



University
of Otago
ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

Hands-On at Otago Proceedings Whai Wheako i Ōtākou

Business | Health Sciences | Arts and Social Sciences (Humanities) | Sciences

A week of university life on our Dunedin campus. For students in Year 12 or 13.

11-16 January 2026



Canon



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Secondary school students got a taste of university and experienced a week of student life over the summer holidays in January 2026. Students chose their favourite subject and spent the week experimenting and learning with like-minded students from across the country. Take a look at what they got up to.

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Convenors' report – Lisa and Monique

The 2026 programme marked the 36th year of Hands-On at Otago. Formerly Hands-On Science, the programme was adapted to Hands-On at Otago in 2018 and began welcoming students who were also interested in studying Business and Arts subjects – and we haven't looked back!

Once again, students from around the country showed us how eager they were to spend a week of their summer holidays with us here at Otago – with an impressive 1069 applications received for one of 400 highly coveted places.

The itinerary for the week was busy: academic projects filling the mornings, taster activities in the afternoons, and social activities in the evenings – reflecting what real student life can be like down here at Otago.

While it's incredibly hard to choose a highlight, a front-runner for us would have to be the phenomenal lecture given by our colleague, Dr Marea Columbo. Marea reflected on the many versions of herself, encouraging students to be flexible and open to new opportunities. At one point she had the entire audience up on their feet engaged in a vocal showdown. Marea's kōrero was so engaging that she received a standing ovation from all the students and staff in the room.

Part of what makes Hands-On so unique to Otago – and unique as an event – is the collaboration that goes on across the University to create such a successful week. This year, staff and postgraduate students from more than 35 departments and programmes across the University generously dedicated their time and expertise to academic projects and our afternoon taster sessions.

Every year, we're blown away by the calibre of Red Shirts (Otago students in years 2–5 of study or recently graduated), who are entrusted with the pastoral care of our students. Their kindness, empathy and humour put our students at ease, and their leadership throughout the week was crucial to the event running smoothly.

Acknowledgment must also be extended to the team at Te Rangihiroa – Otago's newest residential college – for sharing their beautiful facilities with us, complemented by the enticing food that was prepared and served daily.

Support of this programme comes in many forms, and Canon New Zealand are with us each step of the way. The team from Canon enjoyed attending projects, meeting the Canon Scholarship recipients, and even judging the dance competition. Canon's sponsorship is integral to the Hands-On programme, and their presence on-site during the week shows their genuine dedication to Aotearoa's secondary and tertiary education.

A huge mihi must go out to staff from Schools' Liaison, Unipol, Marketing Advisory, and the technician teams at Otago. As well as a special thank you to Orokonui Ecosanctuary, Tūhura Otago Museum, and The Highlanders for their participation in the week's events.



We would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Rachel Heller, Paul Tupai and Gabriella Hyndman, our camp managers for the week. Their dedication to the welfare, wellbeing and experience of all the students on camp was special to observe – thank you both. Our team of assistant camp managers Porourangi Templeton-Reedy, Tiara Das and Quinn Straker also shone bright this week – thank you for your organisation, leadership, sense of humour and energy.

There is an incredible amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, led by the University of Otago's Events Hub. This project takes a year to organise, and the mahi of this is skilfully led by events specialist, Emma Kane and supported by the wider Events Hub staff.

Our final acknowledgement must go to the incredible cohort of Blue Shirts who represented 203 schools from across Aotearoa. Your willingness to put yourself outside of your comfort zones, be open minded, curious and inclusive – coupled with your enthusiasm and sense of fun – made you an absolute pleasure to be around. Whether your future brings you back to Otago or not, you'll always be an alumni of the Hands-On programme and carry a small piece of Otago with you. We wish you all the best for your future, which will no doubt be as bright and amazing as you are.

Ngā mihi nui,

Lisa Russell and Monique Wright
Co-Convenors, Hands-On at Otago 2026

Red Shirts



Camp Managers 2026:

Gabriella Hyndman
Paul Tupa'i
Rachel Heller

Assistant Camp Managers 2026:

Porourangi Templeton-Reedy
Quinn Straker
Tiara Das

Red Shirts 2026:

Ali Dohan
Ane Tan
Ashley Nicholson
Brodie Tokipounamu Devon
Caitlyn Wickham
Eilish Dalley
Emily Gray
Emma Fotheringham
Eva Lloyd
Genevieve Taua
Grace Lovelock
Isabelle Bates
Jade Neho
Janelle Tinker
Jaxson Tautala-Hanita
Jessica Shoemark
Jonty Robertson
Kaitlyn Payne
Kasey Wehi
Kiana Jalali
Lam Tran
Levi Ellis
Liam Beckham
Lily Heidmann
Malin Taulaga Toa
Mikayla Robson
Nyasha Kawara
Oliver Wong

Payton Yimloy
Penelope Hare
Philip Taua-Ah soon
Raukura Kahukiwa
Rose Tanuvasa V Tutogi
Sarah Cooksley
Semisi Taungapeau
Sophie Sloan
Taylor Gallagher
Tui-Aroha Fransen
Zhao Qing (Ruby) Tan
Zoe McConnell

From the Vice-Chancellor

It was a pleasure to welcome you to the 36th year of Hands-On at Otago here at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka – University of Otago.

This year, Hands-On at Otago attracted 400 students from 203 different schools throughout New Zealand. The calibre of students applying for the programme was extremely high, making for a very tough selection process. The strength of this cohort of young New Zealanders bodes well for a great future when these talented individuals develop into our next generation of leaders.

Once on the University of Otago campus, the students experienced a week of dawn-to-dusk activities that exposed them to the thrill of doing hands-on projects in different academic fields. Science students worked in university laboratories and out in the field. Be it at the lab bench making new molecules, using microscopes to explore materials at the micro-scale, or at Orokonui exploring the ecology and behaviour of important species, the students were guided on their journey of discovery by experts – with the results of their projects reported in true scientific fashion in these proceedings.

Students who selected Business or Humanities projects had the opportunity to present a court case, to make speeches and debate policies, engaged with local businesses to learn about their business strategies, to build stories in innovative ways, or to argue the big questions. Some explored the New Zealand curriculum, and some presented an exciting performance of the skills they had learned in theatre and dance. In addition to their main area of investigation, students joined “tasters” that allowed them to sample a range of different subjects with their peers.

For many students, attending Hands-On at Otago was their first time away from home, and their first opportunity to spend time in a unique, residential university community. We have no doubt that the whole experience will have left the students with fond memories of their time at Otago.

In this age of instant online information and doing-by-viewing virtual experiences, our commitment to maintaining strong hands-on experiences for budding scholars remains as firm as ever. At Otago, we know that students learn best in a supportive social environment, surrounded by highly motivated peers and teachers who are passionate about their subjects of expertise. These experiences not only help them to learn the content of the material they encounter, but also help them to learn about themselves. I am sure that all the students who participated in Hands-On at Otago left the programme with a new sense of what they are capable of achieving.

We rely heavily on the commitment and enthusiasm of University of Otago staff and students to make Hands-On at Otago the success that it is. I want to acknowledge the staff who take the time to guide students through this programme. The care and attention and extra mahi involved is something that I am both grateful for, and extremely proud of.



I want to specifically acknowledge the Events Hub staff and our Event Specialist Emma Kane, our camp managers Rachel Heller, Paul Tupa'i and Gabriella Hyndman, assistant camp managers Porourangi Templeton-Reedy, Tiara Das and Quinn Straker, and the committee convened by Monique Wright and Lisa Russell. Their planning and project development that takes place throughout the year ensures that the week of summer research fun goes off without a hitch. I also acknowledge the supportive teachers, parents and community leaders who are vital to encouraging and allowing their young people to participate. In the end, it is the students themselves who ultimately make this a week to remember. As you will read through their reports, they played their part perfectly again this year. I congratulate you all on another wonderful year.

**Hon Grant Robertson
Vice-Chancellor**

Hands-On at Otago 2026

	SUNDAY 11 JAN	MONDAY 12 JAN	TUESDAY 13 JAN	WEDNESDAY 14 JAN	THURSDAY 15 JAN	FRIDAY 16 JAN
7am		7-8:15am Breakfast Te Rangihiroa College	7-8:15am Breakfast Te Rangihiroa College	7-8:15am Breakfast Te Rangihiroa College	7-8:15am Breakfast Te Rangihiroa College	7-8:15am Breakfast Te Rangihiroa College
8am		8:30am Daily notices Te Rangihiroa College	8:30am Daily notices Te Rangihiroa College	8:30am Daily notices Te Rangihiroa College	8:30am Daily notices Te Rangihiroa College	8:15am Daily notices Te Rangihiroa College
9am		9am-12:30pm Projects	9am-12:30pm Projects	9am-12:30pm Projects	9am-12:30pm Projects	9:30am-12:30pm Report back session and farewell St David Lecture Theatre
10am	10am-3pm Registration Te Rangihiroa College					
11am						
12pm	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College	12-1:30pm Lunch Te Rangihiroa College
1pm		1:30pm Notices	1:30pm Notices	1:30pm Notices	1:30pm Notices	1pm Departure/Pick up
2pm		2-4pm Taster 1	2-4pm Taster 2	2-4pm Taster 3	2-4pm Projects	
3pm						
4pm	4-5pm Orientation Unipol	4-5:30pm Free time/Tour of accommodation	4:15-6pm Active Afternoon Unipol	4:15-6pm Free time/ Tour of accommodation	4:15-6pm Free time/ Tour of accommodation	4:15-6pm Active Afternoon Unipol
5pm	5:30-6:30pm Mihimihi Welcome Te Wao Nui	4:30-5:30pm Māori and Pacific Islands Centre session then dinner for session 5:30-6:15pm St David Lecture Theatre	5:30-7pm Dinner Te Rangihiroa College	5:30-7pm Dinner Te Rangihiroa College	5-6:30pm Dinner Te Rangihiroa College	6:30pm Notices Te Rangihiroa College
6pm	6:30-7:30pm Dinner The Link	5-6:30pm Dinner Te Rangihiroa College				
7pm	7:45-8:15pm Welcome to Hands-On Te Rangihiroa College	6:30-7:15pm Photos Water of the Leith steps 7:30-8:30pm Guest Lecture St David Lecture Theatre	7:30pm How to Otago Te Rangihiroa College	7:30pm Quiz Union Hall	7:30pm How to Otago Te Rangihiroa College	7:30-11pm Big Night Out Te Wao Nui
8pm	8:30pm Floor meetings Te Rangihiroa College	8:45pm Whakawhanaungatanga Te Rangihiroa College				
9pm		9:30pm Floor meetings Te Rangihiroa College	9:30pm Floor meetings Te Rangihiroa College	9:30pm Floor meetings Te Rangihiroa College		
10pm						
	10:30pm Bed time	10:30pm Bed time	10:30pm Bed time	10:30pm Bed time	12am Bed time	

Acknowledgements

The Hands-On at Otago committee would like to thank the following for their generous support of the programme and its students:

And the following service organisations for providing support for students to attend Hands-On at Otago:

- Canon NZ
 - Gravity Events
 - Orbit Travel
 - University of Otago – Te Rangihiroa College
 - University of Otago – AV Support
 - University of Otago – Catering and Events Team
 - University of Otago – Disability Information and Support Office
 - University of Otago – Division of External Engagement
 - University of Otago – Division of Health Sciences
 - University of Otago – Division of Humanities
 - University of Otago – Division of Sciences
 - University of Otago – International Office
 - University of Otago – Māori Health Workforce Development Unit
 - University of Otago – Schools' Liaison Office
 - University of Otago – Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori
 - University of Otago – Otago Business School
 - University of Otago – Pacific Islands Centre
 - University of Otago – Te Huka Mātauraka
 - University of Otago – Va'a o Tautai – Centre for Pacific Health
 - University of Otago – Residential Colleges
 - University of Otago – Unipol Recreation Services
 - University of Otago – Uniprint

- Rotary
 - Lions Club
 - STAR Funding

Group photos were taken by the University of Otago photographer, Dave Bull.



Orientation

As the first event at Hands-On, after a day of travelling for many, orientation was a chance for our taura to get energised for the week. We had a fun fashion challenge that allowed everyone to mix and mingle and begin to get comfortable with one another. It was a great opportunity to come together and have some fun – a taste of the exciting week ahead!

Māori and Pacific Islands Centres

The Māori and Pacific Islands Centres session was a chance for Blue Shirts of Māori and Pacific Island descent to hear what dedicated support systems are in place at the University. The session started with entertaining icebreakers, including a whole group riff off, followed by talks from representatives from both centres, and a Red Shirt interview panel session highlighting personal experiences of support for Māori and Pasifika students. Tours of both the Māori and Pacific Islands Centres were given after the session, followed by some kai.

Residential college tours

Our Blue Shirts were welcomed into many of Otago's residential colleges near campus, including Arana, Aquinas, St Margaret's, Carrington and Knox. Each college has a different energy, but they all showcased their exceptional services for caring for their students. We really appreciate the college leaders taking the time to show us around their whare.

Quiz night

Both cohorts had an absolute blast at the quiz night held in the Union Hall. Hosted by the Red Shirts, the Blue Shirts were quizzed on University of Otago trivia, general knowledge, fun facts about the Red Shirts, music and more. Arguably, all teams came out victorious as their baskets of knowledge were filled, and taura were able to work together, meet new people and have fun!

How to Otago

After a busy start to the week, How to Otago was a great chance for the Blue Shirts to sit down with the Red Shirts, Schools' Liaison, divisional marketing advisers, and the Scholarships team to ask all their burning questions about life at Otago. The Red Shirts split themselves into Otago's main subject areas, based on their own academic backgrounds, giving Blue Shirts a chance to talk to people who have been through the course of study they're most interested in pursuing. Red Shirts shared their university insights, hoping to demystify the experience for the Blue Shirts as they begin thinking about their plans after high school. Thanks to the Blue Shirts for being so enthusiastic and full of excitement and questions. It really was a wonderful evening to chat and connect. We hope that you all felt as energised as we did afterwards, and you enjoyed the more relaxed evening after a few busy days!



Guest lecture

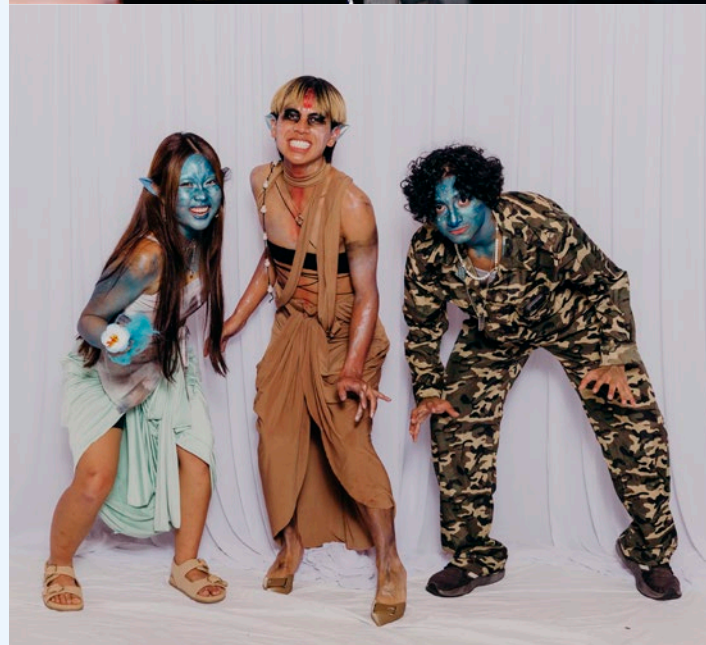
Dr Marea Colombo is a senior teaching fellow in the Department of Psychology.

She has worked in the areas of cultural psychology and social psychology, investigating how our culture impacts our social engagement, learning and thinking. Marea has also pioneered opt-in psychology labs for Māori and Pacific students, offering culturally informed teaching for our first-year students.

In Marea's inspirational guest lecture, she shared with us the many different versions of herself – student, academic, parent, dive-master and award-winning performer (just to name a few)! Marea's presentation allowed us to reflect on the different versions of ourselves and to look at the different paths we can take in our lives. Her key messages – to be curious and flexible, to listen to each other, to be silly and present, and the importance of connection – resonated loudly with all members of the audience. The lively crowd renditions of "you can't ride in my big red wagon!" certainly resonated loudly as well! We are enormously grateful to Marea for her mahi, time, energy and presence at the 2026 Hands-On at Otago guest lecture.



The Big Night Out

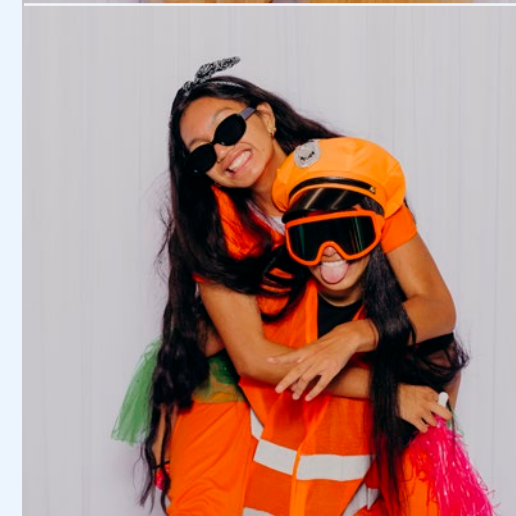


The 2026 Hands-On at Otago Big Night Out was a programme highlight! This year's theme – "Out of This World" – truly came to life. The Otago Business School was transformed with colourful, imaginative decorations – from soaring astronauts, aliens, planets and stars to drifting jellyfish and even an Alice in Wonderland tea party, complete with floating playing cards.

Everyone arrived buzzing and ready to celebrate the end of an unforgettable week at an event that truly lived up to its theme. The night was filled with energetic dancing, dazzling outfits, and a party

atmosphere that didn't slow down. Upstairs, the quiet space offered a more relaxed vibe, with plenty of conversation, snacks and board games for everyone to enjoy. It was the perfect way to wrap up the Hands-On at Otago experience.

A big congratulations to the dance competition winners, and thanks to the judges for their time and enthusiasm. We'd also like to thank the team at Gravity Events, the University of Otago Events team, the Red Shirts and of course, all the Blue Shirts for bringing the energy and making the night so memorable.



Taster acknowledgement

Tasters are an important part of the Hands-On programme, inspiring curiosity and allowing students to experience a range of different subject areas. We extend a huge thank you to our Hands-On Taster leaders and their teams for their time, energy and enthusiasm in delivering this year's programme.

TASTER	TASTER LEADERS
Chemistry	David McMorran
Solar Cells and Microplastics	Keith Gordon
Dentistry	Carolina Loch
Entrepreneurship (Start-Up Dunedin)	Rachel Butler
Genetics	Karen Knapp
A View From Afar	Ben Varkalis
Highlanders	Samantha McAuley
History	Claire Macindoe
Hocken Collections	Alexander Ritchie
Law	Ben Nevell
Management/International Business	Virginia Cathro
Marine Science	Hannah Drury
Medical Laboratory Science	Olivia Moreton
Orokonui Ecosanctuary	Taylor Davies-Colley
Pharmacy	Greg Walker
Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences	Neil Anderson
Physics	Emma Douma
Physiology	Mady Hintz
Physiotherapy	Donna Smith
Politics	Brock Anderson
Psychology	Becky Marshall
Theatre and Dance	Sofia Kalogeropoulou
Tourism	Anna Carr
Tūhura Otago Museum	Christine Weirda
Va'a O Tautai	Siloma Faioso and Grettel Williams
Zebra Fish	Megan Leask



Active afternoon

Active afternoon was all about getting involved, trying something new and experiencing what Unipol has to offer.

Blue Shirts had the opportunity to make their way around a variety of activities, from upbeat group fitness like Jump Jam to casual games across a range of sports. A big thank you to our Blue Shirts for bringing such great energy and enthusiasm. We hope the session offered a great introduction to the range of facilities available to you.

A special thanks also to the Unipol staff and Red Shirts whose support made the sessions run so smoothly.



Accounting

Costing: Art or science?

We had a week-long discussion around the concept of “cost” – how it is constructed within a framework of T-accounts to reflect an accountant’s understanding of the relevant underlying economic process of interest. This was illustrated by a visit to Speight’s Brewery where the particular costing procedure known as “process costing” was illustrated by the various stages required to brew beer.

Students were given a problem that required understanding how deciding a product mix reflects the accountant’s possible approaches to costing. Students were nudged to ask the right questions rather than trying to find a unique, “right” solution. After a break, students were shown a series of videos that explained how counting and even writing evolved from a physical double-entry bookkeeping based on clay tokens.

Students were given a second case that required understanding how transferring costs across managers within a single company affects the measurement of profits. After the break, they were shown how T-accounts are designed to track costs within economic processes.

Process costing was discussed in preparation of the students visiting the Speight’s Brewery. During that visit, they were nudged to relate the physical brewing process with the costing tracking process built into the accounting information system.

Students were challenged to solve basic arithmetic problems to understand how accounting numbers are supposed to be interpreted. After the break, they were given a final case that required understanding budget variances as a costing technique.



Anatomy

This project provided students with an immersive, hands-on introduction to anatomy and microscopy, taking them on a journey from the macroscopic structure of the knee to the nanoscopic world of cells. Across four days, students explored how structure underpins function in both health and disease, while gaining direct experience with techniques used in anatomical education and biomedical research.

The week began in the Anatomy Department, where students were introduced to the body donor programme and the ethical principles guiding the use of human cadavers in teaching and research. A scavenger hunt through the Anatomy Museum encouraged active learning and curiosity. Students then explored the structure and function of the knee using models, bones and plastinated specimens, before constructing a mechanical knee model and dissecting a deer knee joint to compare bipedal and quadrupedal anatomy.

On day 2, students entered the microworld of histology, embedding, sectioning and staining tissue samples. They prepared and examined haematoxylin and eosin-stained sections of a rat knee joint, learning to identify bone, cartilage, ligaments and muscle under the light microscope.

Day 3 took students even deeper into the nanoworld at Microscopy Otago, where they used transmission and scanning electron microscopes to visualise cellular ultrastructure and 3-D tissue surfaces. The day concluded with a human knee dissection, linking microscopic observations back to real human anatomy.

The final day focused on living anatomy, with students interpreting real-time ultrasound images of their own knees and creatively consolidating their learning through anatomical body painting.



Archaeology

Hands-On Archaeology was all about using material remains to investigate and tell stories about the human past. Over this week, we explored material culture, faunal remains and surveying techniques, and went on our fieldwork to survey midden and pā sites.

Day 1: Investigating material culture

On day 1 we used historical artefacts, pottery and stone tools to understand that there are different ways to classify and interpret material culture. How can we use these artefacts to tell stories? We explored their function, their age, where they came from and how they were made.

We then got "Hands-On" with experimental archaeology by making and using our own stone tools. Archaeologists use experiments to replicate how people made different types of stone tools and work out what they were used for.

Day 2: Focus on fauna

The second day we began by sorting the faunal remains of three different middens into different species: moa, sea mammal, bird, fish and shellfish. We then suggested a possible age for the sites and investigated how people's diets have changed over time, with large moa bones usually found in early sites, and a later focus on fish and shellfish. Then we went to Tūhura Otago Museum to explore how animal remains are incorporated into material culture, with a special guided tour of the Tangata Whenua gallery by Curator Māori Gerard O'Regan.

Day 3: Archaeological field methods

On day 3 we headed outside to learn how archaeologists map and record sites. This involved setting up excavation squares and mapping artefacts within them, as well as learning how to read and draw stratigraphy (the different soil layers present within a site). This contextual information is really important when it comes to interpreting a site.

Day 4: Field trip to Doctors Point and Huriawa Pā

We headed to Doctors Point to undertake an archaeological survey to relocate two middens, which were on the foreshore and consisted of shellfish, fish and bird bones. Using our new skills, we could work out roughly how old the sites were, and the types of activities that people were doing. As the sites are suffering from coastal erosion and rabbit disturbance, we also discussed issues of cultural heritage management.

We then visited Huriawa Pā at Karitane. This is a very different type of site, and we tried to identify the different terraces and fortifications present, as well as learn about the oral traditions of this significant pā site.



Arts and Social Sciences

This was the first year the Humanities Division explored the opportunity to develop a themed project under the umbrella of Arts and Social Sciences, bringing together several programmes to investigate a historical mystery through different disciplinary perspectives.

"Murder in the Mist" centred on the unresolved events surrounding Alessandro Malaspina's 1793 expedition to Doubtful Sound. The project captured the imagination of students while creating a shared platform for teaching and exploration across Politics, Languages and Cultures, Archaeology, Criminology, Religious Studies and Geography.

Each day was led by a different programme, offering distinct perspectives, analytical approaches and insights into human behaviour. Together, these sessions explored how people in the 1790s understood the world and contrasted their ways of thinking with those of the twenty-first century. While the world has changed significantly, many beliefs, assumptions and attitudes that shaped events at the time remain recognisable today.

From the outset, students were eager to identify a clear answer to the central question of who had murdered whom. As the project progressed, however, they began to understand that the story was far more complex. Distinguishing fact from superstition, and examining the cultural and sociological forces that shaped how events were recorded, revealed how easily narratives can be influenced or controlled. For many, this process proved to be a genuine eye-opener.

On the whole, students found the project multidimensional and fascinating, and in the end, they felt they needed more time to develop and present what they experienced.



Biochemistry

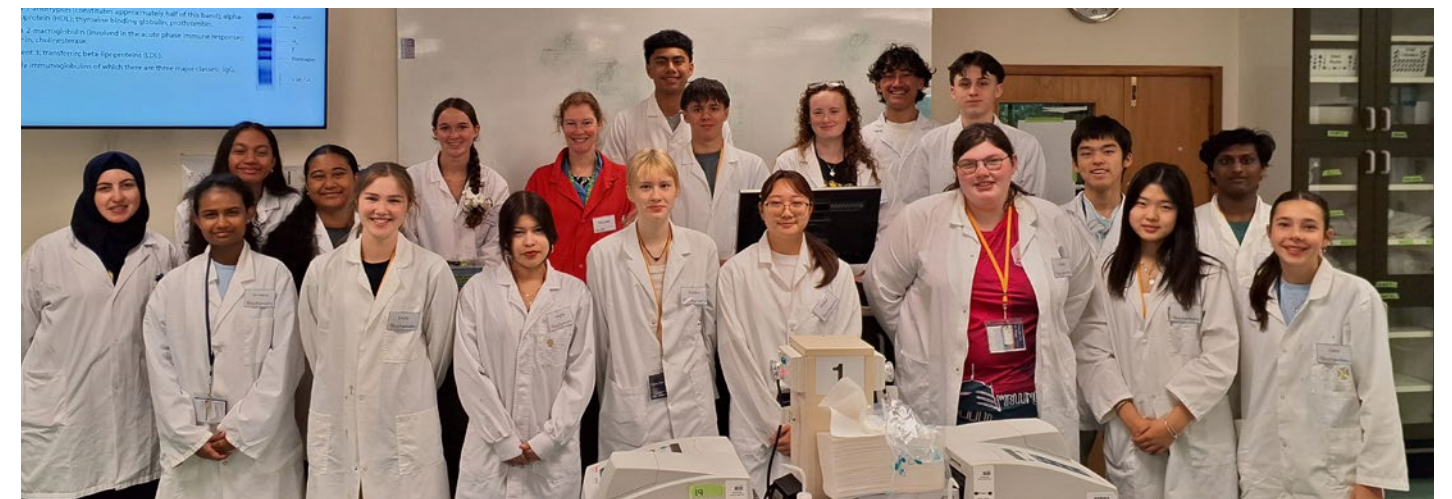
During the Hands-On Biochemistry project, students spent a week exploring what biochemistry looks like beyond the classroom through a series of practical, hands-on experiments. The project introduced students to the molecules that underpin life and showed how biochemists study everything from plant biology to human metabolism.

Early in the week, students developed core laboratory skills, including accurate pipetting and safe handling of biological samples. They used *Agrobacterium* to introduce new genes into plant leaves and later observed the results of this genetic modification. Students also explored molecular biology techniques by cutting DNA with restriction enzymes and separating DNA and proteins using gel electrophoresis, allowing them to visualise molecules that are normally invisible to the naked eye.

The second half of the week focused on metabolism and human biochemistry. Students measured lactate levels in food samples, and in their own blood before and after exercise, gaining insight into how the body produces energy during physical activity. They also measured blood glucose and triglyceride levels, linking biochemical data to real-world health and physiology.

Throughout the week, students were encouraged to think like scientists by asking questions, interpreting results, and designing a small experiment based on their own interests.

Overall, the Biochemistry project gave students a realistic and engaging insight into university-level science and the diverse questions biochemists seek to answer.



Business

We spent an exciting week immersed in the Hands-On Business project, focusing on understanding the challenges of business considering product development, markets and economies, production, business models and strategy through a lens of ice cream.

Our dynamic week involved business pitching, considering product innovations and exploring real-world business realities. We visited Start Up Otago and a couple of businesses as a field trip. We ate ice cream. We looked at decision making, teamwork and leading organisations. Guest speakers from Business South spoke to us about how they partner with organisations to drive performance, highlighting iconic local businesses in their industries.

Our week of activities involved working collaboratively, having fun and considering how studying business might lead to interesting careers and future opportunities. We made new friends and enjoyed seeing what Dunedin has to offer, while exploring what it might be like to study business at the University of Otago.



Education

Education is founded on relationships: teacher to student, student to student, and student to self. In the Hands-On Education programme, we covered a diverse range of curriculum areas where teachers designed, developed and implemented programmes to foster lifelong, future-focused learning. This was a valuable opportunity for students to explore the curriculum from early childhood through primary and into secondary.

On Monday, students participated in activities centered around hauora and physical education, focusing on physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing, as well as connections to people and places through their pepeha. Tuesday was spent in the food technology room, where students used edible glitter, flavourings and personal moulds for chocolate making, while discussing the technological design process.

Wednesday focused on science, exploring the Material World through "rainbows in a beaker" with acids and bases, the Physical World by testing heat transfer, the Living World through the science of sound and vision, and Planet Earth and Beyond with UV beads. On Thursday, our final day, we engaged with the visual arts, experimenting with fingerpainting and puff paint before concluding the programme by creating original art in the style of Banksy.



Environmental Management

Our students joined School of Geography, Te Iho Whenua staff for the week, assessing the environmental health of the university campus through the lens of hauora. We assessed the physical, social and environmental health of Ōtepoti over the four days using the university campus, North Dunedin and the Ōwheo/Water of Leith as main case studies.

Students started the week by taking a walking tour of North Dunedin to look at the walkability and accessibility of the area, taking note of urban planning features that increase amenity value of the student quarter. Some of these included green spaces, heritage protection and recreational areas.

The next day we switched focus to Ōwheo/Water of Leith, where we conducted stream health assessments alongside E. coli water sampling. Students were able use equipment in the river and even dye it green to observe the flow pathways. Our experience in the river allowed us to assess its environmental health based on characteristics including invertebrate diversity, visual clarity and temperature, as well as threats to human health through E. coli.

Over the last two days we pivoted to air quality and movement. We recorded carbon dioxide and particulate matter 10 levels in both indoor and outdoor areas, as well as near traffic and green spaces. We found that everything was within a healthy range, especially the university green spaces which also happen to offer the perfect combination of physical, social and environmental health. Overall, we rated the campus highly for capturing all aspects of hauora!



Health Sciences First Year

This year we ran the first ever Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) Hands-On project. Students were introduced to the broad variety of scientific disciplines that make up health sciences, with every day different.

Our project centered on a simulated outbreak of bacterial meningitis.

On day 1 our students were given epidemiology clues to puzzle-out what disease they would be working on throughout the week. Many students correctly guessed we would be working on meningitis – ka rawe koutou! We then explored how brain anatomy, inflammation of the meninges, and increased brain pressure contribute to the severity of meningitis as a disease. Students had fun recreating the meninges around a “brain” (boiled egg) using household items, and most survived our egg-drop challenge.

On day 2 students learned some basic lab skills, creating colourful bookmarks with pipettes. We toured the PC3 lab in the Microbiology building, learning how infectious organisms are safely handled in research. The view from nine storeys up was spectacular too! Back in the lab, students investigated how the immune system and vaccines work, using their new skills to measure antibody levels and determine the immune status of people linked to the outbreak.

Day 3 started with some chemistry. Students tested whether three chemicals preferred to be dissolved in water or an organic solvent. We linked these results to chemical structures and looked at how similar structures in antibiotics influence how easily these drugs cross the blood-brain barrier. Day 3 ended with students choosing antibiotics to grow bacteria with, to assess whether the bacteria were resistant to any common meningitis treatments.

On our final day students examined the results of their antibiotic experiments, with mixed success among the group. Some correctly identified the antibiotic the bacteria were resistant to, while others accidentally contaminated their entire plates. Oh well, that’s the fun of science! For their final task our students learned to use microscopes, viewing cell structures that create barriers in our body. Students created cheek cell slides and really enjoyed seeing their own cells up close – a great way to end the week.

Overall, students had a fantastic week learning about all the interconnected branches of health sciences. Everyone had a different opinion on which activities were the most fun and interesting – there was something for everyone.



Law

On Monday we went to a police station, where we saw the holding cells and interview rooms. The experience was very exciting but also intimidating. Outside the station we also did a little role-play around a robbery, and the robbers were “arrested” and interviewed by the police.

When we got back to our seminar room we had a few discussions around how morals affect lawyers’ conduct, and the legal ethics and responsibilities lawyers must uphold, as people who trust them are often marginalised or in distress.

Tuesday was a day well spent, as we got to go to the Dunedin District Court and see how a court trial unfolds. It was an amazing experience to be able to talk to the judge and ask questions. This experience also made the group closer and helped us connect with each other over the following days.

After the court visit, we discussed the cases that we witnessed and what stood out, what we thought was questionable, and what we thought was reasonable. We also understood that we weren’t just witnessing cases but were getting to see the people involved in them. This helped us understand the true importance of law – to help people and to seek justice for all.

On Wednesday, we got the chance to go around the faculty of law where Ben showed us the lecture halls, libraries, and the clubs and societies centre. This was really helpful as we felt what it is truly like to be a law student and had many conversations about what studying law is all about. We then had a very ethical debate about the outcome of two cases, *R v Dudley & Stephens* (a shipwreck case) and *Re A (Children)* a case about whether killing a conjoined twin to save the other twin would be lawful? It was an amazing day that gave us the foundation of what it is to be a law student in Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and also being a part of a community where we may argue but ultimately still respect each other.

On Thursday, our final day, we began with mock trials based on our learning from the previous days, this included the arrest we constructed outside the police station. We ran through the mock trials as though we were either prosecution or defence lawyers, analysing the situation as though we had law degrees of our own. Questioning witnesses and making legal submissions to the judge. We shared our lunch with some other law professors in the faculty. We had the opportunity to talk about life, law and their experiences in Otago. After lunch, instead of tasters we began to create a film based on our entire experience of the law hands on project to show to others students. We filmed an arrest, a mock trial and a sentencing all like we had seen and experienced in the previous days, bringing our incredible experience of laws at hands on to an end.



Marine Science

Over the week, students on the Hands-On Marine Science project were introduced to fundamental methods for investigating species throughout the food web and their connections to the environment of Otago Harbour.

On the first day, students became familiar with our facilities through an in-depth tour of the Portobello Marine Laboratory, learning about opportunities for undergraduate study and current research from departmental postgraduates and staff. They were also briefed on local species, especially through interactive exploration of our touch tanks.

On day two, students collected data at three sites in the harbour using our largest vessel, the R/V Polaris II. Students deployed nets to sample plankton communities, performed seabirds counts, set up baited cameras to film underwater predators, and measured various physical aspects of the marine environment.

On day three, students quantified biodiversity in their plankton samples through detailed inspection under microscopes. They became familiar with common plankton, the process of identifying specimens using taxonomic guides, and approaches for accurate subsampling of highly abundant communities.

On day four, students completed analyses of plankton and bird biodiversity, which they visualised as figures using scatterplots, line charts and bar graphs. Finally, students engaged in a comparison and discussion of trends in plankton and seabird diversity across the three study sites, considering environmental and human influences that could explain the patterns they uncovered.

In all, students gained hands-on exposure to the lifecycle of a marine science study, learning methodology for collecting, analysing and reporting ecological data in our salty backyard.



Marketing

Marketing is the only “outward facing” business discipline. While it has the capacity to create great benefits for society, it can also do great harm. This project covered several areas over the four days.

The first day covered two main areas: identifying consumer needs and wants, and communicating with consumers. In the first exercise we looked at chocolate and how it was marketed to completely different consumers in completely different ways according to what the chocolate “did” for them. In communicating needs and wants we looked at the development of smart phone apps and the application of artificial intelligence.

On day two, we went to Wal’s in Mosgiel, which is one of the most successful local leisure destinations. On the tour the students learned how Wal’s works as a “destination” to attract people to it.

The third day we spent considering Wal’s problem. While Wal’s is a popular family destination, its limited offerings for teenagers may reduce a family’s long-term engagement as children grow and their interests shift. Several solutions, including axe throwing, were developed by the groups to a “service blueprint” stage and presented to the leaders as a sales pitch.

The last day involved another field trip, to Gardens New World. The groups were told that they had to create a new comb-honey-based product that would address a specific consumer need and market. Some interesting ideas were developed!



Media, Film and Communication

In the Media, Film and Communication (MFCO) programme, students engaged in a variety of storytelling activities through video production, social media and news broadcasting. The main project was to create a three-minute video based on their experiences at Hands-on at Otago. Throughout the week, they captured footage during activities including a TV studio session, a radio news reading, and a visit to the Otago Daily Times. Students edited their footage on Thursday, with the final videos showcased at the Friday report-back session.

In addition, a social media workshop involved analysing how influencers create engaging content. Students then collaborated to produce updates about their experiences for the programme’s Facebook page. In news writing and radio broadcasting sessions, students explored journalism’s role in shaping public perception and the ethical responsibilities of accurate reporting. Each student wrote a radio news story covering local and international news, sports and weather, and went on air to read it live on RadioOne. During their visit to the Otago Daily Times, they filmed the newspaper production process and interviewed the chief reporter and quality control manager. They also shot a short drama sequence in the university’s TV studio.

Throughout the week, students were immersed in the scholarly and creative dimensions of university-level media studies. They engaged with studio cameras, editing suites and audio tools to explore how meaning is constructed through media. Under the guidance of academic staff and senior undergraduate MFCO students, they explored the creative possibilities of media production in collaboration with their group members, experimenting with narrative structure and visual style. The programme emphasised that media practice must be integral to critical analysis as each creative decision became an opportunity to reflect on broader debates about journalism, representation and the media’s role in public life.



Microbiology

The Microbiology course demonstrated how microorganisms influence our daily life, health and environment. Across the four days, we investigated the presence of microbes, their transmission, identification methods and prevention methods.

On day one we collected samples from different sites. First, environmental sampling. Using swabs we sampled various surfaces from inside the lab and outdoors in the environment. (Many of us chose to sample river water.) These samples were put into the lab incubator at 25 degrees to allow our cultures to grow. A food contamination experiment was also conducted on infected cupcakes. We took multiple samples of the cupcakes and allowed these to incubate overnight also, in order to identify the unknown bacteria. We also collected samples from our noses, investigating the potential presence of *Staphylococcus aureus*. Finally, we took samples of *Staphylococcus epidermidis* from our foreheads and forearms using RODAC agar plates.

Day two involved continuing the previous day's experiments. The samples were incubated overnight, which allowed us to observe the microbes present in the environment. We then conducted microbe identification on our samples using gram stains to be able to observe the microbe cultures under the microscope. Lastly, we streaked the enrichment broth from our nose samples onto mannitol salt agar plates.

Day three involved finally concluding the nose swab tests: the mannitol salt agars either turned yellow or remained pink. A change in colour indicated the presence of *Staphylococcus aureus* as it fermented the salt, removing the colour. We conducted an antibiotic testing by spreading a sample of bacteria onto agar and placing disks soaked in antibiotics. Furthermore, we tested the effectiveness of hand washing using different methods: sanitiser, regular soap, cold water and antibacterial soap. Next, we investigated the immune system, using blood smears to analyse different types of white blood cells using a microscope. Finally, we had guest speakers Dr Bridget Watson and Amelia Roy talk about their experience of their studies here in Otago.

After analysing the results of the hand washing test and hand shake test, we were quite concerned and decided that washing our hands was quite crucial to avoiding bacterial spread. The tests showed that hand sanitiser was most effective in eliminating microbes, but it also eliminated all the good bacteria, putting its efficacy into question. Secondly, we examined the results of the antibiotic test, and found that bacteria were most susceptible to ciprofloxacin. We concluded the substantive parts of the project with a small talk from Judith about the structure of the potential degrees in microbiology.

Our experience reinforced the idea that "what can't be seen matters". Microorganisms play an important part in health and environmental interactions. Microbiology provides the tools to detect, classify and manage those impacts. The week's investigations highlighted why hygiene, food safety and evidence-based medical decisions are essential. So make sure to wash your hands!



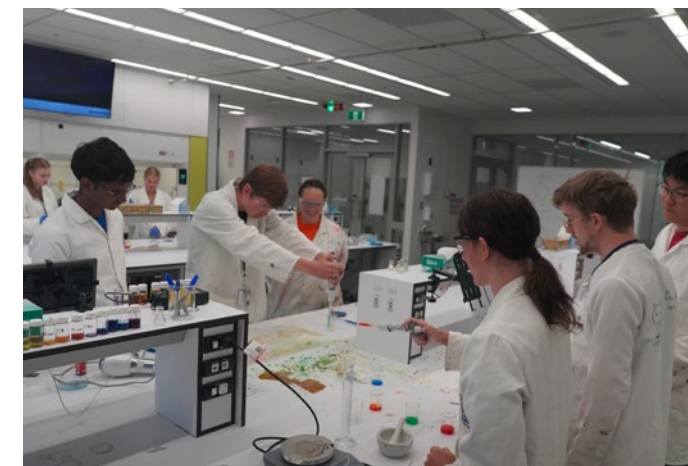
Nanochemistry

Nanochemistry is the study of chemistry at the nanoscale, in which small changes in size and shape can have a large impact on the observed properties. In this project, students explored key concepts through experiments and computational modelling centred on silver. In a side experiment, the students also functionalised some silica nanoparticles as an example of how surface chemistry can be manipulated.

Bulk silver was made in two different ways as an example of everyday silver. Silver fractals were formed by using an electric current to reduce silver ions to solid silver, producing silver snowflakes. Students also created silver mirrors inside sample vials using the aldehyde test whereby silver ions were reduced by glucose.

The focus then shifted to silver at the nanoscale. Here the students were able to produce silver rainbows by changing the size of the suspended silver nanoprisms. To complement this, a computational modelling exercise was completed enabling them to gain an appreciation for how the different nanoparticle sizes change the observed suspension colour. Here, we also introduced the idea that some surfaces/nanoparticles are more reactive than others. This was verified using UV-vis spectroscopy in which the students were able to complete a catalysis experiment comparing the rate of reaction of their smallest and largest nanoprisms.

In a final activity, students functionalised silica nanoparticles with long hydrocarbon chains to make super-hydrophobic paper. This involved several new chemistry techniques, including a reflux and vacuum filtration. The week concluded with a chemistry "magic" show featuring liquid nitrogen and flames.



Natural Products Chemistry

Chemistry is important for all our lives, but it is also highly creative and often like a detective story, where the aim is to solve the mystery of what the molecule is. A big part of chemical research involves finding and making new molecules with useful properties. Inspiration for this can come from nature, and natural products chemistry is an area in which chemists seek out interesting molecules from natural sources such as plants and microbes.

The Chemistry project group spent the week exploring natural products chemistry using caffeine as a case study.

On Monday we extracted caffeine from green tea, coffee and energy drinks. Samples of the chosen drink were treated with a base to increase their pH and then the caffeine was extracted into the organic solvent dichloromethane. Separation of the water and dichloromethane solutions and boiling of the solvent gave pure caffeine.

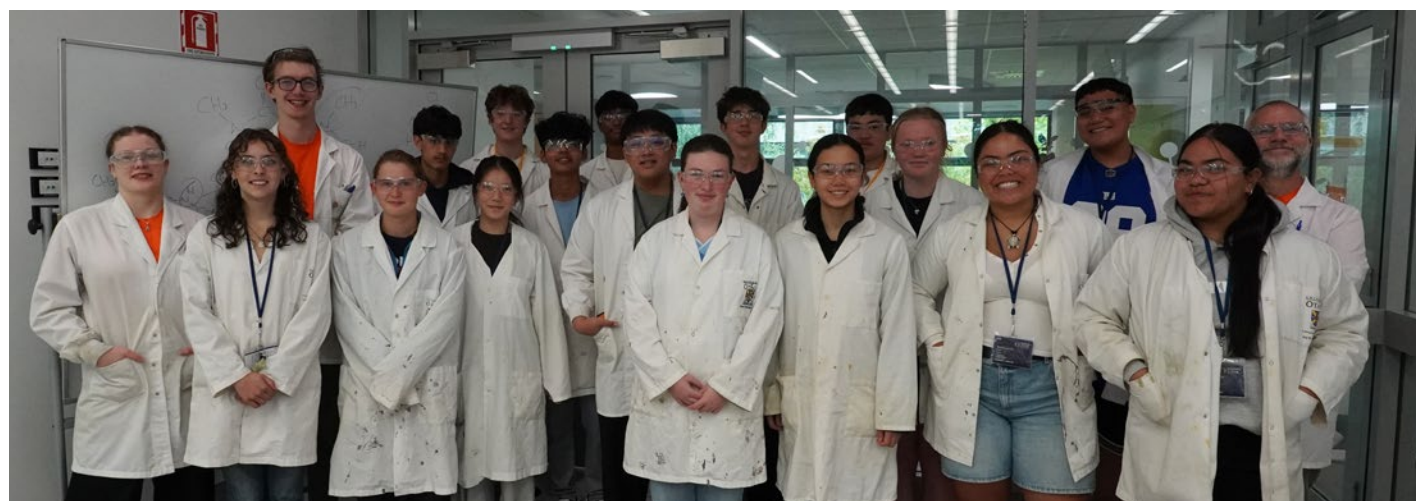
On Tuesday we synthesised caffeine from either theobromine or theophylline using organic chemistry methods.

On Wednesday we used modern, very expensive machines, including a nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer, an infrared spectrometer and an electrospray mass spectrometer, to check that what we made really was caffeine.

On Thursday we looked at all the data from the experiments we had done on Wednesday to work out how well our reactions to make caffeine had gone.

We finished the week with the project leaders setting us on fire!

By the end of the week we had learned a lot more about what doing chemistry is really like.



Pharmacology and Toxicology

We ran three Pharmacology and Toxicology experiments this week. Firstly, we used liquid nitrogen to freeze leaves from native manuka, tarata and harakeke plants to grind them into a powder, and placed them into a solution of dimethyl sulfoxide. After that, we centrifuged the solutions, so we were then able to dilute them. Next, we tested our extracts on cancer cell cultures to discover whether they had the ability to kill cancer cells. We found out that they did not have these properties, so we then ran further tests to see if they had any alternative properties, such as antioxidants or lipids, that could be used to supplement health.

For our next experiment we collected water samples from the Water of Leith, Kaikorai Stream, Lindsay Creek and a control sample of distilled water. We tested sea monkey survival, nitrates, nitrites and pH to distinguish between the samples. When making our judgments we had to consider the origin of the water, as we knew that the Leith could be more toxic than rural streams. Surprisingly, most groups could not guess the samples correctly. The nitrite test had the most conclusive results.

Our last experiment was to see what effect caffeine would have on our cognitive abilities by doing multiple benchmark tests before and after consuming caffeine. The tests included reaction, memory, mental focus, tremor, heart rate and blood pressure. We found that we performed better before consuming caffeine compared to after consuming caffeine. Within this experiment we had half of the group consume decaf without being informed. This showcased the placebo effect in which individuals' actions changed without receiving the drug (caffeine).



Pharmacy

Over four days, students were immersed in the diverse practice of pharmacy through a series of interactive, hands-on learning experiences. The programme introduced key professional, clinical and scientific aspects of the discipline, including extemporaneous and aseptic dispensing, pharmacy communication, drug delivery systems, molecular modelling for drug design and pharmaceutical quality control.

On Monday, students received an overview of the multifaceted roles of pharmacists across healthcare, industry and society. This was followed by a practical session in extemporaneous dispensing, where they compounded products such as coloured and scented aqueous cream, flavoured lip balm and zinc-based sunscreen. Students were also introduced to the legal requirements of prescription writing and product labelling.

Tuesday focused on clinical communication and assessment skills, including an introduction to objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs). Students then participated in a pharmacy-themed “escape room” challenge, working in teams to solve puzzles and apply their knowledge.

An “Amazing Race” style activity further reinforced their practical learning.

On Wednesday, students gained experience in aseptic dispensing, preparing a contamination-free mock chemotherapy IV bag. The day concluded with an exploration of targeted drug delivery using omeprazole as a case study.

Thursday centered on molecular stereochemistry, with students using ball-and-stick models to examine how ibuprofen exists in two opposite forms and why that geometry matters for its medicinal properties. A sensory demonstration using caraway and spearmint illustrated real-world implications of chirality. The programme concluded with laboratory investigations of different paracetamol formulations using physical testing and microscopy.

Overall, the experience broadened students' understanding of pharmacy, challenged their preconceptions, and highlighted the profession's scientific, clinical and creative dimensions.



Physics

Monday: Eggs and the Sun

For the first day, Jono Squire, a lecturer at the University of Otago, spoke about the sun and its effects on Earth. We then competed to build the safest landing craft for an egg – Shelly landed safely in the “Mother Hen”.

Tuesday: Lightning

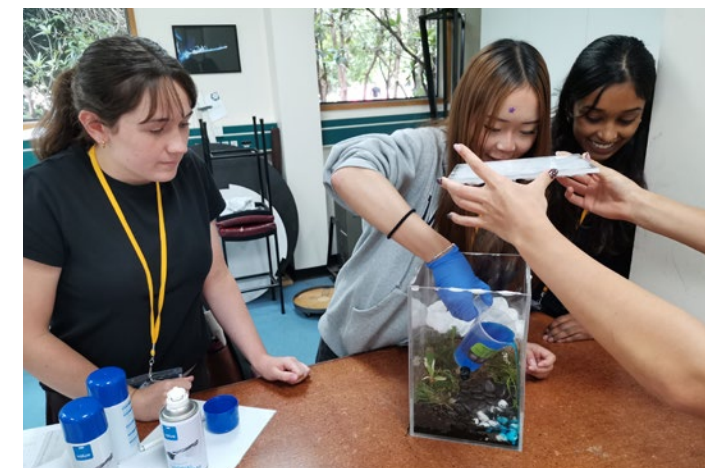
We had a lecture from Craig Roger who taught us about very low frequency (VLF) radio waves that carry information about lightning from all corners of the Earth.

Wednesday: Our atmosphere

Greenhouse gases help regulate global temperatures so that we can live in a hospitable environment. We conducted an experiment that demonstrated this at a much smaller scale.

Thursday: Lightning and quantum optics

For our final day, we went out into the field and gathered data on the VLF radio waves emitted by active thunderstorms. We were then given a tour of the main laboratories where research is currently being conducted. This gave us the opportunity to learn more about where physics can take us.



Physiology

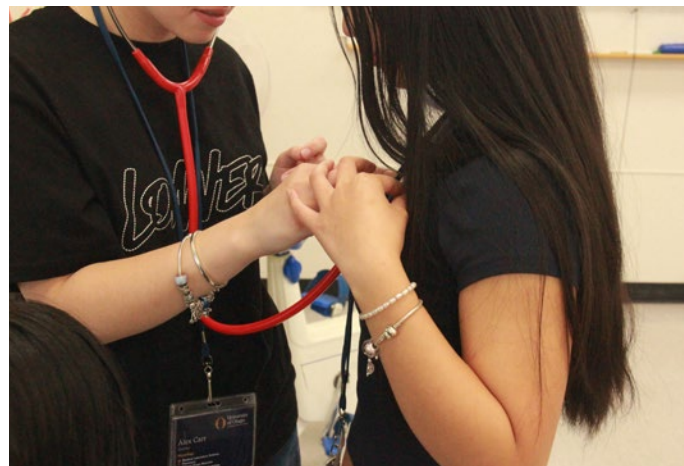
Physiology is about understanding how the body works. This project aimed to highlight cool ways to explain this science.

Day one was centred around our senses, and how we experience the world. Beginning with our vision, we completed colour blindness tests and found our blind spots. We also measured how long it takes the brain to register what we see. We then looked at our vestibular system, which senses head movement and helps with balance, using a spinning chair.

Day two focused on how we move. We used electromyography (EMG) to measure our hand muscles' bioelectricity and sent a small electrical pulse to the ulnar nerve in our elbows to make our hands twitch. From this, we could estimate how fast our nerve signals travel. We also tested the Achilles reflex and compared its duration compared to a voluntary movement.

Day three covered the heart and lungs. We recorded the heart's electrical signals and sounds, then used them to figure out how long the heart spends contracting and relaxing, and how exercise changes it. We also experimented with different breathing patterns to see whether experiencing high carbon dioxide or low oxygen levels drive us to breathe after a breath hold.

Day four explored how we perceive flavour. We learned how sweet and sour tastes are detected differently and how taste can adapt or be suppressed. We also explored how temperature and smell impact flavour. Finally, using prism goggles, we saw how quickly the brain creates new neural connections, adjusting our movements to a distorted visual field.



Politics

In the Hands-On Politics project, we asked the question "What makes for a just society?". To answer this question, we set out to design what we believed to be a just society on a brand-new planet – Gaia.

To envision this society, we considered concepts such as democracy, welfare, economics, pensions, the job market and culture, and tried our best to design it from behind a "veil of ignorance". Each day, our group was divided into committees that were tasked with deciding on these aspects for our new society. This sometimes meant we had contentious decisions to make, but this was the system we had to work with. On Thursday, our society was complete, and we ran a simulation in which we were each given a profile outlining who we are in our new society. Some of us relied on state intervention to live a good life, while others were subject to high taxation due to the wealth they had brought from Earth. We came to realise that while our new society had strict laws, we had no police force on our new planet, meaning that our society quickly fell into the hands of vigilante justice. We also forgot to include provisions relating to labour laws, meaning some people in our new society were often put to work at a very young age.

Overall, our new society was mostly fair and just! The "veil of ignorance" simulation was an engaging way to explore the foundations of a just society. By detaching us from our personal identities, it forced us to design a system that remains fair regardless of the life we might inherit.



Psychology

In the Psychology project for 2026, students learned about multiple different areas of psychology and how broad the subject can be.

Monday started with an immersive tour of the Department of Psychology. Researchers from five distinct labs guided students through their facilities, offering insights into their current projects – ranging from the complexities of cultural psychology to a first-hand look at the hippocampus of a rat.

Tuesday focused on neuropsychology and personality. In the morning, students learned how the brain has two halves with different functions, including the fact that the right hemisphere is specialised for emotion perception (called lateralisation of emotion). Later, students took a couple of personality tests and learned more about how our personalities are formed.

Wednesday focused on the social side of psychology. Students used stop-motion Lego animations to visualize the formation of social groups and their impact on human judgment. A clinical psychology student, Tame, came in later and talked about what clinical psychologists do, and students applied their skills to a fictionalized case study of LeBron James.

Thursday wrapped up the week with memory and learning, starting with the use of operant conditioning to get volunteer students to perform target behaviours. Memory was then tested through a scavenger hunt around Tūhura Otago Museum to see how much everyone could recall.

Our favourite parts of the week included pretending to be pigeons during one of the labs on Monday, learning about the two halves of the brain and diagnosing LeBron James with generalized anxiety disorder!



Sport and Exercise Sciences

Across four days, the Sport and Exercise Science project blended hands-on activity with real scientific learning – we were learning through movement!

In our first session at the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences we calculated the amount of oxygen our body consumes, and energy we use, per minute when resting, walking and running. From this information we worked out that on average we'd need to eat more than 650 M&Ms to give us the energy for 24 hours of being alive!

On day two we used GPS trackers while playing touch rugby to collect data on speed, distance and player behaviour. In the second half of the game, we introduced a new rule that increased movement demands, allowing comparison of how teams adapted their game playing strategy to accommodate performance changes. We also learned that professional sports teams use this equipment to track how athletes perform during training and games.

On day three the focus shifted to aquatic performance. We examined fluid dynamics while we were in the flume, which is like a water treadmill. We investigated how different kicking techniques, body positions and clothing can influence the drag a swimmer experiences.

The final day introduced ankle taping, specifically the closed basket-weave technique. We tested how taping –and even distractions like texting – affect balance and stability. We discovered that taping our ankles and texting made us worse at balancing on one foot.

Overall, the project highlighted how learning through movement deepens understanding, and offers experiences far beyond a traditional lab.



Theatre and Dance

The Theatre and Dance project introduced students to the art of creating an original performative work that showcased their creativity and performative qualities. Each day consisted of a dance session led by Sofia Kalogeropoulou, the convenor of the Bachelor of Performing Arts and the Dance programme, and a theatre session facilitated by Ryan Hartigan, a senior teaching fellow in Theatre Studies. The students were enthusiastic and engaged in a wide range of warm-ups and playful focusing tasks such as “muscle and bone”, “knife and fork” and the “clapping game”, all of which aimed at cultivating the idea of complicité – a sense of togetherness and collaborative spirit that is fundamental to any dance and theatre collective.

In Dance, the students crafted a contemporary dance choreography fused with popular culture dance elements that gave the routine a current feel. The choreography entailed unison phrases and short idiosyncratic duets that the students developed themselves using the concept of “action and re-action”. During the rehearsal process the students learned how to refine the movement aesthetic, create seamless transitions between the different sections of the dance, and bring out the emotional tone of the choreography.

In Theatre, the students revealed their versatility as triple threat performers by re-working an excerpt from Grease. It was amazing to see the students’ ability to sing, dance and act, as well as their imagination in adapting a musical theatre classic to suit the Hands-On context. Above all, the students’ professional ethos and problem-solving skills in bringing the dance and the theatre pieces together were prominent and noteworthy.



Zoology

After introductions and a shared dinner on Sunday evening, the Zoology Hands-On team began an exciting week exploring the impact of introduced predators and the conservation of Aotearoa New Zealand’s native taonga species. Our first outing was to Orokonui Ecosanctuary, a great place to start our journey. Guided by Taylor and Craig, we explored the sanctuary and were lucky to see native birds, including takahē, kākā, tūi and korimako (bellbirds), as well as some cool lizards. We also took part in an interactive game that encouraged us to think about takahē behaviour and evolutionary history.

On Tuesday, we took part in a wallaby dissection. Wallabies are an invasive pest species in the central South Island, and this session gave us the opportunity to examine their digestive and reproductive systems while thinking about the ecological impacts of introduced mammals. Although beautiful animals, the dissection highlighted the consequences of species being in the wrong place (and sorry no photos, it really was too gory!).

Wednesday focused on discussion, with the group exploring the role of introduced mammalian predators in New Zealand and the challenges they pose for conservation. We then visited Tūhura Otago Museum, where we answered questions related to animal diversity and evolution of New Zealand’s fauna.

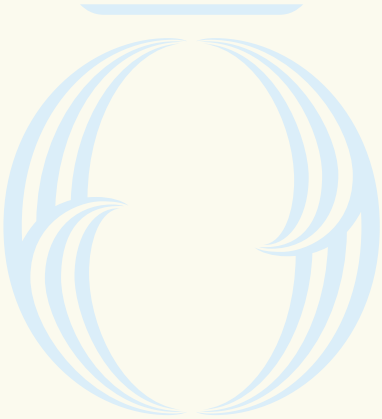
On Thursday, we examined skulls, beginning with comparisons between carnivore (dog) and herbivore (rabbit) skulls, before finishing with a challenge to identify 20 different animal skulls. Throughout the week, we engaged in thoughtful discussions, played zoology-themed games, and explored what it means to study Zoology at Otago.



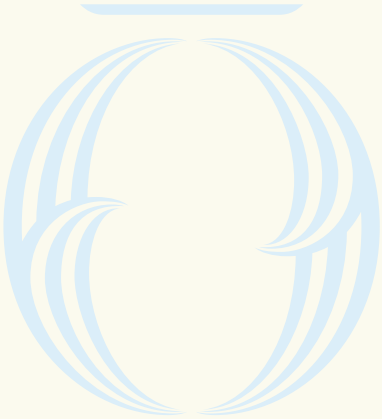


Students 2026

Rayhana Abass Rutherford College	Miliakere Balenivalu Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Amelia Butler Kuranui College	Jack Connor Burnside High School	Kaylee Douglas Nayland College	Anushriya Ganti Epsom Girls' Grammar School
Alexandre Abenoja St Patrick's College (Wellington)	Ailie Ballantine Southland Girls' High School	Jacob Butler Morrinsville College	Tayla Cooper Waimate High School	Samantha Douglas Nayland College	Kristina Cassandra Gaytano Paraparaumu College
Ben Ackerley Shirley Boys' High School	Peter Bataq Hillmorton High School	Ella Butler-Peck Kuranui College	Dulcie Copeland ACG Tauranga	Daniel Drury Rolleston College	Olivia Geidelberg Samuel Marsden Collegiate School
Ruby Ah Soon Mount Albert Grammar School	Megan Beaumont Roxburgh Area School	Catalina Camero Campion College	Caris Coppock ACG Strathallan School/College	Ollie Dunning New Plymouth Boys' High School	Jerico Gerida South Otago High School
Aabish Alam Tawa College	Alex Bell Auckland Grammar School	Velma Candra St Mary's College (Auckland)	Suzanna Corrigan Te Paepae o Aotea	Sean Eagle Karamu High School	Lochlan Gibbs Rolleston College
Eva Ann Alex Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Paige Berghan-Ollerenshaw Otamatea High School	Saffron Carmody Kaiapoi High School	Will Coupland Timaru Boys' High School	Benjamin Eberlein Kuranui College	Isla Gilby Kristin School
Shanol Alexzandra Perera Dilworth School	Trisha Bhide Burnside High School	Alex Carr Ashburton College	Tobie Crawford Rongotai College	Prin'sess Rana Tamaka Eketone Te Kura Maori O Porirua	Jaisleen Gill Pukekohe High School
Sameeha Fazleen Ali St Dominic's College	Luke Biggar Southland Boys' High School	Lexie Caudwell James Hargest College	Martha Crichton Elim Christian College	Lora Elisara Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Zara Gillies Taupo nui-a-Tia College
Jeasinah Alipia Marlborough Girls' College	Reginald Billot Logan Park High School	Soline Chea Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Georgina Cutler-Doughty Takapuna Grammar School	Aiden Extance Tauraroa Area School	Bella Ginty Huanui College
Maia Allen Ruapehu College	Grace Bismark Longburn Adventist College	Ashley Cheeseman Diocesan School for Girls	Dj Daniel-Lee-Io De La Salle College	Jed Fenwick Roncalli College	Ayden Golombick Papamoa College
Samuel Amaris St Thomas of Canterbury College	Jessica Borchers Avonside Girls' High School	Hailun Chen Rangitoto College	Sneha Datla St Margaret's College	Matthew Fenwick Napier Boys' High School	Niamh Goodwin Whanganui Girls' College
Pinky Ancheta Mount Hutt College	Nicole Bowie Baradene College of the Sacred Heart	Phoebee Chen Pukekohe Christian School	Gabrielle Davis Timaru Girls' High School	James Fidow De La Salle College	Aryan Goundar Aorere College
Grace Applin Hutt Valley High School	Scarlett Bowmar St Oran's College	Tiantian Chen Rangi Ruru Girls' School	Fleur de Clifford Otago Girls' High School	William Fifita Manurewa High School	Asmi Goyal Orewa College
Riley Aralikatti St Oran's College	Saffron Braden ACG Sunderland College	Josephine Cheng Wellington Girls' College	Keiffer de Guzman St Patrick's College (Wellington)	Heidi Flinkenberg Pukekohe High School	Judah Gray Cashmere High School
Thisaja Ariyasinghe Wellington College	Kasey Breslin Mount Aspiring College	Ngiculela Cheung Tau Waitakere College	Oliver Deans Southland Boys' High School	Josiah Fogavai Aotea College	William Grieve Hutt International Boys' School
Max Armstrong St Paul's Collegiate School	Aedan Bruce Nelson College	Jemima Chewe Thames High School	Blossom Dele-Oluwole Chilton Saint James School	Jeanazarene Fosi-Tolovae McAuley High School	Neve Groom Hutt Valley High School
Troy Arnold Awatapu College	Laura Brun Central Hawke's Bay College	Saiesha Chhotu Onehunga High School	Scarlett Delves Nelson College for Girls	Georgia Foster Whangarei Girls' High School	Andrew Guan Kristin School
Isabel Arthur Woodford House	Lila Brunt Green Bay High School	Monyneath Chin Manurewa High School	Preston Sonny Jean Denize Bream Bay College	Reana Freund Northern Southland College	Thomas Guetter Macleans College
Eiko Aspin Christchurch Girls' High School	Kayla Bryant Hillcrest High School	Sabrina Chong Morrinsville College	Hannah Deverall St Peter's School Cambridge	Alyssa Fu Sacred Heart Girls' College (New Plymouth)	Ja-bez Halasima Onehunga High School
Victoria Avei Kelston Girls' College	Maia Bucknell Whangarei Girls' High School	Vimal Chopra Rotorua Boys' High School	Samuel Dick Hillcrest High School	Jingyao Fu Rangitoto College	Maya Haley Darfield High School
Alyssa Bailey Kaiapoi High School	Emma Bungard Mount Hutt College	Manea Connal Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Ellery Douglas Hutt International Boys' School	Jasmin Fynn Onehunga High School	Emma Hall St Joseph's Māori Girls' College



Cayden Halsey Geraldine High School	Sophie Ineson Southland Girls' High School	Jasmeen Kaur Otahuhu College	Davis Leaf New Plymouth Boys' High School	Daisy Male Epsom Girls' Grammar School	Sage Miller Hauraki Plains College
Melika Hamed Christchurch Girls' High School	Olivia Ionita Burnside High School	Miji Kim Christchurch Girls' High School	Honour Leakehe Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Victoria Malele Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Serena Min Rangi Ruru Girls' School
Olivia Hardyment Pakuranga College	T.L. Iosua De La Salle College	Grace King New Plymouth Girls' High School	Abbey Leatherland Hamilton Girls' High School	Manahil Malik Christchurch Girls' High School	Ayman Mirza Henderson High School
Olivia Harris Onslow College	Ridima Jain Otago Girls' High School	Haelyn King Green Bay High School	Xylon Leef Alfriston College	Kayla Malone Sacred Heart Girls' College (New Plymouth)	Tobias Moar Hutt International Boys' School
Poppy Harris Waiheke High School	Sunny Jiang Otago Boys' High School	Rylee King Whangarei Girls' High School	Michelle Lei Hillcrest High School	Princess Elrein Manuel Longburn Adventist College	Jeremiah Moce Wesley College
Lana Hattingh Howick College	Amy Jing ACG Parnell College	Femke Kleinloog Nayland College	Yunke Lei Bayfield High School	Crissell Marsh William Colenso College	Mia Montgomery Upper Hutt College
James Henderson Otago Boys' High School	Ella Jing Scots College	Hiroyuki Koizumi Ashburton College	Tanahvat Leng Manurewa High School	Yamilla Marteen Aorere College	Te Kingi Morehu-Hanikawhe Te Paepae o Aotea
Dahlene-Irie Heremaia Flaxmere College	Molly Jones Queen Margaret College	Sarah Koubaridis Opunake High School	Jack Lienert Selwyn College	Lachlan Mason Papanui High School	Nevaeh Morris Whakatane High School
Hasanli Hewa Babaranda James Hargest College	Nico Jones St Peter's College (Epsom)	Annelie Kovach One Tree Hill College	Angela Liju Campion College	Leonidas Mataia De La Salle College	Issac Morrison John McGlashan College
Lisa Ho Burnside High School	Sawyer Jones Northern Southland College	Journey Kuka Tauranga Girls' College	Elizabeth Linder Broadwood Area School	Noah Mati De La Salle College	Tayla-Rose Mose Mount Albert Grammar School
Hazel Hockey Bayfield High School	Zelie Jones Rangitoto College	Wairere Kutia Gisborne Girls' High School	Esther Ling Middleton Grange School	Mikaera Matthews-Borell Wesley College	Laura Muggeridge Trident High School
Corban Hocking St John's College (Hastings)	Anna Rosa Joseph Marist College	Ruvarashe Kwangwari Sacred Heart Girls' College (New Plymouth)	Leikamia Lito Waitakere College	Bailey McCallum Rotorua Boys' High School	Capri Murray Broadwood Area School
Kaiti-Nia Hohepa-Kopa Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Matilda Jowett Wellington Girls' College	Vianna Blythe Ladia Karamu High School	Richie Liu Kristin School	Sienna McCully Waitakere College	Ketana Musgrove Taihape Area School
Milla Holden Otago Girls' High School	Daniella Joyce New Plymouth Girls' High School	Kristian Lai Otahuhu College	Gordon Lo Macleans College	Kasey McEwan Wairoa College	Sriram Muthukumaran Burnside High School
Sophia Holder New Plymouth Girls' High School	Miracle Kabuya Southland Girls' High School	Seneesa Lamahewa Hastings Girls' High School	Sophie Loader Mount Maunganui College	Kristin McIntyre Onehunga High School	Banin Najafi Hamilton Girls' High School
Jaykin Holmes Mercury Bay Area School	Filipe Kacikaci Waitakere College	Anthony Lambert St Peter's College (Gore)	Mia Lunson Tauranga Girls' College	James McKay Whakatane High School	Adi Nauarabota Auckland Girls' Grammar School
Kaprece Hooper Lytton High School	Lavaka Kailea Wesley College	Abigail Lau Riccarton High School	Harper MacDonald Wellington College	Anika McKinney Tauranga Girls' College	Robbie Newlands Gisborne Boys' High School
Bayley Hopkins Rotorua Boys' High School	Aizah Kalim Onehunga High School	Kepu Lauaki Kelston Boys' High School	Korus MacDonald Havelock North High School	Ruby-Jane McLeod Tamatea High School	John Nguyen Botany Downs Secondary College
Rosa Hunter Hamilton Girls' High School	Ramneek Kamboj Rangitikei College	Aviah Lavea Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Calypso Maddox-Rowe Green School	Patrice McMurtrie Fiordland College	Samuel Nguyen Karamu High School
Abigail Hurt St Peter's School Cambridge	Niklas Kane Rangiora New Life School	Alofa Lawrence Onehunga High School	Danielle Maguire Mount Aspiring College	Alyssa Mediano Roncalli College	Elizabeth Nicholson Marist College
Emma Ibbotson Nga Tawa Diocesan School	Gurleen Kaur Ormiston Senior College		Vaine Mahe Auckland Girls' Grammar School	Levi Millar Tawa College	Charlie Nicoll Hastings Christian School



Suwanmee Nimhara
Rolleston College

Icyss Nooroa
Manurewa High School

Ethel Nuuuuli Lene
Wellington East Girls’ College

Sam O’Hagan
Lincoln High School

Twist O’Neill-Caluzzi
Wellington High School

Cora O’Rourke
James Hargest College

Georgia Palmer
Feilding High School

Kaiserina Papali’i
St Oran’s College

Christina Parajuli
Morrinsville College

Prajwal Parajuli
Hauraki Plains College

Sebin Park
Bethlehem College

Amy Parker
Whanganui Girls’ College

Jack Parsonage
Whangarei Boys’ High School

Prachi Patel
Ormiston Senior College

David Tutaia Aretaseta Paulo Tialavea Morris
De La Salle College

Kayla Peace
Ellesmere College

William Peet
Taieri College

Nayeli Pelletier Morales
Sacred Heart Girls’ College (New Plymouth)

Loviana Pepa
Onehunga High School

Aaron Perumal
Rolleston College

Charlotte Petrie
Rangi Ruru Girls’ School

Mia Pierson
Geraldine High School

Kanishka Pokhriyal
Hastings Girls’ High School

Avni Prasad
Taradale High School

Rayan Prasad
Southern Cross Campus Senior School

Isaac Pratley
Hastings Boys’ High School

Luca Pudda
Verdon College

Lucas Pulman
Wesley College

Anna Quigley
Mount Hutt College

Jessica Radka
Marian College

Luka Radovanovich
Whangarei Girls’ High School

Joshua Rae
Hutt International Boys’ School

Eva Rasskazova
KingsWay School

Ella Redmond
Hutt Valley High School

Sarah Reid
St Oran’s College

Eve Rennie
ACG Strathallan School/College

Samuel Richmond
St Patrick’s College (Wellington)

Mariam Rietveld
Columba College

Ellen Riley
Columba College

Jedd Rix
Tawa College

Lilly Roberts
Otago Girls’ High School

Yasmin Rodda
Samuel Marsden Collegiate School

Hegby Ronald
Mairehau High School

Monique Ross
Kaipara College

Paige Rowe
Trident High School

Zyanja Rudge
Lytton High School

Christopher Ruhe
Manurewa High School

Sithuki Samaranayaka
Mairehau High School

Dillan Sami
Geraldine High School

Hannah Andrea San Jose
McAuley High School

Jacqueline Sanders
Wellington East Girls’ College

Nikita Schwass
Gisborne Girls’ High School

Molly Scott
St Peter’s School Cambridge

Maja Sea
Mount Aspiring College

Aaruchya Senthilruban
Queen Margaret College

Kirsten Sewell
Westlake Girls’ High School

Rutendo Shadaya
Tokoroa High School

Shivanjay Sharan
Aorere College

Priyanka Marisse Sharma
One Tree Hill College

Hayley Shaw
Wellington Girls’ College

Kate Sheehan
St Peter’s School Cambridge

Lochlan Shelton
Francis Douglas Memorial College

Emilia Shyra
Hillcrest High School

Folau Sii
De La Salle College

Chloe Simmons
Villa Maria College

Shasti Singh
Aorere College

Sulaksha Sishob
Rolleston College

Semo Sititi
De La Salle College

Thomas Smale
Dunstan High School

Cali Smith
Hillcrest High School

Eloise Smith
Otumoetai College

Emily Smith
Te Puke High School

Natalie Snoek
James Hargest College

Dayner Sok
Morrinsville College

Hermione Sparks
Trinity Catholic College

Aidan Stapleton
Kuranui College

Daniella Starr
Aotea College

Teresa Steiner
St Andrew’s College

Eliza Stepanicic
Paeroa College

Mia Stettner
Havelock North High School

Tristan Stewart
Rotorua Boys’ High School

Janika Stirling
James Hargest College

Lola Storey
Wellington East Girls’ College

Bella Sue
Manukura School

Wan Omega Sun
Otago Girls’ High School

Kaushik Suresh
Karamu High School

Jheizel Susbilla
Roncalli College

Journey Swain
St Margaret’s College

Keiariki Taite
Tauranga Boys’ College

Malak Tamimi
Queen’s High School

Bao Zhen Tan
Riccarton High School

Zhao Xuan Tan
Riccarton High School

Cody Tantrum
New Plymouth Boys’ High School

Samisoni Taufa
Mount Albert Grammar School

Deborah Taūfo’ou
Tamaki College

Candace Tevaga
Westlake Girls’ High School

Lucas Thomas
Kaiapoi High School

Sienna Thomas
Otago Girls’ High School

Zayne Thomas
Riccarton High School

Claire Thompson
Wellington Girls’ College

Keeley Thornton
James Hargest College

Indie-May Thyne
Twizel Area School

Elise Tian
Rangi Ruru Girls’ School

Brooke Tilton-Mist
Wesley College

Jesse Tima
Dilworth School

Keegan Tinsel
Long Bay College

Emily Tipper
Avonside Girls’ High School

Nevaeh Tito
Auckland Girls’ Grammar School

Carolynne Tluang
Nelson College for Girls

Raumati Todd
Whangaroa College

Avalei Toelau
Epsom Girls’ Grammar School

Frost Tofaeono-Tanuvasa
De La Salle College

Ariel Tsai
St Oran’s College

Sum Yee Chelcey Tsui
Saint Kentigern College

Isaac Tua
Naenae College

Ka-leena Tuhakaraina
Huntly College

Taylor Tuki
Garin College

Isla-Mia Tukukino
Tauranga Girls’ College

Jorja Turvey
St Oran’s College

Claire Twyman
Avondale College

Theodore Vannini
Ashburton College

Ashtyn Visesio
Auckland Girls’ Grammar School

Edelweiss Von Hofler
Otago Girls’ High School

Michaela Waite
Central Hawke’s Bay College

Aiden Walters
St John’s College (Hastings)

Zoya Wamoto
Carmel College



Bailey Wells
Kaikorai Valley College

Sierra Wetzel
Te Aho O Te Kura Pounamu

Autumn White
Opunake High School

Sophie Whittaker
Greymouth High School

Hazel Williams
Kuranui College

Orenia Williams
New Plymouth Girls' High School

Amelia Wills
Waitaki Girls' High School

Brian Wilson
Otahuhu College

Noah Wilson
Otago Boys' High School

Harrison Wong
King's College

Cormac Wood
Wellington College

Ryan Wu
ACG Strathallan School/College

Yusiyan Xie
Rangitoto College

Kelly Xing
Macleans College

A'aone Yandall
Aorere College

Haocheng Ye
Christ's College

Arabella Young
Hutt Valley High School

Junyang Zhao
Massey High School

Jonathan Zhou
Burnside High School

Lachlan Zonneveld
Glendowie College

Jing Zou
Kāpiti College

Izak Zuber
Tawa College







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