



REVIEW OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN HUMANITIES 21 – 23 September 2026

Written submissions to be received by: Monday 7 September 2026

As part of the University's quality assurance programme, a Panel has been convened to review, evaluate and report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (Interim) on matters pertaining to Postgraduate Programmes in Humanities.

Convenor: Emeritus Professor Abby Smith, Ōtakou Whakaihu Waka | University of Otago

Panel Members:

International: Associate Professor Sean Chaidaroon, The University of Melbourne, Australia

External: Professor Simon Mackenzie, Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington

Internal: Professor Anna Carr, Ōtakou Whakaihu Waka | University of Otago

Graduate: Michaela Rangitaawa-Schofield

Graduate: Htet Hpone Myat Naing

Secretary: [Juliet Anderson](#), Ōtakou Whakaihu Waka | University of Otago

Scroll down for the Reviews Framework and Terms of Reference below.

Written submissions

Interested parties are invited to make submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference to the Review Panel. The University wants its reviews to be based on all relevant information and accordingly assures you that submissions are treated in the strictest confidence.

Such submissions should be sent to the [Review Secretary](#), **by Monday 7 September 2026**. Emails (PDF format preferred) should be marked "Confidential: Submission for Review of Postgraduate Programmes in Humanities".

Oral submissions

Interested parties are invited to make oral submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference to the Review Panel. Please contact the [Review Secretary](#).

Framework

A review is an opportunity to critically analyse the goals and objectives of a Department¹ and to receive affirmation that current plans and priorities will have long term benefits for students and staff, and to ensure that Department strategy is aligned with University strategy. It is designed to help the area being reviewed plan its future direction, set strategic goals and identify the challenges it will face.

The key part of the review is the Self Review, in which the Department is expected to address the following questions in the context of the Terms of Reference:

Current State

- What is the current situation of the Department?
- What does the Department do well?
- How does the Department contribute to the wider goals of the Division (and School when applicable) of which it is a part?
- How do the activities of the Department support the University in the delivery of its strategic goals, as outlined in *Vision 2040*, *Pae Tata*, and in the University's *Māori Strategic Framework*, *Pacific Strategic Framework*, and *Sustainability Strategic Framework*?

Future State

- Where does the Department want to be in five to ten years time?
- What does the Department need to do to get there?
- What challenges face the future development of the Department?
- What changes might be required to strengthen the Department's contribution to University and Divisional goals and priorities?
- What can the University and Division do to support the Department to achieve its goals?

Alignment with the University's Strategic Imperatives

The core activities of university departments are grouped under four broad headings: (1) Teaching and Student Support, (2) Research, (3) External Engagement and (4) Organisational Resources, which in turn are aligned to the University's Strategic Imperatives from *Vision 2040*.

¹ The term 'Department' covers all academic units, Centres and Schools; a departmental review will also include named degrees as applicable).

DIVISIONAL REVIEW OF COURSEWORK POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN THE HUMANITIES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this review is to undertake a critical, forward-looking evaluation of all Postgraduate offerings in the Humanities Division, with particular emphasis on Coursework Master (coursework MA) degrees (e.g. coursework MA Humanities, Master of International Development and Planning, Master of International Studies, Master of Peace and Conflict Studies). The review will assess the academic quality, coherence, governance arrangements, sustainability, and strategic alignment of these degrees with the strategic plans of the Division of Humanities and the University of Otago in order to inform future planning, innovation, and investment.

The review is intended to affirm what is working well, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that Humanities coursework Master programmes remain intellectually distinctive, pedagogically innovative, student-centred, and aligned with Divisional and University strategic priorities, including Pae Tata and Vision 2040.

2. Scope

The review will cover all coursework Master degrees in the Division of Humanities. While some coursework Masters include a dissertation option, the primary focus of the review will be on coursework Master degrees by papers. However, these coursework Master degrees will be considered in the context of the Division's wider portfolio. This includes assessing the role and purpose of each coursework Master degree alongside other degrees, including research-only postgraduate degrees, Honours, Diplomas, and Postgraduate Certificates, where relevant to progression, coherence, or the strategic positioning of the Division's offerings.

The scope covers programme design, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, staffing, student support, administration and governance, external engagement, and future development.

3. Review Objectives

The review will provide a strategic, evidence-informed assessment of Humanities coursework Master degrees, in order to support clear decision making, prioritisation, and future investment over the next five to ten years. Specifically, the review is designed to:

- Establish a clear and shared understanding of the purpose, coherence, and distinctiveness of Humanities coursework Master degrees, including their intellectual framing, graduate profiles, and contribution to the Divisional strategic vision;
- Review current curriculum design, teaching, learning, and assessment to evaluate alignment with high quality, coherent, and engaging learning journeys for coursework Master students, and that programmes demonstrate pedagogical excellence with a critical approach to innovation and the use of digital technologies;

- Evaluate programme alignment with the University of Otago’s strategic priorities, including Pae Tata, Vision 2040, and associated Māori, Pacific, and Sustainability frameworks, and identify where programmes can more strongly contribute to these priorities; including the extent to which these priorities are embedded within curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and graduate profiles;
- Assess the attractiveness for students, employers and teaching staff, but also the viability, and long-term sustainability of coursework Master’s degrees, including governance and staffing models, resourcing, enrolment patterns, and anticipated future demand both within a program and across the Division of Humanities;
- Evaluate how effectively programmes respond to the needs and expectations of current and future students, including domestic, international, Māori, Pacific, and diverse learner cohorts, and to the expectations of employers, industries, and wider communities; including the extent to which programmes provide clear and coherent pathways into, through, and beyond coursework Master’s study;
- Identify opportunities for innovation, renewal, and collaboration across Humanities Programmes, Divisions, and the wider University, informed by national and international trends and comparable practice in Humanities postgraduate education, including how Otago’s offerings align with, or differentiate themselves from, these trends, and opportunities for consolidation, redesign, or new coursework Master’s programmes.

4. Key Review Questions

1. Purpose, Quality, and Distinctiveness

How clear, coherent, and distinctive are Humanities coursework Master’s degrees in their purpose, intellectual framing, graduate outcomes, and learning journeys, and how effectively do they demonstrate pedagogical quality and innovation? To what extent is this reflected in programme design?

2. Strategic Alignment and Contribution

How well do programmes align with and contribute to the University of Otago’s strategic priorities (including Pae Tata, Vision 2040, and Māori, Pacific, and Sustainability frameworks), and to what extent is this alignment reflected in programme design, curriculum content, and graduate outcomes?

and where are there opportunities to strengthen this contribution in existing degrees, but also through new named coursework Masters degrees?

3. Demand, Viability, and Sustainability

How attractive, viable, and sustainable are Humanities’ coursework Master’s degrees over the next 5–10 years, considering student demand, enrolment patterns and trends, staffing and workload models, Divisional infrastructure, student support mechanisms, resourcing and governance structure? What dependencies or vulnerabilities exist within programme structures, including reliance on particular papers, pathways, or staff?

4. Future Direction: Portfolio Development

How effectively do Humanities coursework Master degrees meet the evolving needs of students, employers, and communities, and what opportunities exist for innovation, collaboration, consolidation, redesign, or new degree development in response to national and international trends and societal needs including how these opportunities reflect the overall coherence and positioning of the postgraduate portfolio?