



University
of Otago

ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

Te Wāhaka Matua Mātau Hauora
Division of Health Sciences

Summer Research Scholarship Programme

Hōtaka Karahipi Rangahau Raumati

2026 / 2027 Handbook



Welcome

Welcome to the Division of Health Sciences Dunedin-based Summer Research Scholarship Programme for 2026/2027.

The Summer Research Scholarship Programme encourages participation from students and staff from the Division of Health Sciences on the Dunedin campus.

The main objective of the programme is to give undergraduate science and health professional students their first introduction to research. Many students go on to pursue careers in research, and some of our most successful researchers gained their first experience through a summer research scholarship. Even if research does not become part of your future career, exposure to a research environment will enrich your degree and help you develop strong critical-thinking skills - an important asset in today's workplace.

We hope that some of you will be inspired by research to make it an important part of your career, and we wish you every success in your research endeavours.

Professor Greg Jones

Chair, Summer Research Scholarship
Assessing Committee

Dr Manon Knapen

Manager, Summer Research Scholarship
Programme

Contacts and Assistance

For all queries related to the Summer Research Scholarship Programme, please contact:

Dr Manon Knapen

Health Sciences Divisional Office

Email: summer.research.scholarship@otago.ac.nz

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Important Dates

Early June 2026	Advertising to students and staff
June–July 2026	You approach supervisors and agree on a project
13 August 2026, 5.00pm	Applications close
September 2026	Applications assessed and scholarships allocated
October 2026	You are notified of the outcome and successful applicants receive their contracts
Early November 2026	Contracts due
November 2026	Projects commence; first payment made
23 November 2026	Latest possible project start date
December 2026	Second payment made
24 December 2026 – 3 January 2027	University Christmas break
January 2027	Third payment made
18 February 2027, 5.00pm	Final reports due
March 2027	Final reports assessed
April 2027	Final payment made once requirements are met

General Information

The Summer Research Scholarship Programme involves completing a research project over the summer break in an area of interest such as clinical or laboratory-based research, biomedical science, ethics, or public health.

Dunedin-based scholarships are ten weeks in duration and provide a tax-free educational grant with a stipend of \$7,000.

This handbook is for students and supervisors undertaking a summer research scholarship in Dunedin. If you wish to be based in Christchurch or Wellington, you must apply through the relevant local programme.

Supervisors from Dunedin schools or faculties who are based in Christchurch or Wellington may apply either to the Dunedin-based programme or to their local programme, but not both.

Further information, application form, and an up-to-date list of available projects and scholarships can be found on the [Division of Health Sciences website](#).

**Summer research scholarship applications close on
Thursday 13 August 2026, at 5.00pm**

Please note: The online application form will automatically close at **5.00pm** on the deadline. After this time, submissions will no longer be accepted, so make sure you submit your application before the closing time.

Scholarships Available

We administer scholarships from multiple funders. Some scholarships are targeted to specific groups of students (for example medical, Māori, or Pacific Island students), while others are open more broadly.

Master's thesis and PhD candidates are not eligible for summer research scholarships.

When you apply, you will automatically be considered for all scholarships for which you are eligible.

Otago Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) Scholarships

Open to all Sciences and Health Sciences students based in Dunedin, for projects related to human health, including biomedical science and public health.

Approximately 15 projects will be funded. These scholarships are worth \$7,000.

Included in these is one scholarship assigned to the research area of Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, or elderly health issues. The OMRF also administers scholarships on behalf of other charitable organisations, subject to availability each year.

Division of Health Sciences Scholarships

For projects supervised by a staff member of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Dentistry, Faculty of Health Professional Programmes or Faculty of Medicine, in Ōtepoti Dunedin.

If your supervisor works in one of the Faculty listed above, you are eligible for a Divisional scholarship. These scholarships are worth \$7,000.

- 2 scholarships for Māori students
- 2 scholarships for Pacific students

A number of scholarships are funded by external sponsors, subject to annual confirmation. These may include:

- Australian & New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine (older persons' health)
- Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Trust (medical students)
- National Heart Foundation (heart disease projects)
- Southern Cancer Society (cancer projects)

Faculty of Medicine Summer Scholarships

For projects supervised by a staff member of the Faculty of Medicine – Dunedin.

If your supervisor works in the Faculty of Medicine – Dunedin, you are eligible for a FoM scholarship. These scholarships are worth \$7,000.

- 2 scholarships available

Faculty of Biomedical Sciences Māori Summer Scholarships

Te Kura Mātai Rongoā-Koiora Raumati Māori

*Hāpaitia te ara tika pūmau ai te rangatiratanga mō ngā uri whakatipu
Foster the pathway of knowledge to strength, independence and growth for future generations*

The aim of this scholarship is to support the development of Māori biomedical researchers and enable Māori taurira to reach their full potential. The Faculty of Biomedical Sciences (BMS) will offer up to two Māori summer research scholarships in 2026.

To note:

- You are also eligible to apply for other Divisional scholarships and OMRF scholarships, if your project is health-related.
- Successful applicants are asked to consider allowing their name, photograph, and general details to be used for Faculty publicity.

Painga (Eligibility)

Applications are open to taurira who identify as:

- i. Māori; and are
- ii. Planning to do a summer project under primary supervision of a member of staff in a BMS Department.

Mahi tonu (Application process)

- Submit your application to the Division of Health Sciences Summer Research Scholarship Programme by Thursday 13 August 2026, 5.00pm.
- Include the additional information requested below.

If you have any questions about the application or process, contact:

bmsadmin@otago.ac.nz

Kōwhiritanga (Selection process)

The selection committee, consisting of the Head of Faculty of BMS or their nominee, Associate Dean Academic BMS, Associate Dean Research BMS, and the Associate Dean Māori BMS, shall consider the following factors in recommending awarding the scholarships:

- i. Quality of the proposed research;
- ii. Applicant's academic ability;
- iii. Applicant's potential involvement and commitment to Māori communities;
- iv. Applicant's interest and commitment to research;
- v. Advice and recommendations from appropriate University staff as needed.

The selection committee reserves the right not to award the scholarships in any given year if there are no candidates deemed suitable.

In exceptional circumstances the Head of Faculty BMS may approve variations to these regulations.

Additional information

This is requested **in addition** to the application as outlined on page 12 of this handbook.

1. **Whakapapa**; please state your:
 - Iwi
 - Hapū
 - Marae

Applicants may wish to provide information about:

2. **Whakarāpopoto mai āu mahi me ētahi o āu kaiārahitanga ki roto i ngā hapori Māori me ngā rōpū Māori hoki.** Please outline your involvement and any leadership activities with Māori communities and organisations (250 words maximum).

Faculty of Biomedical Sciences Pacific Peoples' Summer Scholarships

The aim of this scholarship is to support the development of Pacific Island biomedical researchers and enable Pacific Island students to reach their full potential. The BMS will offer up to two Pacific Peoples' Summer Research Scholarships in 2026.

To note:

- You are also eligible to apply for other Divisional scholarships and OMRF scholarships, if your project is health-related.
- Successful applicants are asked to consider allowing their name, photograph, and general details to be used for Faculty publicity.

Eligibility

Applications are open to students who are:

- i. Of Indigenous Pacific Island descent (either domestic or international); and
- ii. Planning to do a summer project under primary supervision of a member of staff in a BMS Department.

Application process

- Submit your application to the Division of Health Sciences Summer Research Scholarship Programme by Thursday 13 August 2026, 5.00pm.
- Include the additional information requested below.

If you have any questions about the application or process, contact: Saki Baleivanualala, Associate Dean (Pacific) at saki.baleivanualala@otago.ac.nz

Selection process

The selection committee, consisting of the Head of Faculty of BMS or their nominee, Associate Dean Academic BMS, Associate Dean Research BMS, and the Associate Dean Pacific BMS, shall consider the following factors in recommending awarding the scholarships:

- i. Quality of the proposed research;
- ii. Applicant's academic ability;
- iii. Applicant's involvement and commitment to Pacific Islands communities;
- iv. Applicant's interest and commitment to research;
- v. Advice and recommendations from appropriate University staff as needed.

The selection committee reserves the right not to award the scholarships in any given year if there are no candidates deemed suitable.

In exceptional circumstances the Head of Faculty BMS may approve variations to these regulations.

Additional information

This is requested **in addition** to the application as outlined on page 12 of this handbook.

1. **Island(s) of Heritage/Origin**
2. **Please outline your involvement and any leadership activities with Pacific communities and organisations** (250 words maximum).

Applying for a Scholarship

Student Eligibility

To be eligible for a tax-free summer research scholarship, **you must intend to enrol at a University in the following year**. This ensures the University meets its legal and tax obligations. If you do not return to study in 2027, you will be required to pay withholding tax to Inland Revenue. You can get guidance on the IRD website on how to do this. If you receive a scholarship, you will be required to sign a contract confirming your intention to enrol for University study in 2027.

You are eligible to apply for a summer research scholarship if you:

1. are an undergraduate student currently enrolled at the University of Otago,
2. intend to enrol for University study next year,
3. will be based in Dunedin over the summer, and
4. are supervised by a Dunedin-based University of Otago staff.

Summer Research Scholarships are intended to provide research experience for undergraduate students and therefore **you are not eligible** to apply for a summer research scholarship if you:

1. have previously received a Summer Research Scholarship through this programme, unless you are a Māori or Pacific Island student,
2. are a Master's thesis or PhD candidate,
3. already hold a Master's degree or a PhD, or
4. have already graduated.

Projects will not be funded if you have a family or personal relationship with your supervisor or co-supervisor, in accordance with the [University's Ethical Behaviour Policy](#).

Finding a Supervisor

You are encouraged to be proactive in finding a supervisor and project. Consider your research interests, lectures or topics you particularly enjoy, and contact relevant staff members directly. You can also use the [Health Sciences Staff Expertise Database](#) to find out about the research interests of our researchers.

Details of available projects may be posted on departmental noticeboards or advertised on departmental websites. From time to time supervisors will post available projects on the [Division's summer research scholarship website](#).

Supervisor Eligibility

- Supervisors must be academic staff of the University of Otago or health professional staff of Health New Zealand. If the primary supervisor is a member of Health New Zealand, then the project must have a University staff member as co-supervisor. All Health New Zealand staff should discuss this with [Health Research South](#) **before applying**.

- Staff of other institutions will be accepted as co-supervisors only where it is clear that the project represents a genuine collaboration between the external(s) and supervisor(s) from the University. The collaboration must be made explicit in the application.
- Postdoctoral Fellows (PDF) can be primary supervisors **if they have a senior academic as a mentor.**
 1. One mentee per mentor
 2. Mentoring a PDF is equivalent to being primary supervisor, i.e. a mentor cannot also be primary supervisor in the same year (unless one of the students is Māori or Pacific, see clause below)
- Each supervisor can supervise two students as primary supervisor **if one of those students is either a Māori or Pacific Island student.** If applications for more than one (or two) student(s) per supervisor are received by the Committee, they will be returned to the supervisor to choose which applicant(s) they wish the Committee to consider.
- Each supervisor can be secondary supervisor of no more than two further students.
- **Supervisors must be available to the student during the scholarship period** or provide suitable cover (i.e. a co-supervisor) if they are to be absent for short durations limited to no more than 30% of the duration of the scholarship. Any co-supervisors must be named on the coversheet.

Guidelines for Projects

- More than one applicant for the same project will not be accepted.
- Only one project application per student will be accepted.
- The project should be technically sound and should give the student a broad experience of research, from design through to write-up i.e. a project that consists of a literature review only is unlikely to score highly.
- There should be evidence that the project provides sufficient work for ten weeks, and that the data collection and analysis will not exceed ten weeks. The project must not be overly ambitious. See comment about late completion of projects.
- Projects that are entirely data gathering (i.e. no interpretive component) will not be funded.
- Where volunteers are to be recruited, the number of cases should be sufficient to form a conclusion. For clinical projects, please be aware of the difficulty of recruiting patient participants over the extended Christmas period due to the closure of clinics.
- If the project involves a survey or requests for lay or patients participants, any consent letters sent out by the student must include all relevant information related to the project including: funding body, supervising academic, sponsoring faculty, confirmation of ethical approval etc.

- Please note that the Animal Ethics Committee has expressed concern regarding the suitability of some animal-based projects for summer students. A memorandum is circulated annually to departments hosting summer students, which attempts to provide guidance on the appropriate ethical cost-benefit balance that such activities would be expected to achieve.
- Any travel-related costs associated with the project must be funded by the supervisor.

Format and Submission of Applications

Application format

You must use the application template and include **all** the following:

1. **Coversheet**
2. **Application form**
Complete all sections of the application form.
Applicants for the BMS Māori or Pacific Peoples' scholarships must also respond to the additional questions associated with these scholarships (see pages 8-9 of the handbook).
3. **Proof of ethical approval (if applicable)**
Before any summer research project can commence, **all required ethical approvals, locality authorisations, and Māori consultation requirements must be in place**, where applicable.
 - If approvals are already in place at the time of application, record the approval number on the coversheet and attach a copy of the approval letter to your application.
 - If approvals are still pending, proof of ethical approval(s) must be forwarded to Manon Knapen prior to the commencement of the project.
4. **Your full academic record(s)**
Provide a complete academic record downloaded from eVision.

Submission process

Submit your application as **one PDF**. Reminder, your PDF must include

1. Coversheet
2. Application including your supervisor's letter of support
3. Ethical approval(s) (if applicable)
4. Full academic record(s) from eVision

Name your PDF using the following format: **surname_firstname.pdf**

[Click here to submit your application](#)

You must be logged in with your University of Otago student account to access this form

Assessment of applications

Scholarships are awarded based on:

- The merit of the proposed project
- The student's skills and suitability for the project
- The feasibility of completing the project within the 10-week scholarship period
- The student's academic record
- The supervisor's letter of support

Applications are assessed by the Summer Research Scholarship Assessing Committee, which comprises clinicians and scientists from a broad range of academic disciplines.

Results will be announced in October.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are honours students eligible?

Yes. Honours and PGDip students are eligible if they enrol at Otago the following year.

Am I eligible if I am an international student?

Yes.

I am currently doing a BHealSc but already hold a Master degree in another discipline, am I eligible?

No. The purpose of the summer research scholarship is to provide research experience to undergraduate students and therefore is not designed for Master's thesis and PhD students. Students with PhDs, Master's or who have already graduated are not eligible for these scholarships either.

I am not an Otago student, am I eligible?

No. Students need to be currently enrolled at Otago to be eligible for a summer research scholarship in Dunedin.

I received a summer research scholarship through this programme last year; can I apply again?

A student who has previously held a centrally funded Summer Research Scholarship in the Division of Health Sciences is not eligible to hold a second centrally funded scholarship, except for Māori and Pacific students.

HRC Ethics allows for repeat candidates.

I am doing an undergraduate in the Division of Sciences; can I apply?

Yes, but only for certain scholarships. Carefully review the eligibility criteria before applying.

Can I take a summer paper if I received a summer scholarship?

No. The summer scholarship must be your only academic obligation during the 10 weeks of its tenure.

How do I find a supervisor?

See page 10.

Can I have a part-time job over summer?

Yes, but the summer scholarship must be the student's only academic obligation during the 10 weeks of its tenure (i.e. students cannot be enrolled in Summer School).

Receiving a Scholarship

Timing of the project

Summer projects should start by mid-November to allow for 10 weeks of work and a summer break before return to study in 2027. Please note, therefore, that projects must commence no later than November 23.

Ethical framework and required approvals

Before any summer research project commences, it is essential that all relevant ethical approvals, locality authorities, and Māori consultation requirements are fully in place, where applicable to the research.

Responsibility for approvals rests with the primary supervisor. Supervisors must ensure that all necessary approvals are obtained beforehand, so that the student can commence their summer scholarship.

Summer projects that have not received all required approvals by the 1st of December will be alerted to the Associate Dean (Research). In most cases, this will result in the withdrawal of the scholarship. This outcome can have significant negative consequences for students who had planned to rely on the scholarship over summer. For this reason, supervisors are expected to be particularly diligent and timely in meeting their responsibilities.

If a scholarship is withdrawn due to failure to obtain the necessary approvals, the supervisor will face a two-year stand-down from participating in future summer research scholarship rounds.

What prior approvals might be required?

Work involving animals requires approvals of the University of Otago's Animal Ethics Committee.

Work involving human participants requires approval of the Health and Disability Ethics Committee or the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.

Work requiring human ethics approval also requires Ngāi Tahu Research Committee Consultation.

Work involving any access to Health New Zealand medical records, patients or staff requires locality approval through Health Research South.

Work involving genetically-modified organisms requires approval from the EPA or the University of Otago's Institutional Biological Safety Committee (IBSC).

Once again, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure these approvals are in place before the start of the summer project.

Building access over summer

Supervisors should ensure that students have access to necessary buildings and laboratories, computer facilities and libraries and that they are provided with security or ID cards if needed. Planning in advance can save valuable time once the student arrives.

IMPORTANT: Students who are awarded a summer scholarship at the end of their Honours degree may have their University accounts deactivated shortly after completion of their degree. This can affect access to email, building entry, and University-licensed softwares. If your account is deactivated, please follow [these instructions](#) to restore/maintain the access required for your scholarship.

Changes to projects

The scholarship is awarded for the project and student specified at the time of application. **The scholarship cannot be transferred to another student. Prior permission must be sought (with justification provided) prior to making changes to the project.** If this is the case, then please advise Manon Knapen, who will consult with the Chair of the Summer Research Scholarship Assessing Committee if required.

Non-completion of projects

If the student is unable or unwilling to complete the project (due to illness, unforeseen circumstances or any other reason), the Summer Research Scholarship Assessing Committee will review the work completed and determine the portion of the scholarship the student is entitled to receive. In some cases, this may require the student to return a portion of the scholarship already received.

Late completion of projects

Students need to be available to fully participate in coursework once this commences in 2027. If a staff member is supporting their summer student to complete and/or present work after a course commences then this must not infringe on teaching and course requirements in any way. No allowances will be made if a project runs into semester 1.

Concerns arising during project completion

If supervisors have any concerns about the quality of the work, student attendance, or progress of the project, these must be conveyed to Manon Knapen as soon as they become apparent. Scholarship payments are made on the assumption that good progress is being made. Any situation to the contrary should be reported at the earliest opportunity.

Health and safety training

It is important for supervisors to be aware that they are responsible for ensuring that their students receive appropriate health and safety training for the techniques and materials that they will be using during their project.

Payments

Payments are usually made in four instalments, directly into the bank account nominated by the student, as detailed below:

- Three monthly instalments of \$2,000 (November, December and January)
- \$1,000 in April 2027 once the final report has been assessed

You will not receive your final payment until April 2027. The Assessing Committee must read all the reports and meet to approve them – this process takes time.

The final payment is dependent upon the:

- submission of the final report by 18 February 2027.
- submission of the completion form signed by your supervisor by 18 February 2027.
- final report complying precisely with the reporting requirements outlined below, and being deemed satisfactory by the Summer Research Scholarship Assessing Committee.

Since the scholarship is an educational grant, it is not taxable and the amounts do not need to be disclosed in any tax returns submitted by the student.

Otago Medical Research Foundation Soirée

Summer students funded by the Otago Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) must attend a social event organised by the OMRF. Final payment is dependent upon attendance to this event. More information will be provided in due course.

Reporting Requirements and Prizes

Students are required to submit a final report and completion form by 5.00pm, 18 February 2027. See Appendix A for Report writing requirements.

The template for the final report and the completion form can be downloaded from the [website](#).

Final reports and completion forms must be submitted as separate documents via an online form, which will be made available in early 2027.

File name and format

For the report, only a Word file (.docx or .doc) or an .rtf file will be accepted. Do not send a PDF file of your report. Please name your report in the following format: **surname_firstname.docx**. The completion form can be any format.

Prizes

OMRF-funded projects: the student whose work is deemed to have been the most meritorious will be awarded the annual P K Renshaw Prize.

Projects hosted in the Faculty of Medicine – Dunedin (and not funded by the OMRF): the Gil Barbezat Prize will be awarded for the best report.

Projects hosted in the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences (and not funded by the OMRF): the Dean's Summer Research Prize will be awarded for the best report.

Appendix A: Report Writing Requirements

The report contains four parts and should summarise what you have done over the 10-week period, it does not have to be crammed with everything!

General Rules

- Font - 12-point Times New Roman
- Minimum margins of 2.0 cm
- Pages must be numbered
- All abbreviations must be defined
- Readability and presentation are important
- Write in clear English. Is the style of your writing easy to read? Are complete sentences used?
- Proofread carefully before submitting. You could even ask a friend or flatmate to read it for you

Part A. Title page and personal statement

Part B. Lay summary of the project for your Sponsor

Your summary may be used for press releases, and/or inclusion in a variety of educational and research publications or reports which may be distributed to the public.

Part C. Potential impact and next steps

Part D. Scientific report – no more than five pages

Abstract - 150 words

An abstract summarises the report to help a reader decide if they need to read the rest. It is a condensed version of the entire report. All abbreviations in the abstracts must be defined.

This abstract must describe: the purpose of the work, its context and the questions(s) posed; the experimental design; the key results and the major conclusion and its significance.

Your abstract may be used for press releases, and/or inclusion in a variety of educational and research publications or reports which may be distributed to the public.

Introduction - why did you study this problem?

The introduction prepares the reader for what will follow in the report. It should:

- Clearly state the purpose or objectives of the research
- Provide important background and/or theory
- All references to previous studies should be properly documented

Materials and methods - what did you do?

Describe how and when the research was conducted, including:

- The experimental design
- Experimental apparatus (if any)
- Methods of gathering and analysing data including statistical methods used
- Types of controls used

The reader should be able to replicate the experiment if they wish after reading your methods. This section should be written in the past tense as a narrative describing what you did. Methods adapted from other sources should be referenced. Photographs or diagrams may be used to help describe an experimental setup.

Results - what did you find?

Summarise observations, data and findings in this section. Tables and graphs should be used to supplement text and to present the data in a clear, concise, and more understandable form.

Tables and graphs should be labeled correctly and clearly.

Discussion – what do the results mean?

This section explains what you think your data mean and how they relate to the objectives of the project. It should describe patterns and relationships that emerged during the project.

Explain how any changes to the experimental procedure may have affected the results or offer suggestions as to why your results may have differed from expected.

Conclusion

What is now known as a result of your research? What are the practical applications of your research?

Acknowledgements

Here you must acknowledge the financial assistance provided by your sponsor/funding organisation, including any sub-sponsors, together with any assistance from your supervisor or other research and technical staff. Be sure to check that you have used the correct names and titles.

You should also state that ethical or other approvals were obtained for your research, if applicable. But do not state the permit numbers.

References - maximum one page

All references should be cited correctly and consistently. Your supervisor can offer advice on this. References have to be in font 12-point Times New Roman. Please note the references are additional to the five pages allocated to Part D of the report.

Appendix - optional

Additional or supporting figures and tables may be included in an appendix. Material included in the appendix should not be essential for following the main argument or conclusions. **The appendix must not exceed four pages.**