Summer Research Scholarships

Are you returning to Otago university next year? Would you like to carry out an interesting 8-10-week research project over the holidays?

Scholarships worth $6000 are available for the following projects, to be based at the Centre for Sustainability, University of Otago, Dunedin.

Project 1: Archival Research on Early Settler Relationship to Place
This project is looking to explore early Dunedin settler relationships to place, land and environment. To do this the student will be asked to search the Hocken archives for settler diaries or other ephemera which can provide a look into how early settlers (mid-late 1800's) formed relationships with the new environment of Aotearoa. Particular focus will be paid to emotional connections or disconnections which are made in documents found. We want to know how the structure of settlement may guide particular land-based relationships. Is the settler-land relationship antagonistic? Or do settlers form unexpected relationships through their own experience? The student will be asked to provide detailed notes on the archival data and summarize results into a brief report. The report will note the general themes found across the data in a narrative form. The student will also be asked to present their results in a brief presentation.

Student skills: Strong analytical and communication skills. Ability to work independently. Background in social science or humanities. Experience with archival work is ideal but not required.
Supervisor: Dr Abbi Virens

Project 2: Anticipating Future Technologies: Exploring green hydrogen in New Zealand media
The Green Hydrogen Programme is exploring the social dimensions of a potential green hydrogen transition in New Zealand. As an emerging technology, green hydrogen development and implementation is limited and therefore it is difficult to predict how such innovation will influence wider society. At this stage such social research is limited to exploring the expectations which emerge from discussions related to green hydrogen. Media articles offer a good opportunity to explore how the topic of green hydrogen is being introduced to the New Zealand public, helping us to understand how technical discourse is converted into conventional understanding. The student will be asked to find contemporary discussions related to green hydrogen in New Zealand media. The resulting data will then be coded according to predetermined themes to gauge the range of expectations related to green hydrogen technology. This research will be compared to previous analyses of green hydrogen in New Zealand to determine discourse trends and patterns. The student will then synthesize their results into a brief report and oral presentation.

Student skills: Strong analytical and communication skills. Background in social science, science communication or media studies would be preferred. Experience with discourse analysis or other media analysis would be ideal. Knowledge of green hydrogen or energy technologies is not necessary.
Supervisor: Dr Abbi Virens and Professor Hugh Campbell
**Project 3: Historical accounts of early Dunedin earthquakes, particularly the 1974 April 9th earthquake**

This project will support an community-based public education initiative planned for April 2024 to commemorate the 1974 Dunedin earthquake, which the most damaging earthquake for the city since 1921. The project will investigate local knowledge of the 1974 earthquake, by interviewing community leaders and others with living memory of the earthquake. Historical accounts from newspapers and other sources will also be used to develop an understanding of the impacts and damage caused by the earthquake. Emergency Management Otago will be partnering on this work to run a community event in April, to bring earthquake preparedness to the public.

**Student skills:** Strong written, analytical and communication skills, background in social science would be preferred (e.g. History, Human Geography). Interest in natural hazards and disaster resilience would be helpful.

**Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Caroline Orchiston

**Project 4: Connecting the resilience and sustainability discourses in a multi-hazard risk context – a review of literature**

In New Zealand, resilience has been a fundamental paradigm for understanding future uncertainty and disruption in the context of earthquake hazard and disaster risk reduction. More recently the risks presented by multi-hazards, including climate change, have shifted the discourse towards sustainable futures. The focus of this project is a review of literature connecting resilience and sustainability in the context of future disruption (including disasters) to map the evolving discourse. The successful candidate will develop an annotated bibliography and a summary report on the prominent academic contributions on the topic.

**Student skills:** Excellent written and analytical skills.

**Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Caroline Orchiston

**Project 5: Investigating tree wētā ecology**

This opportunity is for a summer student to work on a tree wētā project. This will have a number of components, that we can tailor to some extent to match the student interests. It will involve some of the following activities: 1) helping with a literature review of New Zealand tree wētā 2) hands on management of captive wētā  3) assistance with or development of some experimental work (together with a Postdoc researcher), and 4) preparation of lab samples for isotope analysis (e.g. labelling, drying and grinding). If interested, the student may also undertake some simple data visualisation in R (e.g. drawing graphs).

**Student skills:** The student needs to be careful and conscientious in their work; willing to handle insects, and help with their maintenance; happy to undertake repetitive tasks in the lab. Interest in ecology of New Zealand insects is essential. Experience with R is a bonus.

**Supervisors:** Assoc. Prof. Cilla Wehi and Dr. Evie Virens
INTERESTED IN APPLYING?

Please check eligibility and details below

ELIGIBILITY

- Summer research scholarships are open only to students who are returning to study the following year.
- Students must not be receiving alternative scholarship support for the same project or any other project over the same timeframe. Students may hold only one Summer Research Scholarship for the period.
- Students who currently hold a University of Otago Doctoral or Master’s Scholarship are not eligible for a Summer research scholarship.

TENURE

The Summer Research Scholarships take place over the November to February period and are for 8-10 weeks each. Time frame to be negotiated with the supervisor. Time off for holidays during this time can be arranged.

SCHOLARSHIP VALUE

$6,000 (tax free) to be paid in 3 instalments with the final $500 paid after the project report or other outputs have been submitted.

Note: Scholarship holders will be expected to make a short presentation of the results at the Centre for Sustainability’s end-of-summer student scholarship mini research symposium.

TO APPLY

Please send your CV and academic record, together with a cover letter explaining your suitability for the project, to centre-sustainability@otago.ac.nz.

Short-listed candidates will be asked to come in for an interview and notified of a decision shortly after that.

Closing date for applications: Friday September 22nd, 2023
Start date if successful: Early - mid November 2023
(Exact start date to be negotiated depending on your examination commitments etc).