

INFORMATION SHEET ENGLISH



English

Shaping the World with Words

Photo of Jaume Plensa sculpture, 'Nomade'

“Studying English makes you a strong candidate for most jobs because of the excellent communication skills you learn and the ability to see things outside the square. The study of literature teaches you empathy.”

Amie Richardson BA(Hons)
Freelance Writer and TV Researcher

Writers of literature take us on pleasurable and challenging journeys of the imagination. Studying English helps you read more deeply, in fiction, poetry and critical prose, and take in the sounds and signs of language in the world around you. Studying English also helps to develop writing skills for your own communication, whether for creative pleasure or for your profession.

At Otago you can study literature from Old English to contemporary poetry and prose, New Zealand literature, post-colonial literature, popular literature such as crime fiction, and critical theory.

The Department offers courses in creative writing, and writing for professional purposes.

YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

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Why study English?

Literature in English embodies a high level of creative insight into human behaviours, preoccupations, politics and passions.

English at Otago teaches the arts of reading and writing in an integrated way, by studying and discussing literary texts, and by practising the techniques of writing.

By learning about language from its best practitioners, students gain critical skills that are valued by employers, governments and educationalists; skills that are essential for people taking an active role in an open society.

By immersing yourself in literature, you will gain a unique understanding of the roots of society and its cultures and also develop your own powers of analysis, creativity and imagination.

English and your career

English develops key skills in critical thinking, cultural awareness, and communication, which are essential in all workplaces, and are increasingly sought after by employers.

Our graduates are working as editors, copy-writers and in publishing, as creative writers or journalists, teachers, librarians and educational administrators. English graduates may be found in the public service, as analysts, diplomats, politicians, and policy-makers. Others have become ministers of religion, arts administrators, and broadcasters.

Otago has an excellent record of preparing students for postgraduate study in English and related disciplines, both in New Zealand and overseas. Recent Otago graduates have gone on to study at top Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, and Harvard, and Otago graduates hold positions at universities in Britain, Australia, and North America.

Teaching Style

Undergraduate courses involve a combination of small-scale, discussion-based classes (tutorials) and larger-class teaching (lectures), which generally involve a variety of departmental staff. In upper-level courses, class sizes are generally smaller and opportunities for discussion greater. At second and especially third year, there is generally a greater emphasis placed on independent and exploratory learning and research.

English at Otago

The Department teaches almost forty undergraduate courses, covering a diverse range of historical periods, literary styles, and national literatures. Papers offered at first year include:

- Practical introductions to effective writing and effective communication
- A study of 'controversial classics,' literary works that have stirred passion and outrage over the centuries

Later year offerings allow students to follow their own interests, supported by the research strengths of the department, which include:

- New Zealand and postcolonial literature
- Modernist, 20th-century, and contemporary literature
- 18th- and 19th-century British literature
- Renaissance literature and Shakespeare
- Old and Middle English literature
- The history of the book
- Writing for professional purposes
- Creative writing

Teaching in the Department is informed by the latest research. All members of the Department of English and Linguistics are actively engaged in research and publish leading contributions in their fields.

Major or Minor in English

English is available as both a major and a minor subject. It can be combined with another BA major or form part of a double degree. A major in English provides you with flexible communication and analytical skills and a deeper knowledge of the world's most widely spoken language. It also complements study in any other subject. The major comprises 9 English papers, plus an additional 11 papers from English and/or other subjects.

Minor in Writing

The Department also offers a minor in Writing, incorporating a total of 5 papers across the undergraduate levels. A minor in Writing provides you with invaluable skills no matter what subject you are studying.

Honours in English

Students who do well in the early stages of their degree will be invited to apply to enter Honours at the conclusion of the BA. The BA (Hons) is a rigorous one-year course, offering advanced study in English and the opportunity for students to conduct their own independent research.

Postgraduate Study in English

The Department has a strong and growing postgraduate programme where students complete MA and PhD degrees. Both these degrees involve the writing of a thesis, a piece of independent research, under the supervision of one or more of the members of the Department. The Department's broad range of expertise allows students to undertake MA and PhD research on a wide range of topics.

PROFILE

Kate Newton BA (Honours) English
Journalist, Radio New Zealand

Kate Newton knew she wanted to be a journalist by the end of High School. "I loved following politics and current affairs and also wanted to end up doing something that allowed me to write for a living."

Kate chose to study English to prepare herself for her chosen career. "Studying English encouraged me to look at the world through endless lenses, windows and perspectives I didn't even know existed. The degree not only gave me fantastic communication and analytical skills - it taught me the importance of sitting back and listening to another person's story."

In her final year of University, Kate applied for the Fairfax internship scheme and was offered a place by *The Dominion Post*. During her year of journalism school at Massey in Wellington, Kate interned at *The Dominion Post* and was offered a permanent job there once she finished.

In 2013, Kate took up a position in the Auckland newsroom of Radio New Zealand. "There seems to be no end to the variety of human experience I get to witness - whether it's reporting on the Kim Dotcom legal saga, the arrival and settlement of Afghan interpreters who worked for New Zealand's defence force in Bamiyan province...or the Hyde Street keg party."

Kate notes that her "Honours year was especially rewarding. To get to spend a year working on an original piece of research, surrounded by a tight-knit group of people all doing the same thing, was such a privilege. The small class sizes and knowing that everyone there was as interested as I was meant tutorials become engaging conversations, and I really felt like I was part of the department. I'm so proud of what I achieved in honours. I still have a copy of my dissertation, and sometimes think - did I write that?"



For questions about English
otago.ac.nz/englishlinguistics

