



# Pacific Islands Studies

Rediscover the Pacific

All of us trying to find time  
to ta'olunga  
to meke  
to tamule  
to siva  
into our truest selves

(Karlo Mila, excerpt from *On joining Pasifika*)

New Zealand is the world's largest Polynesian country, and the number of institutions and businesses needing employees with knowledge of Pacific cultures and societies is growing rapidly.

Excellent employment prospects await graduates who have knowledge of issues affecting Pacific peoples and skills in intercultural communication in the Pacific context.

0800 80 80 98 | [otago.ac.nz](http://otago.ac.nz) | txt 866 | [university@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university@otago.ac.nz)



## What is Pacific Islands Studies?

Pacific Islands Studies is a unique programme with a multi-disciplinary orientation that examines contemporary issues of importance to Pacific peoples, including New Zealanders, within their broad cultural context.

The course covers the geographical area contained within the Polynesian Triangle defined by Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa as well as the islands of Melanesia and Micronesia. The focus of the programme affirms New Zealand's location within the Pacific and its acknowledged political, intellectual and diplomatic links in the area.

## Pacific Islands Studies at Otago

Pacific Islands Studies combines well with other papers from a wide range of subjects, including Anthropology, Sociology, Politics, Indigenous Development, Geography, Planning, Management and History. We help you to interpret these different disciplines from a Pacific Islands point of view.

The major comprises 9 papers from within Pacific Islands Studies, plus an additional 11 papers either from within Pacific Islands Studies and/or from other subjects. You can choose from a broad range of papers on Māori, Pacific and other Indigenous societies, and from a range of departments to suit your areas of interest.

Pacific Islands Studies can be studied as a major or a minor subject within the 3-year Bachelor of Arts degree. Further study in this area is available at a postgraduate level (Masters, PhD). There is also an option to undertake a jointly supervised postgraduate degree with other departments in the University.

Throughout your degree you will be challenged to analyse and critique the world in which we live and to design and conduct research that will encourage open-minded solutions.

## Areas of learning

A particular strength of this subject area is its cross-disciplinary nature, readily combining indigenous knowledge with a range of other disciplines. Papers in the programme cover topics such as Pacific people's issues, Pacific

prehistory, Pacific history, Pacific religion and church history, Pacific art history, intercultural film and media studies as well as Māori culture and history.

You are required to do core papers in Pacific Islands Studies in combination with papers offered in participating departments that have a particular indigenous focus. These departments/subject areas include:

- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Geography
- History
- Indigenous Development
- Māori Studies
- Media, Film and Communication
- Music
- Politics
- Social Work
- Theology

Because of the multi-disciplinary nature of this major you are able to tailor your own programme of study by choosing papers that suit your interests and career needs.

## Why study Pacific Islands Studies?

"Growing up in Samoa I took my culture for granted, but my studies made me realize how much I still had to learn about Pacific people and their past. Culture is not a static entity, and our future depends on understanding those around us." (Malia Lameta, MA graduate, Pacific Islands Studies)

Whether you want to promote the interests of Pacific Island peoples locally or around the world, doing a major in Pacific Islands Studies will help you achieve this.

In this programme of study you will learn the value of indigenous knowledge, how it can be preserved, transferred and adapted to suit the needs of modern indigenous communities.

These communities exist in a constantly changing environment. Being able to track the effect of

these changes provides insights into how to formulate better, relevant and more inclusive policies and plans for future development.

Knowledge of Pacific Island cultures has its place in every aspect of society. No matter your interest, Pacific Islands Studies complements many courses of study:

- environmental sustainability
- resource management
- agriculture
- policy development
- education
- language revitalisation
- primary health care and preventative medicine
- economic wellbeing and independence
- community development

## Career opportunities

Our students are equipped with an understanding of Pacific Islands and indigenous cultural philosophies that are relevant in a myriad of employment situations

A background in Pacific Islands Studies creates opportunities for international careers, not only in the Pacific, but also with Pacific peoples in the Americas, Asia and Australia. Knowledge gained in the course is applicable to issues affecting indigenous peoples anywhere in the world.

Graduates with a background of study in Pacific Islands Studies bring to employers a wide range of skills. The multidisciplinary focus of the course provides a wide perspective giving graduates:

- an understanding of contemporary Pacific people's issues combined with an understanding of, for example, history, archaeology, cultural expression and environmental concerns
- an awareness of ethical issues in relation to Pacific Islanders in the context of past and present colonial practices, gender relations and society and culture
- skills in intercultural communication in the Pacific context

## PROFILE

### Zipporah Lagaluga

BA Pacific Islands Studies, minor in Psychology, LLB

When Zipporah Lagaluga signed up to do a 100-level Pacific Islands Studies paper in her first year, she thought 'I already know all this, being a Pacific Islander myself. Instead, the paper "blew my mind because it was about issues that I knew very little about, or was even unaware of, such as shanty towns and what was happening to older people in the Pacific Islands".

Zipporah went on to major in Pacific Islands Studies for her Bachelor of Arts and loved it. "I really enjoyed looking at specific case studies, especially in the Polynesian area and Niue, where I'm from. It gave me a different perspective on how I value my culture within the context of living in New Zealand. It changed my world view and there are many overlaps and links with Law, which I also studied."

In her third year Zipporah tutored for Te Tumu – School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies. "I remember in my first year hiding in the corner, and now I was in front of the classroom myself. Te Tumu gave me a great opportunity for personal growth, I learned a lot and was able to give back too."

Before coming to Otago, Zipporah did a lot of research and decided that Otago had a good campus lifestyle. "I come from a big Niuean family who are based in Auckland and I wanted a change of scenery. I wanted to see if I could be independent and felt that Dunedin was the best place to grow as a person. It took me a bit to get used to the cold but now I miss it!"

Zipporah has recently completed her Professional Legal Studies course and is in the process of applying for her licence from the New Zealand Law Society.

"I want to work in family and employment law – there's a huge need for Pacific people."



For questions about  
Pacific Islands Studies  
[otago.ac.nz/te-tumu](http://otago.ac.nz/te-tumu)