Law at Otago

Studying law at the University of Otago is one of the best decisions you will ever make.
Welcome to the Faculty of Law at the University of Otago. Established in 1873, we are New Zealand’s first law school with a long history and tradition of providing a world-class legal education.

We take pride in ensuring that our students receive the best possible education at all stages of their law degree. We provide a strong collegial atmosphere and exceptional pastoral care with staff who are always willing to assist students with any concerns they may have.

Otago graduates are highly sought after around New Zealand and the world, as they exemplify the necessary skills and expertise to be highly valuable employees or to be self-employed, as well as making important contributions to their communities.
Student success

Our students perform very well. In recent years we have produced 10 Rhodes Scholars – more than any other faculty or school, across all disciplines and New Zealand universities – and we also have the highest student pass rates of all New Zealand law schools.

A great number of Otago law students also achieve success in national and international law competitions – a barometer of our ability to educate and prepare top-quality graduates.

Otago law students have won the National Legal Research Foundation award for best student research nine times in the last 11 years. The New Zealand Law Students’ Journal was also set up and is run by Otago law students.

Legal Research

We are home to three respected multidisciplinary research centres:

• New Zealand Law Foundation Centre for Law and Policy in Emerging Technologies
• University of Otago Legal Issues Centre
• International Centre for Society, Governance and Science

1 Based on the Government’s latest PBRF ranking
After attending Havelock North High School, Louis Chambers came to Otago to study a double degree in Law (with Honours) and Arts majoring in Economics, with a minor in Environmental Management.

“Adjusting to life in Otago was not always easy: having grown up in a small town in Hawke's Bay, it was my first time away from home. I was lucky to have a brilliant and kind first-year law tutor, Kate Muirhead, and I found the Otago Law Faculty approachable and supportive.”

From early on, Louis was particularly interested in issues of climate change and sustainability. As a university student, Louis joined a group of young New Zealanders whose experience attending global climate change summits led them to found Generation Zero, a youth climate advocacy organisation that campaigns for responsible policy changes to reduce New Zealand’s emissions.

Alongside his legal studies and advocating for climate change, Louis and a fellow law student, Alice Osman, entered and won the 2011 Australian Law Students' Association Mooting Competition. As well as competing in debating, Louis served as President of the University of Otago Debating Society for two years. In his final year at Otago, Louis worked with a fellow Otago alumnus, Matt Smith, and another debater, Max Harris, to launch Law for Change, a nationwide network to inspire students and young professionals to pursue public interest legal careers.

Louis gained further hands-on experience through a Summer Clerkship with Russell McVeagh and an internship in Washington, DC working for the Environmental Defense Fund, a non-governmental environmental advocacy organisation known for its science-based, non-partisan approach.

In 2012, Louis was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to study at the University of Oxford. After studying a Master of Public Policy and a Master of Economics for Development, Louis is now working in London at McKinsey & Company, a multinational management consulting firm which works with many of the world’s most influential businesses and institutions.

“The skills I learnt at Otago – in logic, in thorough research, and in concise communication – continue to serve me today, whether I am helping to design a strategy for a new not-for-profit or interrogating differences in political systems with peers from Oxford.”

International Students
Otago’s Faculty of Law has a vibrant, strong academic community and welcomes international students, who bring a highly valued diversity and perspective.

If you are an international student considering studying law at Otago, the best place to begin your enquiries is through the University’s International Office’s team of dedicated advisers.

Exchange
Many of our law students enjoy the opportunity to go on exchange during their studies. The University of Otago has exchange agreements with over 90 institutions worldwide. Students pay standard tuition fees to the home university and receive credits towards their qualification.

Postgraduate Study
Otago’s postgraduate law programmes challenge you intellectually, while developing your independent research skills. As a postgraduate law student, you are part of the Faculty. Students are invited to seminars and events. Your supervisors are international experts in their fields of research and provide excellent support and mentoring.

The University of Otago offers several postgraduate scholarships and awards for domestic and international students. The New Zealand Government provides NZAID Scholarships and New Zealand International Doctoral Research Scholarships, while the New Zealand Law Society and New Zealand Law Foundation also offer scholarships.

Becoming a Barrister or Solicitor
For those students who wish to practice law, following the completion of your LLB degree, you must also complete the Professional Legal Studies Course at either the Institute of Professional Legal Studies or College of Law. This is normally a 13-week course and allows you to be admitted to the roll of barristers and solicitors of the High Court of New Zealand.
Why study Law?

The LLB degree provides an excellent grounding in skills such as analysing, decision making, negotiation, researching and forming legal and other arguments. Law graduates are skilled in the precise use of oral and written language and these skills are used in a variety of occupations. Among the students enrolling in the first-year law paper are many who want to gain an understanding of how the law works in New Zealand as part of their degree course. These include students enrolled in Commerce, Science, Physical Education, Health Science, Arts, Consumer and Applied Science and other degrees.

The Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and the Bachelor of Laws (Honours) LLB (Hons) degrees are both four-year professional programmes. Most law students at Otago complete double degrees, using Otago’s flexible cross credit system, which opens up even greater job opportunities.

Background required

There are no specific requirements regarding subjects taken at school for entry into first-year law. In general, students are advised to take subjects at school that interest them and that they do well in. Good language (English) and analysis (Maths) skills are useful. Another relevant subject, normally first encountered at university, is philosophy. You could develop your language and analysis skills by taking part in activities such as drama and debating.

First-year Law

If you intend to complete a four-year Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, you must take the following 100-level papers:

LAWS 101 The Legal System and 72 – 108 additional points (4 – 6 papers) at 100-level. For the additional 72 – 108 points at 100-level, no specific papers are required or recommended, but you are advised to include papers from your area of second preference in case you do not gain admission to second-year law and then wish to go on in another degree. If you wish to do a double degree programme, you should choose the subjects of your intended second degree.

Note: You will need 72 non-law points to be eligible for admission to second-year law and a total of 108 before you graduate with an LLB.

Second-year and Beyond

Admission to second-year law is restricted to 200 students and is based on the strength of the student’s academic record at university with a particular emphasis on the mark achieved for The Legal System. The second-year course consists of papers in Criminal Law, Law of Contract, Property Law, and Public Law as well as a programme of research and writing. These papers are fundamental to the understanding of law, and provide a foundation for advanced papers in subsequent years.

In the third and fourth years, students have three compulsory papers: the Law of Torts, Jurisprudence, and Legal Ethics. To complete the degree, you need an additional 195 points from a wide range of optional law papers that are offered. Students will also continue with a programme of research and writing, and a short programme to develop skills of oral advocacy.

Honours

Law students of higher ability are offered opportunities to enrol for the LLB (Hons) degree, which involves supervised research in addition to the work required for the ordinary LLB degree.
The University of Otago and the Faculty of Law provide a unique and vibrant environment for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

**Student support**
The University of Otago offers a high level of support to students, so that you have every chance of success during your time at Otago. Faculty of Law staff are happy to see you (at a convenient time) to discuss your work or specific problems – academic or otherwise.

**Scholarships**
There are a number of scholarships available for those wishing to study law. You can visit the scholarships page on our website as well as the main University of Otago scholarships page.

**Accommodation**
The University has 15 residential colleges for students – each with its own character and history. If you prefer private accommodation, living costs in Dunedin are relatively affordable. The Student Accommodation Centre can help you with any questions you have about accommodation in Dunedin.

**Māori support services**
The University of Otago Māori Centre – Te Huka Mātauraka works from a kaupapa Māori philosophy. It strives to support Māori students in their pursuit of academic excellence and works to strengthen cultural and social networks available for students. The centre offers tutorials for the LAWS 101 The Legal System paper and all 200-level law papers.

**Pacific Islands Centre**
The University of Otago’s Pacific Islands Centre is there to help students of Pacific descent do well during their time at Otago. It offers advice on all aspects of campus life and organises academic, cultural and social events throughout the year.

**Students with disabilities**
The advisers at the University’s Disability Information and Support Office are there to discuss any problems you may be having with your studies. Law students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact the Faculty of Law Administrator to advise of their needs.

**Law Student Associations**
Students work collegially at the Faculty and there are dedicated law student associations who offer mentoring and support as well as organising law competitions and social events.

- SOULS
- Te Roopū Whai Pūtake
- Pacific Island Law Students’ Association

**Sir Robert Stout Law Library**
The Robert Stout Law Library is a fantastic facility for our students and provides an outstanding physical and online resource for law students, academic staff and practitioners.

**Proven Top Educational Performance**
The University of Otago has topped all but one of the key indicators measuring educational performance of students at New Zealand's universities. The Tertiary Education Commission’s Educational Performance Indicators (EPIs) for 2015 examine areas such as overall course and qualification completions, retention rates and progression to higher levels of study. Otago placed first in the ‘Students retained in study’ (90%) and a very close second in the ‘First year retention rate’ (82%) indicators and first in ‘Completion of qualifications’ (85%) and ‘Cohort-based qualification completion’ (70%). Otago also topped ‘EFTS-weighted course completion’ (89%). The University led the way as well in ‘Progression to higher levels of study’ (95%).

**Otago University Students’ Association – OUSA**
OUSA provides support for students via its Student Support Centre. OUSA is also home to Queer Support.
Careers

Here at Otago, our primary mission is to ensure our students have successful and rewarding careers. A law degree from Otago is a professional degree that can lead you to both expected and unexpected careers.

The legal training you receive from Otago will equip you with analytical and problem solving skills that are an asset to future employers. Staff work closely with students to help progress the best career opportunities and work placements.

Extensive support for helping students into employment include:

- CV workshops
- Interview skills workshops
- Law careers fairs
- Presentations by employers
- Job search strategies and networking advice
- Personalised career counselling and advice
- Job tips

Otago lawyers are recognised in New Zealand and overseas as trusted advisers, skilled advocates and leaders in business and government. Many Otago law graduates choose other occupations where they can use their legal skills – there are many other career pathways where a law degree will give you an advantage.

### Careers in Law

**Private Practice**
- Large firm
- Medium firm
- Small firm
- Sole Barrister
- New Zealand/Australia/United Kingdom

**Legal Areas**
- Commercial
- Civil
- Family
- Criminal
- Resource Management
- International
- Public
- Environmental
- Intellectual Property
- Labour
- Biotechnology
- Cyberspace, e-commerce
- Property
- Sports
- Insurance
- Taxation
- Animal

**Public Service**
- Crown Law
- Ministry of Justice
- Treasury
- Public Trust
- Inland Revenue Department
- Department of Labour
- Ministry of Consumer Affairs
- Department of Conservation
- Ministry for Primary Industries
- Human Rights Commission
- Serious Fraud Office
- Office of Film and Literature Classification
- Child, Youth and Family
- Parliamentary Counsel Office
- Law Commission
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- ACC
- Ombudsman
- Local Government
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Children’s Commissioner
- Health and Disability Commissioner
- Te Puni Kōkiri
- Medical Disciplinary Tribunal
- Police
- Office of Treaty Settlements
- Ministry of Defence
- Coroner’s Office

**International Public Service**
- War Claims Tribunals – Yugoslavia
- Amnesty International
- Greenpeace
- International Labour Organisations
- International Criminal Court
- Humanitarian Organisations
- NGO’s

**Knowledge Economy**
- Patent Attorney
- Law and Scientific development and research
- Law and the Genome Project
- Environment impact – GE and the law
- Cloning – Legal implications

**Private Commercial Sector**
- Lawyer for large company e.g. Electricity Corporation
- Banking and Finance
- Oil companies
- Insurance companies
- Mining companies
- Lawyer for large accountancy firm
- Chief Executive and management roles because of expertise in law and analytical skills

**Academic**
- Polytechnics – business law courses
- Schools – introductory law
- New Zealand and international universities

**Related**
- Journalism
- Banking
- Investment
- Finance
- Public Relations
- Consultants
- Diplomat
- Drama/TV
Career Development Centre

Students at Otago have access to the University’s Career Development Centre. Staff will help you explore career ideas and assist with course advice, as well as providing personal career counselling and information about specific jobs, employers and further study.

For more information about the Career Development Centre you can visit: otago.ac.nz/careers

Summer clerking with a law firm

Law students who have completed three or four years of study have the opportunity to apply for summer clerking positions. Over the summer period – typically late November to mid February – students can work for law firms and gain experience for their future career as a lawyer. These positions are advertised throughout the year for clerking during the following summer. Most of New Zealand’s major law firms and several boutique and regional firms participate in this programme, and recruit in March for positions over the following summer. There is also the opportunity to apply for summer clerking positions in Australia.

Volunteer opportunities

There are many opportunities to get practical legal experience that will help when you are looking for a job:

- SOULS Tenancy Programme
- The Innocence Project
- Public Interest Law Network
- Otago Students Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Law for Change
- Ignite Consulting
- New Zealand Law Students’ Journal
- Ngāi Tahu Māori Law Centre

Dunedin Community Law Centre

Otago’s Faculty of Law has a long relationship with the Dunedin Community Law Centre.

Students in their third, fourth, fifth or sixth year of law can apply to volunteer at the centres. Volunteer student advisers work under the supervision of a shift leader and a volunteer lawyer.

Positions are advertised in early February (for volunteering from March to October/November) and in October (for volunteering over summer).