PACIFICANA
Support for Pacific students at Otago
The information provided in this booklet is, as far as possible, up to date and accurate at the time of publication.

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The University of Otago was New Zealand’s first university and remains its finest, with an outstanding international reputation for the quality of its teaching and research. Otago graduates hold key positions in many countries around the world.

For many years the University of Otago has welcomed students from the Pacific Islands. After graduating from the University, many of these people have provided notable leadership and service in their own countries (including several Prime Ministers). Increasingly Pacific students born in New Zealand are also choosing the University of Otago for their education.

The University’s commitment to Pacific aspirations is articulated in its Pacific Strategic Framework (2013–2020), which marks a significant milestone in the University’s longstanding engagement with local, national and regional Pacific communities. The Framework is ambitious in scope and sets targets to support the development of activities that promote improved rates of access, retention and completion among students of indigenous Pacific descent.

On behalf of everyone at the University of Otago, I would like to offer a very warm welcome to Pacific students. We are delighted to have you here, and will do anything possible to make your time at Otago fruitful and enjoyable.

PROFESSOR HARLENE HAYNE
ONZM, PhD, HonDSc, FRSNZ
Vice-Chancellor
The University of Otago has had a long relationship with people of the Pacific who, whether Island-born or New Zealand-born, are high achievers.

Our ancestors journeyed the rough seas to bring us to this new country that many of us now call home. They appreciated the opportunities here and sought to pursue them. Our obligation or duty remains the same. It is your job, students, to take our communities further into the big world full of wonderful opportunities. Education was one of the main reasons we migrated and continue to do so – to ensure our fanau receive the opportunities that come from it. The Pacific Islands Centre’s primary role is to help you utilise those opportunities.

Together with the academic divisions, the Centre works to ensure the success of our Pacific students. The Dunedin campus is just like a village of families, aiga or kainga – small and friendly, with everyone looking out for one another.

You will be welcomed as a family member, and we will make sure that you return to your family and community with your mission accomplished. Life is all about taking up opportunities and running with them. It’s all about you – the student – and how much you want to succeed. All you need to bring with you is your determination to succeed.

TOFILAU NINA KIRIFI-ALAI
Manager, Pacific Islands Centre

Talofa lava and warm Pacific greetings
We understand that leaving the support of family, friends and familiar surroundings can be hard. At Otago, we provide the support and care necessary to ensure students study hard, enjoy life and succeed in ways that will enrich their own lives and the lives of those around them.

For some students, going to university is a family tradition. For others, it may be a family or community dream. Many Pacific Islanders leave the warmth of their shores to seek new opportunities and ensure their children access the excellent education New Zealand can offer.

The University of Otago is well aware of the aspirations Pacific people have for their young people, and has been heavily involved in realising these educational dreams since the late 1960s. It is also aware that for an increasing number, university is a new experience, and they are blazing a trail for others to follow. It’s an important start in life, and one that will influence lifetime choices in years to come.

At university, students gain skills that can help to improve their own lives, the lives of their families and communities.

Why choose the University of Otago?

- 20,000 students, including more than 930 Pacific students.
- NZ’s top university for students’ educational performance.
- 136 Pacific students in health professional courses in 2017 (the largest Pacific intake ever).
- 85% of our students come from outside Dunedin.
- Otago scores the highest possible international quality rating for excellence and quality.
- 94% of our graduates go into work or on to further study.
Support for Pacific students at Otago

No matter where you are, there will always be someone you can talk to about coming to Otago – the University has a real commitment to Pacific students and the community.

Our schools’ liaison officers based in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin visit secondary schools throughout the country to introduce the University to students. They assist with course planning and application forms and are also involved in schools’ careers evenings. You will find staff from Otago to talk to at most major tertiary expos around the country.

Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai, the manager of the Pacific Islands Centre, and Christine Anesone, the Pacific Islands community liaison officer, are on campus in Dunedin.

Christine’s role is to visit families and communities and provide support and information to help prepare students for a successful transition to Otago. Both Tofilau Nina and Christine attend Pasifika festivals and expos, and host community fonos/meetings around the country.

Eric Nabalagi, the Pacific Students’ Transition Officer, is also based in the Pacific Islands Centre. Eric ensures that Pacific students transition successfully into the tertiary environment, and that they utilise all of the support available to them.

There is strong support for Pacific students from the four academic divisions, service divisions and from the International Office.

There is also an established Pacific community in Dunedin, which contributes to pastoral care.
Otago’s Pacific Islands Centre is a little bit of the Pacific right in the middle of campus! It’s a welcoming environment – with study rooms, computers and kitchen facilities – designed to help all students of Pacific descent to make the most of their time at university.

Many students have just left their parents and need someone to help them with things they have never had to deal with before. They use the Centre for advice on anything from academic assistance, scholarships, accommodation issues, legal matters, immigration questions, airfares and places to worship – or just to have a chat.

The Centre also helps with fellowships, information about Church groups, Pacific Islands community network, advocacy, career advice, and lots more.

**Course information and advice**

The Pacific Islands Centre offers career planning and course guidance to ensure you are studying the right subjects to achieve your goals, and offers direction to existing services.

**Cultural, health and pastoral support**

If a listening ear is what you need, then Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai – the Pacific Islands Centre Manager – is only too happy to provide it. She is also able to put you in contact with community elders and ministers who can provide care and support.

Otago has a very inexpensive Student Health and Counselling Centre, which is there to help students mentally and physically – so they can make the most of their Otago experience.

Of course, the Pacific Islands Centre is a great place to meet other people who are in exactly the same situation as you.
Supplementary tutorials

If students require supplementary tutorials on a paper, the Pacific Islands Centre can help to arrange this, and can help establish study groups. The tutorials are free and the tutors are from the academic departments.

POPO: The Pacific Orientation Programme at Otago

Funded by the Ministry of Health, the Pacific Orientation Programme at Otago (POPO) runs annually in the first semester.

POPO is an 11-week programme, designed for Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) students who want to work in health-related professions. The programme helps students engage with, and benefit from, all available support services. This gives them the best possible chance to succeed at university. POPO nurtures the aspirations of students, helping them to “capture the moment” for success.

Orientation

At the beginning of the university year, a special Pacific Orientation programme is held. Organised by the Pacific Islands Centre, its aim is to help newcomers find their feet and to tell them where they can get support.

The Orientation runs for a whole week and students are provided with all the necessary information from academic departments and course advisers, to places of worship. This Orientation week of events ends with the annual University of Otago Pacific Welcome, a formal event where students, parents and staff all come together to celebrate and worship before the start of another academic year.

Soon after Orientation there are several welcome events for Pacific students to meet support groups within their academic divisions, and an Academic Mentoring evening where tutorials and mentoring details are confirmed. Specialised orientation programmes are also run for each academic division.

“The staff at the Pacific Islands Centre have given me massive help with tutorials, and when you combine those with my college and the University, you know they’re all aiming to get you the best academic results possible.”

Declan Su’a
Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Economics) student
Taimane Academic Mentoring Programme

The Academic Mentoring Programme is run and co-ordinated by the Pacific Islands Centre and the academic divisions, and is aimed at helping Pacific students succeed and maximise their full potential while at Otago.

Just as the Taimane has four sides, so does the academic mentoring programme. Students are contacted four times during the semester to ensure they are settling in and coping well with their studies.

Each student on the programme is assigned an academic mentor with whom they meet regularly to ensure their studies are going smoothly.

Mentors help make sure students are coping with their coursework, give tips on writing essays and preparing for exams, and can recognise if a student requires extra tutorials on a subject.

All Pacific students are encouraged to actively engage in the Taimane Academic Mentoring Programme, especially first-year students.

Talanoa with our matua, our parents

As Pacific Islanders, our strength comes with our value of being together, praying together, growing up together and living together – that is our point of difference.

However, there is a time when we must allow our fanau to leave home to ensure they are exposed to the great opportunities out there, gain an education and return home successfully – to continue to build warm, safe and happy families and communities.

The Pacific Islands Centre is aware of this and it is the fundamental value that encapsulates all its services. Tofilau Nina and staff are available to meet with parents and communities to plan a pathway for our fanau and to answer all your enquiries. You are an important part of our fanau’s journey and we look forward to working together with you to ensure our success as a community.
New students are generally encouraged to spend their first year at a residential college. These collegiate communities are led by professional staff who are specialists in supporting and caring for young people away from home for the first time. They offer quality accommodation, tutorials, a full meal plan, cleaning, study facilities, academic development, active social and community volunteering opportunities, new friends and, most of all, peace of mind.

Other options include private boarding or flatting, which can also be very successful experiences. The Pacific Islands Centre works with the University’s Student Accommodation Centre to assist students with finding appropriate accommodation.

The Pacific Islands Centre can also help arrange temporary accommodation with a member of the Pacific community for students settling into the city.

As more than 85 per cent of new students come from outside Dunedin, the University of Otago places great importance on the provision of high quality accommodation through its residential colleges.

Accommodation

Our residential colleges accommodate around 3,500 students.

98% of students provide a positive assessment of their colleges.
One of the benefits for students choosing to study away from home at Otago is that they will mature and learn to take responsibility for themselves.

Families can rest assured that the environment is closely monitored by the community-minded Campus Watch team, as well as a range of support services including Student Health, the Chaplaincy Service, Student Learning Development and the Otago University Students’ Association (OUSA).

Together the whole system of integrated services goes a long way to make Otago a safe place to live, but also academically supportive, enabling students to reach their full potential.

“My first year didn’t go exactly to plan, but after finding my feet and creating a balance between study and sport I was able to get back on track. I’m now pursuing musculoskeletal physiotherapy to be able to work with athletes as well as giving back to Māori and Pacific communities.”

Wyllis Korent
Bachelor of Physiotherapy student
Academic support

Le Moana Action Group aims to co-ordinate all the support services on campus for Pacific students.

Chaired by Tofilau Nina, Le Moana Action Group includes staff from the Pacific Islands Centre and support officers from the four academic divisions. At monthly meetings the group discusses best practice and shares information to ensure no Pacific student falls through the cracks. The group also regularly meets with the Director of Student Success, the Director of Student and Academic Services, and the Director of the Pacific Development Office as well as the Associate Deans (Pacific) within each academic division.

LE MOANA ACTION GROUP MEMBERS

Health Sciences

The Pacific Islands Research & Student Support Unit (PIRSSU) looks after approximately 500 Pacific students from New Zealand and the Pacific region studying in the Division of Health Sciences. We offer excellent support for Pacific students in health professional and allied health programmes, nurture successful research careers, and offer quality pastoral care in an inclusive cultural environment. We look forward to welcoming you to our Pacific community in Health Sciences.

Fran Cockerell  
PIRSSU Manager

I am of Tokelauan and European descent. I joined Va’a o Tautai in 2017 in the role of PIRSSU Manager.

In my role I am responsible for overseeing the academic and pastoral support of Pacific students within Health Sciences. As well as supervising the PIRSSU student support staff, I work directly with students, specifically around matters relating to admission to the health professional programmes and entry into the health workforce. I work closely with the Pacific support staff across the University, including those located in Christchurch and Wellington.

fran.cockerell@otago.ac.nz

Otago Business School

Esmay Eteuati  
Associate Dean Pacific and Pacific Islands Academic Adviser

I am of Samoan heritage, and have lived and worked in New Zealand and Samoa. An Otago graduate, I am here to help guide, grow, nurture and provide support to all Pacific students studying at the Otago Business School.

esmay.eteuati@otago.ac.nz
Humanities
Inano Walter
Pacific Islands Students’ Support Officer

I am of Cook Island and European descent and I have a Bachelor of Arts, an honours degree and a Master of Arts in History from Otago. I am excited to be supporting and encouraging all Pacific humanities students as I have traversed the same path. I am here to work with you, support you and assist you on your academic journey at Otago – your home away from home.

pacificsupport.humanities@otago.ac.nz

Sciences
The Division of Sciences Pacific Islands’ Support office network is here for all students of Pacific descent taking any Science papers.

divscipi@otago.ac.nz

Dr Marie Inder
Project Manager: Pacific Islands Student Support

I am of Samoan and New Zealand heritage and have a Bachelor of Science, a master’s and a PhD from Otago, with a background in microbiology. I am the support person for all Pacific students enrolled in Science papers and degrees, and can help you with advice and work with you in planning study and exam timetables. I can also connect you with our network of Departmental Pacific Students Support Liaisons across the Science subjects.

marie.inder@otago.ac.nz

“I’ve had great support academically. I was spoiled for choice early on with tutorials from my residential college, which is awesome, and the departments and the Pacific Islands Centre, where I’ve mixed with lots of Island students and become much more connected with my Samoan heritage.”

Amalie Blackman
Master of Peace and Conflict Studies student
The Pacific Islands Centre helps organise and advise several student groups, which offer mentoring, and moral and cultural support.

**Cultural associations**

- Otago University Cook Islands Students’ Association
- Otago University Fijian Students’ Association
- Otago University Niuean Students’ Association
- Otago University Samoan Students’ Association
- Otago University Tokelau Students’ Association
- Otago University Tongan Students’ Association
- Otago University Wantok Students’ Association

**Academic Division associations**

- The Division of Health Sciences helps to organise the Pacific Islands Health Professional Students’ Association (PIHPSA).
- The Pacific Islands Law Students’ Association (PILSA) organises an annual Guest Lecture and runs support programmes during the year.
- The Science Students’ Pacific Islands Association (SSPIA) organises a student Welcome within the Sciences division, and gatherings and mentoring events to help students settle in to their studies.
- The Pacific at Commerce Students’ Association (PCom) runs Meet and Greet events for all Pacific students studying in the Otago Business School.

**Pacific Postgraduate Reference Group**

The Pacific Postgraduate Reference Group is a support group for our postgraduate students, involving monthly seminars and meetings. It is a place where postgraduate students can bring their frustrations and ideas, and seek and offer support. There is an annual Pacific Voices symposium where students present abstracts of their projects to an invited audience of academic staff and peers. These are published in the Pacific Voices booklet available at:

[otago.ac.nz/pacific/currentstudents/otago022943.html](otago.ac.nz/pacific/currentstudents/otago022943.html)
We run a number of outreach programmes and events to support your journey from secondary school to university, including opportunities to travel to Dunedin and experience life at Otago.

**Hands-On at Otago**

Hands-On at Otago is a week-long summer camp held at Otago in January. We offer scholarships for Pacific secondary students entering Year 12 or 13 to participate in the programme. They cover all costs for you to travel to Dunedin to experience Otago, while developing your knowledge, skills and passion for tertiary study.

**Pacific On-Campus Experience**

The Pacific On-Campus Experience coincides with Dunedin Tertiary Open Day in early May every year. Fifty students from around the country are sponsored to come to Dunedin for three days to experience life in a residential college, attend various programmes (including the Open Day) and start planning their academic journey.

**Dare to Succeed Programme**

This programme runs four times a year. It provides academic mentoring for local Pacific secondary school students, linking them with suitable undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University, providing positive role models and demystifying tertiary studies. Southland Girls College and Waitaki Boys High School students have also attended in recent years.

For information about these programmes and enrolling at Otago please contact Christine Anesone:

christine.anesone@otago.ac.nz
021 279 4574
The University of Otago offers a number of prestigious scholarships for students who have indigenous Pacific ancestry.

**University of Otago Pacific Peoples’ Entrance Scholarships**
Standard value of $10,000 for first-year Pacific students. For exceptional candidates, this scholarship can be awarded at a higher value, and for up to three years.

**University of Otago Māori and Pacific Islands Study Grants**
$3,000 for Māori and Pacific students progressing to their fourth year of study.

**Division of Humanities Pacific Bridging Scholarships**
$10,000 plus tuition fees for indigenous Pacific students with a bachelor’s degree intending to proceed to their first year of taught postgraduate study.

**University of Otago Pacific Islands Masters’ Scholarships**
$13,000 plus tuition fees for indigenous Pacific students to undertake a research master’s degree.
University of Otago Pacific Islands
Doctoral Scholarships

$25,000 per annum plus tuition fees for three years for indigenous Pacific students to undertake a PhD.
(International students may also apply for these scholarships.)

The New Zealand Government also offers New Zealand Scholarships through the New Zealand Aid programme to citizens of Pacific countries. To check if you might be eligible to apply for a New Zealand Scholarship please go to:


“Receiving a scholarship gave me an assurance that I would have a foundation financially, because coming into university there are many areas that need attention when you’re taking a leap in being independent.”

Susana Bryce
Foundation year student and scholarship recipient
Education is recognised as a key for ensuring the strong future of Pacific people. The University of Otago is extremely proud to play a part in assisting all Pacific people to excel.

Our Pacific students study across all subjects at the University, and have gone on to careers in various government ministries, religious roles, health, education, law, diplomacy and much more.

The Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, was welcomed with a kava ceremony during a visit to Otago in 2018.
There are currently approximately 930 students with Pacific heritage – both New Zealand- and Island-born – studying at Otago. These include students from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Tokelau Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Hawaii, Tahiti, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands. Pacific students also come here from Australia, Singapore, Dubai and the USA.

The University offers students the opportunity to learn about their own history and culture through papers and degrees offered at Te Tumu, the School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies. Pacific issues are also addressed in subjects across the University, including law, politics, health, sciences and music.

**Dunedin’s Pacific community**

Dunedin’s Pacific families welcome the young Pacific students who come to the city. They offer pastoral care to the new students, providing meals, advice and company to students who need their support. These families may even provide accommodation to young students when they first arrive in the city, or offer places for visiting relatives to stay.

“It was a big transition from my anga fakatonga. Being far away from home and the family I was out of my comfort zone. I had the island habit of being too shy to ask for help and being unable to speak up and voice my opinions, but staff and the other students were so friendly and welcoming it helped build my confidence. I started asking questions and approaching people for help – and once I did it was great. I don’t have words for how helpful the staff were.”

Katiani Molitika
Postgraduate Diploma in Science (Geography) student
To help get you into the picture of what’s going on in students’ lives, here’s a general guide to what happens during the university year.

**January**
- **Summer School**
- **Pacific Kickstart**
- **Hands on Otago** (a pathway programme in which Year 12 students spend a week in Dunedin experiencing, and preparing for, university life)
- **Otago University Advanced School Sciences Academy (OUASSA)**

**February**
- **Pacific Orientation**
- **Pacific Welcome** – the Vice-Chancellor welcomes students and parents
- **Pacific first-year students’ orientation programme**
- **Taimane semester one first phase**: students learn when tutorials will start and where they can find the right support
- **The Pacific Orientation Programme at Otago (POPO)** for first-year Health Science students
- **FOFOA orientation** (The FOFOA Accommodation Award is a project that ensures a smooth transition between home and university and from school to university studies)
- **Preliminary lectures**
March
Lectures start
Academic Divisional welcome
Taimane semester one second phase
Vice-Chancellor’s scholarship events

April
Taimane semester one third phase: how’s it going – swimming or sinking?
Mid-semester break

May
Vakavinavinaka – Pacific graduation celebrations for graduands and their families
Graduation ceremonies
Taimane fourth phase: exam workshops

June
Exams and holidays

July
Semester two re-orientation
Lectures start
Welcome Back BBQ
Taimane semester two first phase: students learn when tutorials will start and where they can find the right support

August
Tutorials
Careers evening
Vakavinavinaka – Pacific graduation celebrations for graduands and their families
Graduation ceremonies
Taimane semester two second phase
Scholarship applications open

September
Pacific Week including Fiefia Cultural Night – all student associations perform
Taimane semester two third phase
Pacific Leaders on Campus programme
Pacific Voices Symposium, for Pacific postgraduate students

October
Taimane semester two fourth phase: exam workshops

November
Exams and holidays

December
Vakavinavinaka – Pacific graduation celebrations for graduands and their families
Graduation ceremonies
Enrolments for the following year due
Merry Christmas!
The International Office runs a welcome desk and orientation programme at the start of each semester to give all international students a thorough introduction to Dunedin and the University. Staff are available all year round on a confidential basis to help international students with advice and information on issues such as:

- pre-arrival information
- homesickness
- general health and well-being
- student visa requirements
- flatting and accommodation
- student exchange
- cultural adjustment
- family support
- academic issues
- medical and travel insurance
- employment during your study

Starting university study in a new country can be overwhelming, so the International Office runs the Otago International Friendship Network (OIFN), a friendship programme to help new international students feel at home in their new environment. OIFN emphasises social activities and making new friends.

[otago.ac.nz/international](otago.ac.nz/international)
Contact the University of Otago

Pacific Islands Centre
Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai
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Tel 03 479 8278
Email nina.kirifi-alai@otago.ac.nz

Christine Anesone
Pacific Islands Community Liaison Officer
Tel 03 479 4981
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Schools' Liaison
Auckland
Tel 09 373 9704
Email auckland.liaison@otago.ac.nz

Wellington
Tel 04 460 9805
Email wellington.liaison@otago.ac.nz

Dunedin
Tel 03 479 8247
Email liaison@otago.ac.nz

International enquiries
otago.ac.nz/international-enquiries

AskOtago
AskOtago is your one-stop-shop for all questions about studying at Otago. Find answers instantly with our searchable knowledgebase or online chat:

ask.otago.ac.nz

Or contact:
university@otago.ac.nz
0800 80 80 98