

JOB DESCRIPTION

Chief Students Officer

ROLE TITLE	Chief Students Officer
SECTION/DIVISION:	Operations Division
REPORTS TO:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations)
DIRECT REPORTS (FTE):	2 FTE
INDIRECT REPORTS (FTE):	328 FTE
PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE ROLE:	<p>The Chief Students Officer is a senior role responsible for the strategic leadership, integration, and performance of the University's student services, pastoral care, residential life, wellbeing, safety and student experience functions.</p> <p>Reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations), the role provides executive stewardship of the non-academic student journey, working with academic leaders to connect support, residential life, teaching and learning around taura needs, and ensuring Otago's students are supported to live well, feel safe, experience belonging, and engage fully in campus and residential life.</p> <p>The Chief Students Officer leads a large and complex operational portfolio, ensuring student-facing services are integrated, culturally responsive, financially sustainable, and aligned to institutional values, regulatory obligations, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments.</p> <p>The role plays a critical leadership function in delivering the University's strategic priorities under Pae Tawhiti – Vision 2040 and Pae Tata (Strategy to 2030), with particular emphasis on care, place, safety, inclusion, equity, and belonging. Through this leadership, the Chief Students Officer strengthens Otago's distinctive residential and pastoral model as a defining feature of the University's student experience.</p>
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP	<p>As a member of the Vice-Chancellors Advisory Group (VCAG), the Chief Students Officer works closely with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) and peer portfolio leaders to ensure student services and experience functions operate as an integrated and coherent system. The role contributes to collective leadership of the Operations Group while retaining clear accountability for its portfolio.</p> <p>The Chief Students Officer provides senior-level stewardship of the non-academic dimensions of learner success, ensuring that pastoral care, residential life, wellbeing, safety, and student experience systems collectively support student success, participation, and belonging.</p> <p>The role acts as a key partner to the Provost, Chief People Officer, and other portfolio leaders, engaging regularly with academic leaders and those responsible for teaching and learning to ensure learner success, equity, wellbeing, and participation are enabled through high-quality environments that complement academic delivery.</p> <p>In contributing to the University's aspiration to be a Te Tiriti-led institution under Pae Tawhiti, the Chief Students Officer leads student services, pastoral care, and residential environments that actively give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, through culturally grounded, equity-focused, and mana-enhancing approaches to student wellbeing, safety, and belonging.</p> <p>The Chief Students Officer ensures the University meets its obligations under the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice and other relevant regulatory frameworks, while maintaining financially sustainable and operationally effective services.</p>

ACCOUNTABILITIES:

The Chief Students Officer provides executive leadership of the Student Services and Affairs portfolio, with accountability for strategy development, policy and framework stewardship, operational delivery, and capability building across student services, residential life, pastoral care, wellbeing, and safety.

The role ensures that student services, pastoral care and residential systems collectively support learner success, wellbeing, safety, and belonging, aligned with Pae Tata, the Learner Success Plan, the Disability Action Plan, and associated equity, wellbeing and safety strategies.

Student Services and Experience Leadership

- Provide executive leadership and stewardship of the University's non-academic student experience, ensuring services are coherent, accessible and student-centred across campuses and residential environments.
- Establish and lead an integrated operating model for student services and experience functions, aligned within the wider Operations Group operating model, and reducing fragmentation and improving service navigation.
- Champion integrated, navigable and student-centred service pathways that enable timely access to care, support, and participation opportunities.
- As executive lead for the non-academic student journey, lead agreed priority student journeys across services, establish actions, ownership and measures with relevant leaders, and escalate unresolved cross-portfolio dependencies as appropriate.
- Work with academic and operational leaders to make cross-portfolio dependencies visible and resolve or escalate barriers affecting the student journey.
- Promote a care-centred, mana-enhancing approach to student services aligned with Otago's values and place-based identity.
- Ensure learner voice, including Māori and Pacific student voice, informs service design, evaluation and continuous improvement; maintain student journey maps as living evidence, use cohort insight to prioritise improvements, and monitor access, timely support, belonging, safety, equity and service outcomes through agreed portfolio reporting.
- Manage the University's relationship with the Otago University Students' Association (OUSA), acting as the principal senior liaison on student services, wellbeing, advocacy and partnership matters.

Learner Success

- Support the Provost and portfolio leaders in delivery of the University's Learner Success Plan through leadership of non-academic and pastoral care components.
- Lead student services, pastoral care, collegiate and residential life, wellbeing, and safety systems that underpin equitable learner outcomes.
- Ensure alignment between learner success objectives and Pastoral Care Code, Disability Action Plan and equity commitments.
- Contribute to institutional approaches that support retention, engagement, participation, and student success, using evidence to understand differing outcomes and experiences between student groups.

Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and Safety

- Provide executive leadership for learner wellbeing and safety systems in accordance with the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.
- Provide executive leadership and operational assurance that the University meets its obligations under relevant legislation, supporting the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) in fulfilling enterprise-level regulatory and assurance responsibilities.
- Ensure pastoral care responsibilities are clearly defined, resourced, and delivered across student-facing service and residential environments.
- Ensure culturally responsive pastoral care practices that give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including support for Māori and Pacific taurira.

Portfolio Leadership and Performance

Provide executive leadership and oversight of the following portfolios, ensuring strong leadership capability, clear accountability, effective performance management, and a culture where portfolio leaders are empowered to exercise their expertise and authority while being accountable for agreed performance and improvement outcomes.

Campus and Collegiate Life Services

Ensure this portfolio delivers distinctive expressions of care, place, and belonging, providing inclusive and culturally responsive settings that uphold mana, safety, and community for all students. Provide leadership and oversight of services, facilities, and operations that support a vibrant, connected, and well-serviced campus environment.

- Residential Colleges
- Uniflats
- Accommodation Office
- University Union
- Uniprint

Student Services

Ensure this portfolio delivers accessible, culturally responsive services that promote student wellbeing, connection, inclusion, and equitable participation across the diverse needs of the student community, meeting the University's obligations under the Pastoral Care Code, Learner Success Plan, and Disability Action Plan. This includes maintaining a safe, respectful, and supportive campus environment that upholds community standards and responds effectively to conduct, pastoral care, and safety matters, including obligations under the Sophia Charter.

- Career Development and Volunteering Centre
- Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care
- Disability Information and Support
- Locals Programme
- Pacific Islands Centre
- Proctor Office and Campus Watch
- Recreation Services
- Student Health and Wellbeing
- Te Huka Mātauraka
- Te Pou Whirinaki
- Te Whāre Tawharau

Financial Management and Stewardship

- Provide executive leadership for a large, complex, and asset-intensive operational portfolio, encompassing residential colleges, accommodation, student health services, and recreation facilities
- Ensure operations are financially sustainable, operationally resilient, and capable of delivering high-quality, safe and accessible services at scale.
- Hold accountability for significant operating and capital budgets across the student services and residential portfolio.
- Balance service quality, accessibility, and student experience with affordability and long-term sustainability.
- Partner with Property and Campus Development to support evidence-based prioritisation of maintenance, renewal, space use and development planning, including whole-of-life affordability.
- Lead engagement with OUSA on the development, negotiation and agreement of Student Services Fees, ensuring transparent, sustainable, and student-aligned decision-making.

Student Participation, Belonging and Leadership

Work with the Provost, Chief People Officer and other relevant leaders to support delivery of Pae Tata priorities for student participation, belonging and success.

- Promote student participation, belonging, leadership, and engagement
- Ensure student-facing services and environments support positive identity, connection and participation

- Contribute to a values-led, mana-enhancing culture that reflects Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments
- Support leadership development, volunteering and civic engagement opportunities.

Operational Risk, Safety and Incident Management

- Ensure robust risk management, safety procedures, incident response and escalation arrangements operate within University risk, emergency management and business continuity frameworks.
- Provide executive oversight of serious incidents affecting student wellbeing or safety.
- Ensure appropriate escalation, coordination, and post-incident review in alignment with university risk, assurance and business continuity frameworks.

Strategy Execution and Service Transformation

- Translate Pae Tata priorities relating to care, place, safety, and belonging into executable service strategies and improvement initiatives.
- Lead service redesign and improvement initiatives. Use shared improvement and delivery capability where agreed, retaining service ownership and accountability for benefits within the portfolio.
- Match improvement commitments to available capacity and make clear recommendations about what should be protected, improved, sequenced differently or stopped.
- Promote responsible use of data, digital services and artificial intelligence where these improve student access, service quality, decision-making or staff capacity, within University policy and governance.
- Improve accessibility, service experience, and outcomes while maintaining financial and operational sustainability.

Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion

- Ensure student services and environments are safe, inclusive, supportive and accessible across physical and digital contexts
- Support equitable participation and learner success across diverse student communities
- Align services with the Pastoral Care Code, Disability Action Plan, and University equity commitments

KEY RELATIONSHIPS:

Internal

Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors Advisory Group (VCAG)
Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellors
Chief People Officer
Operations Senior Leadership Team
Chief Financial Officer
Academic leaders
Registrar and Secretary to the Council
International Office
Academic and Professional Staff

External

Government
OUSA and other representatives of the student body
Universities New Zealand
Sophia Charter partner agencies
Health New Zealand — Te Whatu Ora
Dunedin City Council
New Zealand Union of Student Associations (NZUSA)

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

Essential

A tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline such as management, leadership, public policy, education, or a related field, or equivalent senior leadership experience

Extensive leadership experience within complex organisations, preferably in student services, pastoral care, wellbeing, residential community, or similarly people-based service environments.

Experience leading large, multidisciplinary teams and complex operational portfolios. Demonstrated experience managing large, complex budgets with accountability for financial performance and resource allocation

Demonstrated strategic leadership capability, including the ability to develop and deliver organisational strategy and lead large-scale change initiatives.

Experience implementing complex strategic plans, organisational transformation, or service improvement initiatives.

Demonstrated executive-level judgement, decision-making capability, and experience operating within a senior leadership environment.

Strong cultural competency, with an understanding of Māori and Pacific communities, te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and a demonstrated commitment to championing diversity and inclusivity in the workforce.

Demonstrated ability to build effective relationships and influence across diverse stakeholder groups, including senior leaders, academic staff, professional staff, and student representatives

Commitment to upholding the University's values, with personal qualities including openness, respectfulness, and integrity.

Preferred

Experience within the tertiary education sector or similarly complex public sector environment.

Experience working within regulatory pastoral care frameworks or student wellbeing frameworks.

TECHNICAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

Essential

Strong strategic stakeholder engagement and relationship management capability. Excellent written and oral communication skills, including the ability to communicate complex issues clearly and persuasively.

Sound financial and commercial acumen, including knowledge of managing large operational budgets and resource allocation

Understanding of contemporary student wellbeing, pastoral care, and student experience practices within higher education or comparable sectors.

Knowledge of equity, accessibility, and inclusion practices relevant to diverse student populations.

Strong organisational leadership capability, including service design, performance management, and continuous improvement

Understanding of regulatory and assurance frameworks relevant to student services, wellbeing, and safety

Demonstrated ability to lead organisational change, transformation, and service integration initiatives

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Some travel will be required.

Out of hours work is expected in the event of emergencies or enactment of business continuity plans.

Staff must comply with the Public Records Act 2005 and the Privacy Act 2020 and are expected to complete training to understand and meet these requirements.

DIRECT BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY:

Operating budget of circa \$107 million per annum.

Annual capital budget circa \$3 million per annum.

MĀORI STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

Act in a manner consistent with the principles and implications, as well as the University's commitment to the Treaty as articulated in the Māori Strategic Framework.

PACIFIC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

Act in a manner consistent with the strategies and goals contained in the University's Pacific Strategic Framework, role-modelling and promoting Pacific values, equity and diversity principles and cultural safety practices.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Act and work in a manner compliant with current health and safety at work legislation and University procedures, frameworks, and guidelines. Role model safe behaviour and practices, share the responsibility to prevent harm and contribute to a safe campus and work environment, including raising workplace health and safety concerns for self, students, visitors, and other staff.

SUSTAINABILITY:

Act in a manner consistent with the University's sustainability commitments; role-modelling sustainable practices, with a particular emphasis on minimising the environmental impact of day-to-day activities.

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY:

Act in a manner consistent with the University's commitment to anti-racism and the co-creation of accessible, safe, respectful, and welcoming environments where all students and staff are supported to achieve their full potential.

CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK:

Capability Group	Capability Name	Level
ENGAGE	Communicate Effectively	Highly Advanced
	Commit to Customer Service	Highly Advanced
	Work Collaboratively	Highly Advanced
	Influence and Negotiate	Highly Advanced
ENABLE	Deliver Results	Highly Advanced
	Plan and Prioritise	Highly Advanced
	Think and Solve Problems	Highly Advanced
	Demonstrate Accountability	Highly Advanced
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	Display Resilience and Courage	Highly Advanced
	Act with Integrity	Highly Advanced
	Manage Self	Highly Advanced
	Value Diversity	Highly Advanced
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	Manage and Develop Capability	Highly Advanced
	Inspire Direction and Purpose	Highly Advanced
	Optimise Work Outcomes	Highly Advanced
	Change and Innovation	Highly Advanced
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE	Te Reo	Adept
	Tikanga Māori	Adept

CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK DESCRIPTORS

Chief Students Officer

ENGAGE

Communicate Effectively	Commit to Customer Service	Work Collaboratively	Influence and Negotiate
<i>Communicate clearly, actively listen to others, and respond with respect</i>	<i>Provide customer centric services in-line with the University's and organisational objectives</i>	<i>Collaborate with others and value their contribution</i>	<i>Gain consensus and commitment from others and resolve issues and conflicts</i>
HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED
<p>Articulate complex concepts and put forward compelling arguments and rationales to all levels and types of audiences</p> <p>Speak in a highly articulate and influential manner. State the facts and explain their implications for the organisation and key stakeholders</p> <p>Actively listen, and identify ways to ensure all have an opportunity to contribute. Monitor own and others' non-verbal cues and adapt where necessary</p> <p>Anticipate and address key areas of interest for the audience and adapt style under pressure</p>	<p>Create a culture which embraces high quality customer service across the organisation, ensuring that management systems and processes drive service delivery outcomes</p> <p>Engage and negotiate with stakeholders on strategic issues related to University policy, standards of customer service and accessibility, and provide expert, influential advice</p> <p>Ensure that responsiveness to customer needs is central to the organisation's strategic planning processes</p> <p>Set overall performance standards for service delivery across the organisation and monitor compliance</p> <p>Ensure that the organisation's systems, processes, policies and programs respond to customer needs</p>	<p>Establish a culture and supporting systems that facilitate information sharing, communication and learning across the sector</p> <p>Publicly celebrate the successful outcomes of collaboration</p> <p>Seek out and facilitate opportunities to engage and collaborate with stakeholders to develop organisational, whole-of-University solutions</p> <p>Identify and overcome barriers to strategic collaboration with internal and external stakeholders</p>	<p>Engage in a range of approaches to generate solutions, seeking expert inputs and advice to inform negotiating strategy</p> <p>Use sound arguments, strong evidence, and expert opinion to influence outcomes</p> <p>Determine and communicate the organisation's position and bargaining strategy</p> <p>Represent the organisation in critical negotiations, achieving effective solutions in challenging relationships, ambiguous and conflicting positions</p> <p>Identify contentious issues, direct discussion and debate, and steer parties towards an effective resolution</p>

ENABLE

Deliver Results	Plan and Prioritise	Think and Solve Problems	Demonstrate Accountability
<i>Achieve results through efficient use of resources and a commitment to quality outcomes</i>	<i>Plan to achieve priority outcomes and respond flexibly to changing circumstances</i>	<i>Think, analyse and consider the broader context to develop practical solutions</i>	<i>Be responsible for own actions, adhere to legislation and policy and proactively address risk</i>
HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED
<p>Create a culture of achievement, fostering on-time and on-budget quality outcomes. Use own professional knowledge and expertise of others to drive organisational and University objectives forward</p> <p>Initiate and communicate high level priorities for the organisation to achieve University outcomes</p> <p>Establish systems to ensure all staff are able to identify direct connection between their effort and organisational outcomes</p> <p>Identify and remove potential barriers or hurdles to ongoing and long term achievement of outcomes</p>	<p>Establish broad organisational objectives, ensure that these are the focus for all planning activities and communicate to staff</p> <p>Understand the organisation's current and potential future role within the tertiary sector and the community. Consider emerging trends, identify long-term opportunities and align organisational requirements with desired whole-of-University outcomes</p> <p>Drive initiatives in an environment of ongoing, widespread change, including whole-of-University policy directions</p> <p>Ensure effective governance frameworks and guidance enable high quality strategic, organisational, and operational planning</p>	<p>Establish and promote a culture which encourages initiative and emphasises the value of continuous improvement</p> <p>Apply lateral thinking and develop innovative solutions across a wide range of highly complex information and situations that have long standing, organisation-wide impact</p> <p>Identify and evaluate organisation-wide implications when considering proposed solutions to issues</p> <p>Ensure effective governance systems are in place to guarantee quality analysis, data gathering and innovation</p>	<p>Promote a culture of accountability and direct the development of effective systems for the establishment and measurement of accountabilities, and evaluate ongoing effectiveness</p> <p>Direct the development of short and long term risk management frameworks to ensure the achievement of University aims and objectives</p> <p>Ensure that legislative and regulatory frameworks are applied consistently and effectively across the organisation</p> <p>Inspire a culture which respects the obligation to manage University monies and other resources responsibly and with probity</p>

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Display Resilience and Courage	Act with Integrity	Manage Self	Value Diversity
<i>Be open and honest, prepared to express your views, and willing to accept and commit to change</i>	<i>Be ethical and professional and act in keeping with the University's values</i>	<i>Show drive and motivation, a measured approach, and a commitment to learning</i>	<i>Show respect for diverse backgrounds, experience, and perspectives</i>
HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED
<p>Create a climate which encourages and supports openness, persistence and genuine debate around critical issues</p> <p>Provide sound explanation and argument for agreed positions while remaining open to valid suggestions for change</p> <p>Raise critical issues and make difficult decisions</p> <p>Respond to significant, complex and new challenges with a high level of resilience and perseverance</p> <p>Consistently use a range of strategies to keep control of own emotions and act as a stabilising influence even in the most challenging situations</p>	<p>Champion and act as an advocate for the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour and reinforce them in others</p> <p>Drive a culture of integrity and professionalism across the organisation. Define, communicate and evaluate ethical practices, standards and systems pertaining to the organisation</p> <p>Create and promote a climate in which staff feel able to report apparent breaches of rules, policies and guidelines and act promptly and visibly in response to such reports</p>	<p>Promote and model the value of self-improvement and be proactive in seeking opportunities for growth</p> <p>Seek challenging and strategic goals and show commitment to their achievement</p> <p>Actively seek, reflect and act on feedback on own performance, manage challenging, ambiguous and complex issues calmly and logically</p> <p>Model initiative and decisiveness and maintain a high level of personal motivation when faced with challenging circumstances</p>	<p>Create and drive a culture where all staff value diversity of people, experiences and backgrounds</p> <p>Use diversity to foster innovation, drive change across the organisation and leverage organisational outcomes</p> <p>Develop and promote integrated workplace diversity principles across the organisation</p> <p>Ensure workplace systems, policies and practices allow individuals to participate to their fullest ability</p>

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Manage and Develop Capability	Inspire Direction and Purpose	Optimise Work Outcomes	Change and Innovation
<i>Engage and motivate staff and develop capability and potential in others</i>	<i>Communicate goals, priorities and vision and recognise achievements</i>	<i>Manage resources effectively and apply sound workforce planning principles</i>	<i>Support, promote and champion change, and assist others to engage with change</i>
HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED	HIGHLY ADVANCED
<p>Ensure performance development frameworks are in place to manage staff performance, drive development of organisational capability and undertake succession planning</p> <p>Drive executive capability development and ensure effective succession management practices</p> <p>Implement effective approaches to identify and develop talent across the organisation</p> <p>Model and encourage a culture of continuous learning and leadership, which values high levels of constructive feedback, and exposure to new experiences</p> <p>Instil a sense of urgency around addressing and resolving team and individual performance issues and ensure that this is cascaded throughout the organisation</p>	<p>Champion the organisational vision and strategy, and communicate the way forward. Generate enthusiasm and commitment to goals and cascade understanding throughout the organisation</p> <p>Create a culture of confidence and trust in future direction. Communicate the parameters and expectations surrounding organisational strategies</p> <p>Negotiate clear performance standards. Communicate them effectively and monitor progress</p> <p>Celebrate organisational success and high performance and engage in activities to maintain morale</p>	<p>Ensure that organisational structure is aligned to the organisation's goals and responds to changes over time</p> <p>Engage in strategic workforce planning, and strategic resource utilisation to ensure achievement of organisational aims, goals and University's objectives</p> <p>Align workforce resources and talent with organisational priorities</p> <p>Ensure systems and processes are aligned to enable high performance and outcomes</p>	<p>Drive a continuous improvement agenda, define high level objectives and translate these into practical implementation strategies</p> <p>Build staff support and commitment to announced change, and plan and prepare for long-term organisational change, with a focus on the wider political, social and environmental context</p> <p>Create an organisational culture that actively seeks opportunities to improve</p>

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Te Reo	Tikanga Māori
<i>Develop understanding and use of te reo Māori (Māori language)</i>	<i>Create knowledge and use of tikanga Māori (Māori cultural practices) in the workplace</i>
ADEPT	ADEPT
<p>Demonstrate use of te reo Māori words and phrases regularly and in appropriate formal work place activities</p> <p>Communicate appropriately and accurately in te reo Māori with external parties in the course of formal work place events</p> <p>Encourage others to use and learn new te reo Māori words and phrases</p>	<p>Engage with subject matter experts and consider the University's Māori Strategic Framework principles when undertaking work planning activity.</p> <p>Model good practices and encourage others to adopt work place practices that show sensitivity for tikanga Māori.</p> <p>Has good knowledge of the Articles and Principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and encourages understanding in others.</p> <p>Encourage others to extend their understanding and knowledge of tikanga Māori.</p>