rights until [month/year]" where accurate.
- Show local engagement: New Zealand collaborators, conferences, employers, communities, volunteering, sector associations or client-facing work.
- Explain global value: languages, cross-cultural research, international markets, global datasets or regional expertise.
- Learn local context: relevant legislation, professional standards, public institutions, Māori perspectives and sector language.
- Build references: choose people who can speak to delivery, teamwork and communication, not only thesis quality.
- Plan early: understand visa timing, residence pathways and any employer accreditation or role-specific requirements before urgency narrows your options.

Important

- This guide provides general career information, not immigration advice.
- Use Immigration New Zealand as the source of truth and seek licensed immigration advice where needed.

Navigating the local market as an international graduate?

TribeCareers supports doctoral researchers who need to translate their experience and understand professional pathways in New Zealand.

[Visit TribeCareers](#)

PART 7 - ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

17. Explore commercialisation, innovation and entrepreneurship

Some PhD careers are created by connecting a research capability to a user, market, public need or implementation pathway.

Commercialisation is broader than becoming a founder. It includes technology assessment, IP and contracts, partnerships, investment cases, market validation, programme management, business development, regulatory strategy and research translation.

Questions that move research towards impact

- Who experiences the problem, and how costly or urgent is it?
- What existing alternatives do they use?
- What evidence would make a customer, funder, regulator or partner act?
- What intellectual property, data, ethics, cultural or regulatory issues apply?
- Can the solution be delivered, adopted and sustained outside the research environment?
- Which capability is missing: technical, commercial, design, customer, finance, legal or operational?

New Zealand resources to investigate

Resource	Use it for
Your university commercialisation office	IP, licensing, spinout decisions, market validation and research partnerships
KiwiNet	Understanding the research commercialisation ecosystem, capability pathways and success cases [7]
business.govt.nz innovation funding	Current innovation support and grant information
R&D; Career Grant	An employer-applied grant that can support a recent PhD graduate in an R&D; team for six months; the official page states funding of up to NZD35,000 and an opening date of 31 August 2026 [8]
NZTE / founder and export networks	Business growth, international markets, investment and ecosystem connections

Commercialisation career keywords

- commercialisation adviser, technology transfer, innovation manager, IP analyst, portfolio manager, partnerships, business development, product manager, programme manager, market intelligence, research impact.

Turn research into an impact pathway

PhDtribe can help you decide whether you are best positioned as a technical expert, commercialisation professional, founder or portfolio professional.

[Ask a question](#)

PART 7 - ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

18. Evaluate offers and prepare for the first 90 days

The best first industry role is not always the most prestigious title. It is the role that builds relevant evidence, relationships, context and future options.

Evaluate the whole opportunity

Dimension	Questions
Role scope	Will I own meaningful work and produce visible outcomes?
Manager	Will this person clarify priorities, give feedback and sponsor my learning?
Team and culture	Can I ask questions, challenge respectfully and collaborate across functions?
Learning	Will I gain market, customer, regulatory, product or delivery knowledge?
Progression	What could strong performance lead to in 12-24 months?
Practical terms	Salary, leave, location, flexibility, visa fit, probation, fixed-term risk and benefits
Values and impact	Do the organisation's decisions and behaviours align with what matters to me?

Your first 90 days

Days 1-30: Learn Understand priorities, customers/users, decision rights, language, stakeholders, systems and success measures. Deliver one small reliable win.	Days 31-60: Contribute Own a defined problem, communicate progress, ask for feedback early and build cross-functional relationships.
Days 61-90: Demonstrate Deliver an outcome, document learning, propose a practical improvement and agree the next level of responsibility.	Throughout: De-academicise Do not over-research every decision. Learn when "good enough to act" is appropriate, while protecting quality and ethics.

Prepare for the transition, not only the interview

Your first months will shape confidence and reputation. Enter with a learning plan and a clear definition of what success looks like.

**Connect with
PhDtribe**

PART 8 - ACTION PLAN

19. Your 90-day PhD-to-industry plan

Use this plan as a disciplined experiment. Track actions that create information and relationships, not only application counts.

Period	Focus	Minimum outputs
Days 1-15	Clarify and translate	Three career hypotheses; evidence inventory; first positioning statement; updated LinkedIn headline
Days 16-30	Research the market	30-organisation list; 20 job descriptions analysed; 5 practitioner conversations; role-language bank
Days 31-60	Build credibility	Industry resume; cover letter base; one work sample; 8 interview stories; two professional events
Days 61-90	Convert opportunities	Targeted applications; referrals where appropriate; interview practice; weekly review and strategy adjustment

Weekly scorecard

Metric	Target	W1	W2	W3	W4
Thoughtful outreach	5				
Learning conversations	2				
High-fit applications	2-4				
Visible proof / contribution	1				
Follow-ups completed	100%				
Strategy review	1				

Review every Friday

- What generated useful information?
- Where did I receive interest or resistance?
- Which capability or message remains unclear?
- What will I stop, start or change next week?

Do not navigate alone

A structured conversation can help you focus your 90-day plan, identify blind spots and maintain momentum.

Email questions@
phdtribe.com

PART 8 - ACTION PLAN

20. Common mistakes and better alternatives

Most stalled transitions are not caused by a lack of intelligence. They are caused by unclear direction, untranslated evidence and low-contact job searching.

Mistake	Better alternative
Applying to everything	Choose role families and build a repeated evidence narrative.
Leading with the thesis topic	Lead with the problem you solve, methods, outcomes and stakeholder value.
Using a long academic CV	Use a concise, targeted resume; provide publications separately when relevant.
Waiting until submission or graduation	Begin market learning and relationship-building 6-12 months earlier where possible.
Collecting more qualifications by default	Identify the exact credibility gap before paying for another course.
Networking only when desperate	Build relationships through curiosity, contribution and consistent follow-up.
Hiding uncertainty in interviews	State assumptions, explain trade-offs and show how you would learn.
Assuming "overqualified" is the problem	Show motivation, realistic expectations and why the role is a deliberate fit.
Underpricing non-academic experience	Count teaching, leadership, community work, committees, consulting and operational responsibilities.
Taking rejection as a verdict	Treat patterns of rejection as data on fit, evidence, timing, market access or communication.

Final self-check before your next application

- Can I describe my value without using my thesis title?
- Do I understand the organisation's problem and success measures?
- Have I selected evidence rather than listed activities?
- Have I spoken with anyone in this type of work?
- Can I explain why this transition is intentional?
- What would reduce the employer's uncertainty about hiring me?

A focused strategy is faster than random activity

PhDtribe exists to normalise multiple doctoral futures and help researchers transition with clarity, language and confidence.

Discover
TribeCareers

PART 8 - ACTION PLAN

21. One-page transition toolkit

Print or save this page as your weekly dashboard.

My primary role hypothesis	My secondary hypothesis
Top five target organisations	Three people to contact this week
My strongest evidence story	My most important credibility gap
Work sample I will create	Next application deadline
One action I will stop	One action I will start

My positioning statement

Use this page in a PhDtribe conversation

Bring your hypotheses, evidence and questions. The clearer your inputs, the more specific the career strategy can become.

**Email your
questions**

RESOURCES

Useful New Zealand links and source notes

Live policies and programmes change. Use these links to verify current information and continue your research. Information in this guide was checked on 31 July 2026.

[1] PhDTribe - TribeCareers

<https://phdtribe.com/doctoral-researchers-exploring-professional-pathways/>

Career guidance, skill translation, pathway mapping and discovery support.

[2] Careers New Zealand

<https://www.careers.govt.nz/>

Job-search guidance, career ideas, CV and interview resources.

[3] NZ Government Jobs

<https://jobs.govt.nz/>

Vacancies across the New Zealand public service and participating public organisations.

[4] KiwiNet

<https://kiwinet.org.nz/>

Research commercialisation ecosystem, pathways, resources and success stories.

[5] Immigration New Zealand - Post Study Work Visa

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/visas/post-study-work-visa/>

Official visa eligibility, costs, processing information and conditions.

[6] Immigration New Zealand - visa duration

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/work/requirements-for-work-visas/how-long-you-can-work-on-work-visas/how-long-you-can-stay-on-a-post-study-work-visa/>

Official guidance on how long eligible graduates can stay.

[7] KiwiNet Commercialisation Professional Framework

<https://kiwinet.org.nz/Resources/CommercialisationProfessionalFramework>

Career pathways and capability development in research commercialisation.

[8] business.govt.nz - R&D; Career Grant

<https://www.business.govt.nz/tax-and-money/innovation-funding/r-and-d-career-grant>

Current employer grant information for hiring recent Master's and PhD graduates into R&D.;

[9] NZTE

<https://www.nzte.govt.nz/>

Business growth, export, investment and ecosystem information.



THE WORLD NEEDS YOUR EXPERTISE

Your next chapter can be designed.

Your doctorate proves that you can learn deeply, work through uncertainty and create credible knowledge. The next step is to translate that capability into a problem, organisation and career direction that matters to you.

EMAIL
questions@phdtribe.com

VISIT
www.phdtribe.com



Explore TribeCareers for practical support with skill translation, pathway mapping, industry-ready narratives, recruitment strategy and career confidence.