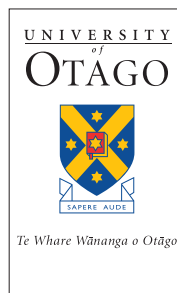
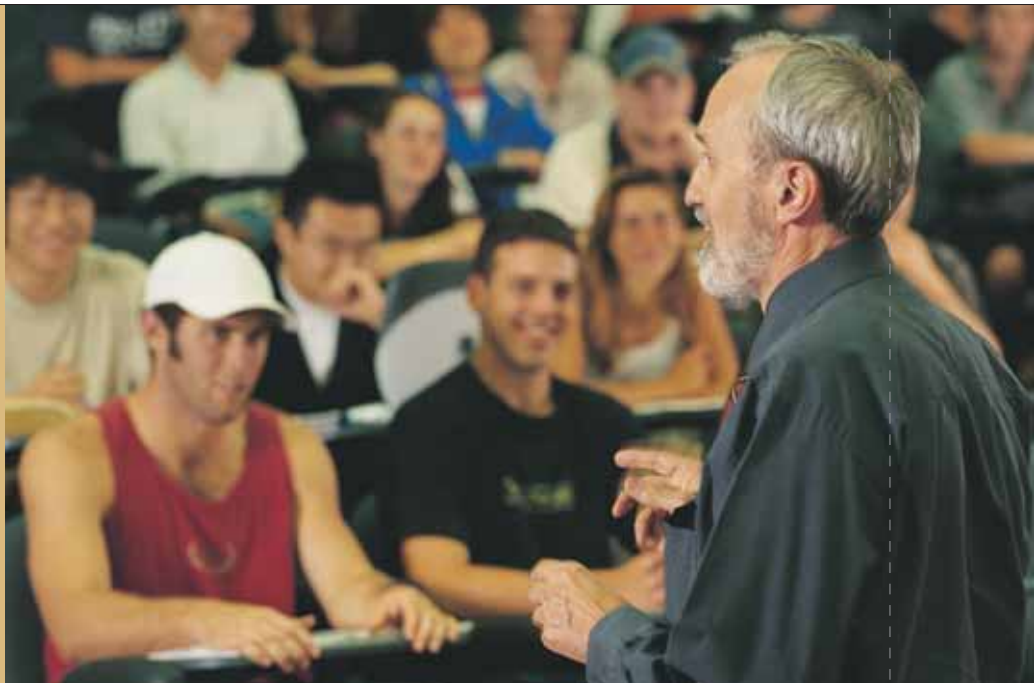


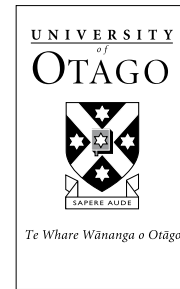
THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

2005–2010

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO







THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

2005 – 2010

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## A INTRODUCTION: THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The first University of Otago Teaching and Learning Plan was adopted by Senate in February 1996. It was completely re-written in 2002 but retained the purpose of the 1996 Plan, namely “to provide guidance for academic Divisions, Schools and Departments as they undertake the planning of teaching and learning activities.”

The 2002 Teaching and Learning Plan was developed by a group of academic staff experienced and active in teaching and a similar group has reviewed the Plan for this updated version. The 2005 update continues to provide teaching staff with a bridge between the all-important goals of the University and the practice of teaching, learning and assessment. Advice on specific teaching methods which can be used to implement the strategies are available online as link from the site <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>. The six Dimensions and the attributes of the University of Otago Graduate are keys to the design of curricula which lead to quality learning in the University and to the learning outcomes we expect for our students.

I commend the Plan as a guide and a helpful tool for staff and students.

**Professor David Skegg**  
Vice-Chancellor  
University of Otago

## B BACKGROUND TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

The Teaching and Learning Plan emphasises what is expected in teaching and learning and points to ways in which these expectations might be achieved. The Plan is focused on the “inputs” to the process of achieving quality learning - graduate profiles are concerned with the end-result. The six “Dimensions of Quality Learning” (Section D) provide a synthesis of the nine objectives and link the expectations expressed in the Teaching and Learning Plan to the achievements defined for the University of Otago Graduate (Section E). The Teaching and Learning Plan applies to all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in the University.

The Teaching and Learning Plan, as well as drawing on relevant policy statements of the University, is strongly influenced by the opinions and values of experienced teachers and by informal input through discussions at committees such as the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies. A few years ago HEDC organised a series of working parties to identify the key features of effective teaching in eight modes of teaching (large class lecturing, practical based teaching, performance teaching etc). The findings from the discussions among about 80 respected teachers from across the University were primarily used to develop a new system for evaluating teaching performance but have also been a most valuable source of strategies and useful teaching ideas for the Teaching and Learning Plan. A group of Otago winners of National Tertiary Teaching Excellence awards was consulted for the 2005 update.

The University’s first Teaching and Learning Plan was adopted in 1996. It was entirely rewritten for the 2002 version in order to be based on the goals and objectives of Strategic Direction to 2005 to ensure that the two policy statements are consistent with each other. The nine objectives are unchanged in the 2005 update, apart from minor editing, but the objectives are now linked to the University’s Profile 2004-6. Each objective is supported by a series of strategy statements and a link on the webpage at <<http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>> extends each strategy with lists of practical suggestions intended to help individual teachers and planners who seek to implement the objectives in their teaching. Only some of the practical suggestions will be relevant to individual circumstances and users of the Plan are encouraged to add their own ideas derived from experience in their teaching and to forward them to HEDC for inclusion on the website.

Up-to-date performance indicators for the teaching and learning objectives can be found in the University’s Profile 2004-6 and in the teaching and research plans of the academic divisions and departments.

## C THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

**GOAL** To foster learning through research-informed teaching and assessment of high international standing. (Charter 7.0, Profile 2004-6 6.1)

### **CI: MASTERY OF KNOWLEDGE**

**Objective 1:** To develop in each student a mastery of a coherent body of knowledge through systematic, disciplined study.

**Context** The challenge for the teachers of the University is to guide our students as they acquire the high level learning skills and expertise which characterise university study. Current interest in the development of generic learning skills can distract attention from the central role of the mastery of a coherent body of knowledge on which the generic learning skills can be built. Advice the University takes from the employers of our graduates tells us that employers assume mastery of subject matter as they begin their search for the special skills and attributes which they need.

Nevertheless, mastery of knowledge cannot be considered in isolation: the high order learning skills have little meaning without a sound knowledge and understanding of the discipline. Mastery of knowledge will not be achieved by the simple acquisition of facts using passive learning methods. Moreover, knowledge is best mastered by application of the many high order learning skills which are identified in this Plan. To be an effective learner at university the skills of critical reasoning, conceptualisation, analysis, synthesis, creativity, evaluation, problem identification and problem solving must be available. Knowledge mastery will require that the student is familiar with relevant research methods and with the handling of evidence. The student will, of course, need to be an effective communicator and have the ability to apply the knowledge they have acquired or it cannot be said that they have mastered the body of knowledge they have studied.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 1a Lead students to understand the major conceptual paradigms, frameworks and theories that relate to the subject matter studied.
- 1b Provide students with a suitable knowledge of the subject content, developed through a programme of study characterised by coherence, depth, and progression.
- 1b Develop in students an ability to practice the appropriate methods and practical techniques associated with the subject being studied.
- 1d Instill in students a sense of the limitations, the provisional nature and the constraints of knowledge gained within a particular sphere.
- 1e Equip students with a sense of the interconnectedness between different fields of knowledge, and with the ability to integrate and synthesise perspectives gained from a range of fields.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C2: INTELLECTUAL INDEPENDENCE****Objective 2: To foster intellectual independence in students.**

(Profile 2004-6, Objective 22)

**Context** Fostering intellectual independence is linked to developing lifelong learning skills (C3) and to the interdependence between teaching, research and professional practice (C5) which defines university study. In the university context, intellectual independence is commonly associated with the experience of advanced learning in the disciplines especially postgraduate study. Most experienced and reflective university teachers can define the traits which comprise intellectual independence in their own discipline. If advanced students are to be intellectually independent they need to be encouraged from the start of university study. The University recognises that employers place a high value on intellectual independence (C8).

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 2a: Develop learning environments which encourage intellectual independence.
- 2b: Motivate students to develop intellectual independence.
- 2c: Ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills to be intellectually independent.
- 2d: Develop assessment practices which reward demonstrations of intellectual independence.
- 2e: Encourage teachers to develop their understanding of the special attributes of intellectual independence in the particular discipline.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C3: LIFELONG LEARNING****Objective 3: To develop the lifelong learning skills of students.**

(Profile 2004-6, Objective 23)

**Context** The Mission of the University, the graduate profiles of all programmes and most, if not all, departmental Teaching and Research Plans stipulate that the skills of lifelong learning are key attributes of the successful Otago student. The skills of lifelong learning include the ability to adapt to rapid change, to tolerate uncertainty, to be open to new ideas, as well as willingness to invest time and energy in keeping current in one's own and other fields of knowledge, and concern for social, ethical and environmental implications. Success can be measured by the extent to which skills learned in the University are transferred to the unpredictable environment of the wider world.

Accepting responsibility for personal development is essential to success since university education takes for granted that knowledge is not static and that change is inevitable. Developing the skills of lifelong learning occupies all stages of university education, from first year to final year. Probably the most powerful influence on students is the example set by the lifelong learners who guide them in their study.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

3a: Ensure students have the basic learning skills for study at tertiary level.

3b: Encourage the use of appropriate resources which support lifelong learning.

3c: Ensure students develop understanding at a conceptual level.

3d: Instill in students a love of learning:

3e: Empower students to own their learning.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C4: EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING****Objective 4: To promote, encourage and support excellence in teaching.**

(Profile 2004-6, Objective 2)

**Context** It is a prime task of teachers in the University of Otago to help their students along the path towards intellectual independence through developing the skills of life-long learning and expertise in disciplinary knowledge, skills and attitudes. Effective teachers are willing to share their own learning skills, their ability to use and apply evidence and their passion for their subject.

In a university it is possible for sophisticated learners to succeed more or less independently of the quality of teaching, providing they have ready access to appropriate facilities such as libraries and electronic information technology. However, the majority of students enter university less well equipped to exercise significant independence from their teachers. The path is not easy for many students and they can benefit from teachers who empathise with their struggles and recognize that students gain significant learning skills when they make a successful transition from one stage to the next.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 4a: Encourage academic staff to recognise the importance of the objectives relating to intellectual independence and lifelong learning skills of students.
- 4b: Provide a comprehensive system of opportunities for teaching staff to improve their teaching by gaining a greater understanding of their role in enhancing student learning and a rational appreciation of the opportunities provided by effective use of educational technologies especially information and communication technology.
- 4c: Provide a comprehensive system for evaluating the quality of teaching in programmes, courses and by individual teachers which emphasises development and fosters a desire to improve.
- 4d: Encourage academic staff to reflect on their teaching experiences.
- 4e: Provide a rational system of rewards for high quality teaching (including assessment) based on success in developing the learning skills valued by the University.
- 4f: Ensure that teaching staff with responsibility for course design and delivery are fully aware of the importance of current educational theory, best practice and the agreed policies of the University.
- 4g: Ensure that effectiveness in teaching is a significant factor in selection of new academic staff.
- 4h: Ensure that teaching methods make learning accessible to Māori and Pacific Island students, students with impairments and students with a first language other than English.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C5: TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

**Objective 5: To recognise, reinforce and promote interdependence between teaching, research and professional practice.**  
(Profile 2004-6, Objective 27)

**Context** University teachers who reflect on the task of teaching know how to draw on the learning and understanding stored in their own and others' research activities and in relevant professional practice. Teaching, research and professional practice all depend on continuing interaction with knowledge, and all are processes where critical analysis, synthesis, action and self-development are essential. The values of university based research parallel the values of university teaching and both inform the values of professional practice.

The links between teaching, research and professional practice are most easily demonstrated at advanced levels of study. However, the links can be made from the first day of each student's university study. Effective university teachers select what they teach from their understanding of current research and contemporary professional practice. They model the values and thought processes of active researchers and those of professionals in practice and they are ever alert to the insights their teaching gives them for their research and professional practice. Researchers in many disciplines find that their teaching feeds their research directly, for example when their students are involved in their projects either as co-investigators or as participants.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 5a: Encourage academic staff to give value to the importance of the interdependence between teaching, research and professional practice.
- 5b: Seek every possible means to make students at all levels of study aware that research, teaching and professional practice are interdependent.
- 5c: Ensure that the teaching and research plans of all departments, schools and divisions make explicit the importance of the interdependence between teaching, research and professional practice.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C6: ETHICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Objective 6:** To encourage students to reflect upon and evaluate the ethical and social implications of their knowledge.

**Context** The universities of New Zealand are charged with the role of ‘a critic and conscience of society’ (Education Act, 1989). Teachers can help students to identify, from a critical perspective, the important ethical and social issues of their subject and equip them with the means of responding now and in the future.

The University seeks to produce graduates who are able to reflect upon and evaluate the ethical and social implications of their knowledge and who are willing to act upon that awareness whatever the ethos of their ultimate employment. The ethical and social values of a university education should transcend the pragmatism of the workplace.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

6a: Include consideration of ethical and social issues in course design.

6b: Promote awareness of formal ethical procedures and standards within the University.

6c: Encourage students to share the University’s role as a critic and conscience of society.

6d: Use staff awareness of their influence as role models to lead by example.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C7: INTERNATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE****Objective 7: To develop further international content, context and vision in the learning experience of students.**

(Profile 2004-6, Objectives 6&7)

**Context** Internationalisation of the teaching and learning environment at the University of Otago may take many forms. Whatever the forms may be, internationalisation seeks to encourage students to incorporate into their learning a variety of perspectives which transcend the boundaries of a single nation, society or culture. Crucially, this process involves recognition both of cultural diversity and common humanity, especially with respect to the quest for knowledge across time and space.

The successful integration of international dimensions into the University's teaching and learning activities will assist in preparing students for participation in an increasingly globalised world as active citizens and producers of knowledge. Internationalisation will thereby constitute a key element in the graduate profiles of many University of Otago programmes.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 7a: Enhance the international dimension of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes by facilitating the appropriate internationalisation of curricula. (see Internationalisation Management Plan, 2003-6 (IMP) 4.1-4.4)
- 7b: Institute and maintain systems which ensure that the University benefits fully from participation in the global internationalisation of tertiary education. (see IMP 1.1-1.4)
- 7c: Develop and support student exchange programmes which enable University of Otago students and their overseas counterparts to participate in an international learning experience for credit towards their degree. (see IMP 3.1)
- 7d: Enrol undergraduate and postgraduate international students in each Division of the University, drawn from a diverse range of countries. (see IMP 2.5-2.7)

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C8: EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY**

**Objective 8: To develop in students skills, attributes and knowledge which enhance their employment prospects and their capacity to make a positive contribution to society.**

(Profile 2004-6, Objective 4)

**Context** In the many reports which identify the skills employers seek in university graduates there is a high level of consistency with respect to the most valued skills. When the University of Otago surveyed the employers of its graduates the main findings were entirely consistent with those of most other studies. To ensure that the University continues to understand the issues, senior staff of the University meet each year with selected employers to discuss their expectations of our graduates.

High among the skills which employers regard as important are effective communication skills, the ability to learn new skills, the capacity for cooperation and working effectively in teams. These particular generic skills are also valued by university staff but have not been ranked so highly in several studies. On the other hand, employers take for granted that graduates of the University will have acquired such generic attributes as disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) knowledge, skills and attitudes, problem-solving skills, facility with information technology and the ability to work independently.

The capacity to make a positive contribution to society draws on many generic skills. However, the ability of graduates to adapt their University experience to new needs, to respond to change and to be flexible about how and where tasks are undertaken are especially important. In general, society expects graduates to be capable of acting as “critic and conscience” and to evaluate the ethical and social implications of their knowledge. Our society also expects graduates to be leaders of change and visionaries, to see the big picture and its implications for the present and the future.

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 8a: Ensure that graduate profiles, and the curricula of programmes and papers address the development of relevant skills and attributes along with disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge.
- 8b: Provide a safe environment for students which allows relevant generic skills and attributes to be acquired and practised.
- 8c: Continue to seek feedback and input from employers, graduates and other stakeholder groups on the skills and attributes which are currently relevant to them, those which they anticipate being relevant in the future, and the extent to which they are demonstrated by graduates of the University of Otago.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

**C9: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

**Context** Extensive research into student learning at university has shown that the quality of the learning achieved is related to the way that the students perceive the context in which they are learning and the way they approach their learning. Some students will see learning as gathering knowledge, some as memorising while others will be seeking to extract meaning and to gain understanding so they can apply what they learn. Still others will be reinterpreting the knowledge to better understand the wider meaning of their learning and may ultimately find that they themselves have changed in a profound way. To achieve the six dimensions of quality learning described below (see D), especially those of lifelong learning and intellectual independence, it is necessary to sustain an environment which accommodates all learners, whatever their perception of the learning task, while challenging them to embrace all levels of learning from memorising to personal transformation.

The task of providing a safe, healthy and suitably resourced learning environment is complex and calls for understanding by teachers and by all those who have a role in student learning. The learning environment is a result of the quality of space for teaching and for study, the appropriateness of methods of teaching and assessment and includes protection from abuse including the inappropriate use of power. Ultimately, a successful learning environment equips each individual learner with an optimistic view of their future and confidence in the learning experiences of their past.

**GOAL** To maintain and improve the quality of the university experience and the supportive environment in which students live and work. (Charter 7.2, Profile 2004-6 6.1)

**Objective 9i: To provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students.**  
(Profile 2004-6, Objective 24)

**Objective 9ii: To provide a suitably resourced study environment.**

**Objective 9iii: To recognise the rights and responsibilities of students as participants in their own educational experience.**

**Strategies** Teaching strategies which can assist in realising this objective include:

- 9a: Ensure that students are provided with the best quality space for teaching and study which resources permit and which current learning theory indicates will be effective.
- 9b: Plan courses and programmes which respond to the diversity of learning strategies of the students while challenging them to expand their perceptions of learning.
- 9c: Establish the standards for interaction between teachers and students, and between students.
- 9d: Encourage the development of a culture where all interactions between teachers and students are marked by an expectation of shared commitment to learning and by optimism for success in the chosen field of study.

*Practical examples of how the strategies listed here might be put into practice in the papers and programmes of the University are provided at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/hedc>.*

## D SIX DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

A summary of the University's goals and objectives for teaching and learning

- **Disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and attitudes**

The University of Otago promotes quality learning through the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and the building of attitudes. Quality learning within specific disciplines and across traditional disciplinary boundaries assists learners to apply what they have learned to practical situations now and in the future. Oral and written communication skills and the ability to collaborate effectively are vital.

- **Understanding**

Effective learners at the University of Otago demonstrate conceptual understanding as well as subject knowledge. Conceptual understanding enables learners to engage in rigorous intellectual analysis, criticism and problem-solving and to apply knowledge and skills creatively in current and new contexts.

- **Research informed learning**

Learners at the University of Otago are informed by research and scholarship; they are encouraged to recognise the insights offered by current research and to value the example set by their research-informed teachers.

- **International perspectives**

The University of Otago encourages learners to develop international awareness and understanding, to recognise what is common across diverse cultures and to participate in globalisation of study, research and employment.

- **Ethical and social awareness**

The University of Otago expects learners to evaluate and debate the ethical, social and community implications of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have acquired so that they are informed in their opinions and in their ethical values.

- **Lifelong learning**

Quality learning at the University of Otago emphasises lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is central to the Mission of the University. Lifelong learners are independent learners able to adapt to rapid change, to tolerate uncertainty and to be open to new ideas. Lifelong learners love learning, are eager to invest time and energy in continuing study and to apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the interests of society.





## E THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO GRADUATE

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The following attributes are to be fostered at the University of Otago:

- **COMMUNICATION:** the ability to communicate information, arguments and analyses effectively
- **CRITICAL THINKING:** the ability to analyse issues logically, consider different options and viewpoints, and make informed decisions
- **CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING:** an understanding of cultural diversity within the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi, and biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand
- **ETHICS:** a knowledge of ethics, ethical standards and social responsibility
- **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:** an appreciation of the global perspective in their chosen discipline(s), and an informed sense of the impact of the international environment on New Zealand and New Zealand's contribution to the international environment
- **IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE:** a deep, coherent and extensive knowledge of at least one discipline coupled with an understanding of the fundamental contribution of research
- **INFORMATION LITERACY:** a basic understanding of information literacy and specific skills in acquiring, organising and presenting information, in particular through computer-based activity
- **INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE:** intellectual openness and curiosity, and the awareness of the limits of current knowledge and of the links between disciplines
- **LIFELONG LEARNING:** a commitment to lifelong learning, with the ability to apply knowledge, develop existing skills, adapt to a changing environment, and acquire new skills
- **RESEARCH:** the ability to conduct research by recognising when information is needed, and locating, retrieving, evaluating and using it effectively
- **SCHOLARSHIP:** a commitment to the fundamental importance of the acquisition and development of knowledge and understanding
- **SELF-MOTIVATION:** the capacity for self-directed activity and the ability to work independently
- **TEAMWORK:** the ability to work effectively as both a team leader and a team member
- **WORKPLACE-RELATED SKILLS:** enterprise, self-confidence and a sense of personal responsibility within the workplace and community

(Adopted by Senate March 2003)

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THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

2005–2010

