



English

Write your story

“Studying English makes you a strong candidate for most jobs because of the excellent communication skills you learn and the ability to see things outside the square. The study of literature teaches you empathy.”

Amie Richardson BA(Hons)
Freelance Writer and TV Presenter

We are our stories. Stories carry our community's past forward, they critique our present and they build a vision of our future. As a UNESCO City of Literature, Dunedin is the perfect place to dive deep into the literature of before, create your own works and take them to your community.

English at Otago is locally situated but globally oriented, connecting the best of Aotearoa with literary visions around the world. You will have the opportunity to look at everything from monsters in medieval romances to supernatural dread in gothic novels to mind-bending form in contemporary poetry to world-building in role-playing video games – and beyond!

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Why study English?

English at Otago teaches the arts of reading and writing in an integrated way, by studying and discussing literary texts and by practising the techniques of writing.

By learning about language from its best practitioners, students gain critical skills that are valued by employers, governments and educationalists; skills that are essential for people taking an active role in an open society.

By immersing yourself in literature, you will gain a unique understanding of the roots of society and its cultures, and also develop your own powers of analysis, creativity and imagination.

English and your career

English develops key skills in critical thinking, cultural awareness and communication, which are essential in all workplaces and are increasingly sought after by employers.

Our graduates are working as editors, copy-writers and in publishing, as creative writers or journalists, teachers, librarians and educational administrators. English graduates may be found in the public service, as analysts, diplomats, politicians and policy makers. Others have become ministers of religion, arts administrators and broadcasters.

Otago has an excellent record of preparing students for postgraduate study in English and related disciplines, both in New Zealand and overseas. Recent Otago graduates have gone on to study at top universities including Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews and Harvard.

English at Otago

The department connects our literary expressions with the communities that create them, whether the work is from our own tangata whenua, our Pacific neighbourhood or English-speaking peoples across the world.

The department is particularly strong in examining the various ways language arts can appear: in print, embedded with visual art, expressed through music, manifested on stage and screen, explored in digital realms or experienced within gaming.

Your literary study begins through remixing stories across media and ages, exploring and creating the controversies of the day. Purpose-built papers for developing your professional and creative communication skills are integrated alongside.

In second year, you have the chance to intensely study the literature of Aotearoa New Zealand – popular for international students who leap at the chance to examine this material – plus branch out globally to the Americas, medieval Europe, Scotland, England and further. Creative writing and professional writing training intensifies.

In third year, advanced papers connecting narrative to psychology, history and the arts become available, as well as advanced writing papers in which you create extended works to express your beliefs, your imagination and your place in the world.

When you leave a lecture, explore all that Dunedin, a UNESCO City of Literature, has to offer. Travel Otago's literary history with the d-tour app, attend a poetry reading at a local pub, explore the Victorian heritage of Otago and the Robert Burns statue in the city octagon, join a local writers' group or dig through the national archives of the Hocken Library.

Major or minor in English

English is available as both a major and a minor subject. It can be combined with another BA major or form part of a double degree. A major in English provides you with flexible communication and analytical skills, and a deeper knowledge of the world's most widely spoken language. It also complements study in any other subject.

Minor in Writing

The department also offers a minor in Writing, incorporating a total of five papers across the undergraduate levels. A minor in Writing provides you with invaluable skills no matter what subject you are studying.

Honours in English

Students who do well in the early stages of their degree will be invited to apply to enter Honours at the conclusion of the BA. The BA (Hons) is a rigorous one-year course, offering advanced study in English and the opportunity for students to conduct their own independent research.

Postgraduate study in English

The department has a strong and growing postgraduate programme in which students complete MA and PhD degrees. Both degrees involve the writing of a thesis – a piece of independent research – under the supervision of one or more of the members of the department. The department's broad range of expertise allows students to undertake MA and PhD research on a wide range of topics.

PROFILE Laura Marwick

It was "practically inevitable" that Laura Marwick would choose to study English.

"I've always loved language and I figured I'd pursue what I cared about and was good at. I wasn't prepared initially for the range of reading and the emphasis on developing your own ability to think critically, but then I realised I just needed to spend all my time reading and writing, which was essentially my dream lifestyle anyway."

Those thinking of studying English should expect to read more than just the dusty classics, she says.

"There are some fascinating papers on offer and you'll be asked to study a massive range of works. I'd go straight from a lecture on the 17th century diary of Samuel Pepys to one on Patti Smith lyrics. I also really recommend Emma Neale's poetry paper."

"It really is up to you how you want to design your course."

Laura completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English with a minor in Gender Studies, followed by a Diploma for Graduates in Advertising. After university she became a freelance writer and now works in marketing for a young, fast-growing company.

"My English degree taught me to examine language with much more discipline and to be deliberate both with my words and with crafting an argument. When I began studying advertising and taking my first paid writing jobs, I was really grateful for the persuasiveness and acuity I'd spent three years practising as an undergrad. In English you're also expected to take responsibility for your own deadlines and study management, which helped me later when I went freelancing."

"For my current role in marketing I have to be able to convince, reassure, excite and inform, in different tones for different contexts and audiences. Advertising taught me why, but English taught me how."



For questions about
English
otago.ac.nz/englishlinguistics

