General Information

Vision and Mission of the University

Vision
A research-led University with an international reputation for excellence.

Ko te Aronga
He Whare Wānanga e aronui ana ki te rangahau, e rongonui ana i ngā tōpito o te ao i āna tutukinga ikeike.

Mission
The University of Otago will create, advance, preserve, promote and apply knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual independence to enhance the understanding, development and wellbeing of individuals, society and the environment. It will achieve these goals by building on foundations of broad research and teaching capabilities, unique campus learning environments, its nationwide presence and mana, and international links.

Ko te Uaratanga
Ko tā Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo he whakawhanake, he pupuri, he whakatairanga hoki i te mātauranga, i te ihomatua tātari kaupapa, i te whakaaaroaro motuhake o te tangata, kia hāpai ai te mōhio, te mārama, te hiatotanga, otirā, te oranga o te tangata, o te iwi hoki. Mā te rangahau me te tika mārika o te whakaako, mā te whai wānanga ahuerei, mā te whakaū ki tōna mana, me ōna toronga puta noa i te motu, i te ao hoki ēnei whāinga e tutuki.

History
The University of Otago, founded in 1869 by an ordinance of the Otago Provincial Council, is New Zealand’s oldest university. The new University was given 100,000 acres of pastoral land as an endowment and authorised to grant degrees in Arts, Medicine, Law and Music.

The University opened in July 1871 with a staff of just three Professors, one to teach Classics and English Language and Literature, another having responsibility for Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, and the third to cover Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy. The following year a Professor of Natural Science joined the staff. With a further endowment provided in 1872, the syllabus was widened and new lectureships established: lectures in Law started in 1873, and in 1875 courses began in Medicine. Lectures in Mining were given from 1872, and in 1878 a School of Mines was established.

The University was originally housed in a building (later the Stock Exchange) on the site of John Wickliffe House in Princes Street but it moved to its present site with the completion of the northern parts of the Clocktower and Geology buildings in 1878 and 1879.

The School of Dentistry was founded in 1907 and the School of Home Science (later Consumer and Applied Sciences) in 1911. Teaching in Accountancy and Commerce subjects began in 1912. Various new chairs and lectureships were established in the years between the two world wars, and in 1946 teaching began in the Faculty of Theology. The School of Physical Education was opened in 1947.
A federal University of New Zealand was established by statute in 1870 and became the examining and degree-granting body for all New Zealand university institutions until 1961. The University of Otago had conferred just one Bachelor of Arts degree, on Mr Alexander Watt Williamson, when in 1874 it became an affiliated college of the University of New Zealand.

In 1961 the University of New Zealand was disestablished, and the power to confer degrees was restored to the University of Otago by the University of Otago Amendment Act 1961.

Since 1961, when its roll was about 3,000, the University has expanded considerably (in 2018 there were over 21,000 students enrolled) and has broadened its range of qualifications to include undergraduate programmes in Surveying, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Science, Teacher Education, Physiotherapy, Applied Science, Dental Technology, Radiation Therapy, Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy (now combined in an Oral Health programme), Biomedical Sciences, Social Work, and Performing Arts, as well as specialised postgraduate programmes in a variety of disciplines.

Although the University’s main campus is in Dunedin, it also has Health Sciences campuses in Christchurch (University of Otago, Christchurch) and Wellington (University of Otago, Wellington) (established in 1972 and 1977 respectively), an information and teaching centre in central Auckland (1996), and an information office in Wellington (2001).

The Dunedin College of Education merged with the University on 1 January 2007, and this added a further campus in Invercargill.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the University’s foundation, celebratory events will be held throughout 2019, the most important being a Convocation Ceremony, including the conferment of honorary degrees, on 1 June 2019.

**Governance**

The supreme governing body of the University is the Council, presided over by the Chancellor. When it was first established its members held office for life. Its constitution was progressively amended in 1891, 1911 and 1946 to provide for the representation of certain local bodies and educational groups, the graduates, the student body and non-professorial staff. The present structure of the Council was laid down in the Education Amendment Act 2015.

The Council is advised on academic matters by the Senate, the membership of which is drawn mainly from the Heads of academic Departments, but with representatives of other teaching staff and students. The Vice-Chancellor, who was designated as Chief Executive of the University by the Education Amendment Act 1990, convenes the Senate, which, in turn, is advised by the Divisional Boards and other Committees and Boards on matters which fall within their particular terms of reference.

In 1989 the internal governance of the University was reformed by grouping the existing departments, faculties, and schools into four academic Divisions (Commerce, Health Sciences, Humanities, and Sciences). Each academic Division is headed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Further changes to the executive group resulted in the appointment of two Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic, and Research and Enterprise) in 1994, a Chief Operating Officer in 2005, and a third Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) in 2015.

There are several non-teaching Divisions and Offices with responsibility for administrative, financial, and property and facilities matters, and for the provision of other services for staff, students and alumni (see University Staff section for the names of the various areas).
Coat of Arms

The University’s coat of arms was granted by the Lord Lyon King of Arms (Scotland’s premier officer of arms) on 21 January 1948. Its design is based on that of the unauthorised arms which appeared on the University’s seal in use by September 1870.

The blazon (technical description) of the arms is:

Azure, on a saltire cantoned between four mullets of six points Or, a book, gilt-edged and bound in a cover Gules charged with a mullet of six points of the second [i.e. Or] and a book-marker of the third [i.e. Gules] issuant from the page-foot, and in an Escrol under the same this Motto “SAPERE AUDE”.

(Lyon Register vol.36, p.102)

In ordinary language, the shield is blue, with a gold saltire (Saint Andrew’s cross) between four gold six-pointed stars. On the centre of the saltire there is a closed red book, gilt-edged and with a red book-marker protruding, bearing another gold six-pointed star on its cover.

The motto may be translated as ‘dare to be wise’ or ‘have courage to be wise’.

Academic Divisions

The University’s four academic Divisions include the staff in all of the Departments, Schools, and Faculties in each of the four groups of related disciplines. The Schools and Faculties within each Division, and their constituent Departments and other academic sections, are as follows:

Division of Humanities

School of Arts

Classics; English and Linguistics; History and Art History; Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies; Languages and Cultures; Philosophy; and Theology.

School of Geography (including the Centre for Sustainability)

School of Performing Art

Music; Theatre Studies; Dance Studies.

School of Social Sciences

Archaeology; Media, Film and Communication; National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies; Politics; Religion; Social Anthropology; Social Work; Sociology and Gender (including the Children’s Issues Centre).

Faculty of Law

Te Tumu: School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies

College of Education

The College also includes Education Support Services; Educational Assessment Research Unit; Centre for Distance Education and Learning Technologies; and Centre for Educational Leadership and Administration.