



(University of Otago, n.d.)

UNIVER
Otago

1869

Our History

- **History of the University of Otago**
All about the history of New Zealand's first university.
- **Coat of Arms**
What does the Coat of Arms signify?

History and Governance of the University of Otago

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 2010 there were about 21,000 students enrolled) and has broadened its range of qualifications to include undergraduate programmes in Surveying, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Science, Education, Physiotherapy, Applied Science, Dental Technology, Medical Radiation Therapy, Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy (now combined in an Oral Health programme), and Biomedical Sciences, as well as specialised postgraduate programmes in a variety of disciplines.

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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), and an information and teaching centre in central Auckland (1996).

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

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 1990.

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 in 1994 and of a Chief Operating Officer in 2005.

A Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) was appointed in 2006. There are also nine non-teaching Divisions: Academic, Research, Human Resources, Accommodation Services, Financial Services, Information Technology Services, Marketing and Communications, Property Services, and Student Services.

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'.