



media release

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CCTV to proceed for Dunedin campus following consultation

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Following an agreed consultation process between the University of Otago and OUSA, a proposal to roll out CCTV into streets surrounding the Dunedin campus drew 98 student submissions.

As a result of those submissions, University staff have recommended to proceed with the CCTV plans, but with fewer cameras, and a revised University policy that governs their use. The University Council this week approved this plan.

In Zones One and Two of the project, the number of cameras installed will be reduced from 37 to 26 cameras with locations also reduced from 29 to 18 general locations. With this option, the anticipated coverage can be maintained by using higher spec cameras.

The University felt that a larger reduction in the number of cameras would seriously compromise the intended outcomes of the proposal.

Researchers, independent of the CCTV project team, will evaluate the effectiveness of the cameras after the installation of the first two zones within streets immediately North and South of the Campus.

University Chief Operating Officer Stephen Willis says the University actively sought and listened to all student feedback.

Of the 98 submissions, 57 supported the CCTV installation plans for streets, mainly for safety reasons. The cameras would be installed in public streets such as Castle, Dundas St, Albany and Hyde St. A further 34 submissions were opposed, mainly for privacy reasons, while seven submissions were neutral with no position stated.

The consultation followed a process agreed between the University and OUSA in June this year. The process included putting information about the proposal, policy, and how to make submissions on the University's website and advertising the consultation on social media and in Student media. University staff held meetings with Te Roopu Maori, and the OUSA executive, and also held an open forum for students to attend and express their views. Around 30 students attended this forum in the Union back in August.

From the beginning of July to mid-August, students were invited to submit their feedback online to both the proposal and a draft CCTV Security Systems Policy (CCTV Policy) proposed to guide the use of all existing and new CCTV cameras operated by the University across all their campuses. This revised draft Policy still requires approval from the University's Policy Management Group before being enacted.

Mr Willis says the consultation process with the student community was genuine, and he was pleased with the level of student involvement.

“Many students are supportive of the use of CCTV for these reasons if done right, but some students still expressed concerns that there isn’t enough evidence and that crime is already low. While crime is low, crime against students has been creeping up,” he says.

“The University takes its duty of care to students seriously and wants to do what it can to provide an environment where students are safe and can feel assured that offenders will be apprehended if something does go wrong, property is damaged or stolen. The University will be constantly monitoring whether CCTV is being effective at doing that.

“Privacy was the most significant concern for students, even for those who supported CCTV.”

“The purpose of CCTV is not to monitor normal student behaviour and punish every minor infraction but to keep students safe by reducing crime against them and being able to catch offenders. If a student is burgled they’ll be able to get in touch with Campus Watch so that the footage can be used to track down their property and the perpetrator.

“The CCTV policy is there to make sure that all CCTV use by the University protects student’s privacy rights, and the University’s Privacy Officer will make sure that happens. Students suggested that there’s areas of the CCTV policy that could be clearer to them so that they can see how the Privacy Act requirements are being addressed.

“The University is continuing to work with OUSA and other student groups on the draft policy to take their concerns into consideration.”

The evaluation of the cameras after the installation of the first 2 zones will be done by researchers, independent of the CCTV project team.

Engagement with students will be ongoing. The University will continue to meet with OUSA and Te Roopu Maori, and will ensure that students have access to detailed information on the final plan, including how CCTV will operate in public streets and who to contact with queries and complaints.

The University will keep working with students proactively on safety too, which was suggested throughout the consultation – through the residential colleges, OUSA, Campus Watch – to support students when they go flatting so that they know how to keep themselves and their property safe.

Resource Planner and Policy Adviser for the Campus Development Division Murray Brass says resource consent is required for some of the new cameras located in the Heritage or Townscape Precinct in the District Plan. This consent is to control the visual impacts of the structures, such as the cameras, brackets and service boxes, and is unrelated to their use for CCTV. Because the cameras will be located on existing power poles and non-heritage buildings, there should be very little effect on the Precincts. Therefore, the University anticipates the consents process for these cameras will be non-notified.

A Project Management Team is being established within the Student Services Division to move the project forward now that the project has approval.

Background information:

Key milestones for the Project are:

Stage 1

October 2017

27th October 2017

16th November 2017

Resource Consent sought

CCTV Policy submitted to Policy Management Group (PMG)

CCTV Policy Submitted to Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group (VCAG)

Student concerns

- The Campus Watch control room will not be sitting watching all the cameras 24/7. However, some live feeds of cameras will be necessary to be able to respond to crime when it's happening.
- The CCTV policy will have robust rules and training requirements for everyone who can access the live feeds and the University's Privacy Officer will make sure that the University is acting within the law.
- The University has a duty of care to its students for all the time they're studying and is doing what it can to keep them safe and at the same time have the best student experience while they're here.
- It is not the University's intention to curb the student culture. The University wants students to have a good time while they are here, free from the fear of crime. As well as CCTV to keep students safe and prevent crime, the University is working on how to create a more vibrant campus, and events and activities so that students have the best experience socially.

Suggestions that came from students

- That the number of cameras be reduced.
- Cameras should be added to some other areas around the campus.
- The evaluation of the cameras after the installation of the first two zones should be undertaken by researchers, independent of the CCTV project team.
- The University should keep engaging with OUSA and students throughout the project.
- There should be a presentation on the finalised plan and information on how CCTV will operate in public streets and who to contact with queries and complaints.
- The University should work with landlords, residential colleges, OUSA, and Campus Watch – to support students when they go flatting so students know how to keep themselves and their property safe.
- The University and students should work together to look at how to create a more vibrant campus, events and activities so that students have the best experience.

Some Student comments from submissions

For

- I would like to make note of my strong support as a student for this initiative to reduce harm to students and students' property.
- It think it's a good idea if it is intended and used for student safety.
- Anything that increases the safety and protection of both current and future students is a good investment to me.
- I think knowing that there are proper measures put in place gives us a sense of the University's assurance that they care and are looking after us.
- I support the idea of putting up CCTV cameras in certain areas around Uni as long as the residents' privacy is protected.
- If I had something stolen or was physically assaulted on the streets around Dunedin I would be praying that there were CCTV cameras around to provide evidence of the event. I'm grateful to see there are considerations in place to protect student's legal and privacy rights.
- With CCTVs I would feel that offenders would think twice before actually committing something. I would certainly feel safer with more CCTVs around especially if girls were to walk home from the library when the sun has set.
- I reckon it'd be a good step in the right direction, everyone should have a right to feel safe walking home after labs.
- I think it's a good idea. I think care should be taken so that it does not encroach on personal freedoms for people on private property.
- I flatted around campus last year. It was a mistake I will not repeat. As long as privacy is paramount, and the university is okay with the heavy cost, then I think this idea can really only be good for students.
- I thoroughly believe that the attempt to prevent and provide punishment for criminal acts would be greatly aided by the presence of CCTV footage.

Against

- We already live in a police state. CCTV cameras on campus is just another step in the wrong direction.
- I am against the CCTV project purely because the university should not have the right to film public streets. The University's role is a tertiary institute, not a security company.
- The University/Proctor do not have the responsibility (nor the right) to police criminal behaviour, on or off campus.
- I am a student living very close to the uni. I have never felt unsafe by the area I am living in. I do not want 24 hour surveillance of the areas right outside my house.
- I think the creeping surveillance of students in residential areas as opposed to study areas dangerous.
- I would propose a different approach. Invest this money, not in CCTV, but instead in community projects and community venues.
- CCTV only tenuously helps crime – blanketing the area in cameras won't fix everything.
- North Dunedin and the University of Otago are not the same thing. The University cannot just keep expanding into the city.
- It seems very much like the University of Otago is taking an ambulance at the bottom of the hill approach – as opposed to trying to tackle why anyone might be feeling unsafe on campus in the first place
- This money would be much more productively invested in assisting student culture towards one of celebration and sharing, building confidence and growth, and providing space and the means for people to celebrate safely