

Constitution of the Otago Iranian Society

1. Name

The name of the organisation shall be Otago Iranian Society (“the Society”).

2. Purpose and Objectives

The Society exists to:

- 1) Create a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful community for Iranian students, Iranian New Zealanders, and those interested in Iranian culture in Dunedin.
- 2) Support Iranian students at the University of Otago and other tertiary institutions in their academic transition, social integration, and personal well-being.
- 3) Provide a “home away from home” environment that fosters belonging, familiarity, and mutual support for members, particularly international students.
- 4) Foster connections between Iranian New Zealanders, international students, alumni, and the wider Dunedin community to strengthen cultural continuity and leadership development.
- 5) Facilitate peer support and mentorship opportunities to assist members in navigating university life, academic pathways, and professional development.
- 6) Celebrate and promote the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity of Iran through social, cultural, and educational initiatives, while supporting member-led initiatives and umbrella events in line with the Society’s secular, inclusive, and lawful objectives.
- 7) Maintain a safe and supportive environment where members can participate without fear of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or behaviour that undermines their academic well-being.

8) Organise regular events, including at least one recurring flagship cultural event, and provide a platform for dialogue, exchange of perspectives, and community communication, including umbrella initiatives reflecting Iranian heritage, solidarity, or social issues.

9) Operate on a secular, non-partisan, and non-profit basis, ensuring all income and resources are used solely to advance the objectives of the Society.

10) Recognise the distinction between the Iranian people and the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Society supports Iranian culture and community, but does not endorse, represent, or promote the policies or actions of the current Iranian government.

11) Take reasonable measures to protect members' safety and privacy, including in the context of umbrella initiatives, advocacy, or events where participants could be exposed to scrutiny or misrepresentation.

3. Values and Principles

3.1 Inclusivity and Respect

- The Society values diversity of identity, culture, religion, and opinion, and is committed to maintaining an environment of mutual respect.

3.2 Non-Partisan

- The Society itself does not endorse or campaign for any political party or candidate.
- Lawful discussion and advocacy relevant to members' shared interests are permitted within the Society.
- Member-led initiatives or subgroups may engage in lawful advocacy, solidarity, or political activity, provided they do not claim to represent the Society as a whole, and activities comply with the University of Otago and New Zealand law.
- The Society may promote and support umbrella events reflecting Iranian heritage, culture, or solidarity initiatives in accordance with its secular and non-partisan principles.

3.3 Lawful Conduct

- All activities of the Society shall comply with New Zealand law, University of Otago regulations, and OUSA policies.

3.4 Safe Environment

- Harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or defamation of members is strictly prohibited.

3.5 Freedom of Belief

- Members are free to practice their own religion or none. While personal or private cultural and religious practices are respected, Society-endorsed events shall remain secular, inclusive, and consistent with the Society's objectives and the cultural values of Iran.

3.6 Distinction from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Freedom of Expression

- The Society explicitly separates its mission and activities from the Islamic Republic of Iran. While it supports Iranian peoples heritage, culture, and community, it does not endorse, represent, or promote the policies or actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Members are free to engage in lawful advocacy, discussion, and expression regarding the political situation in Iran, including raising awareness of human rights violations or crimes committed by the regime.
- Society-endorsed events shall remain secular, non-partisan, and inclusive, while providing a safe platform for members to participate in cultural, educational, and solidarity initiatives.
- The Society shall not provide a platform for regime sympathizers or propaganda networks, and shall take reasonable measures to ensure members' safety and privacy where activities could expose them to scrutiny or misrepresentation.

4. Membership

4.1 Eligibility

Membership is open to:

- Students of the University of Otago and Otago Polytechnic, including both international students and Iranian New Zealanders
- Members of the wider Dunedin community who support the objectives of the Society.
- Membership may be accepted at any time, subject to completion of the Society's registration process.

4.2 Rights of Members

Members may:

- Attend Society events.
- Vote at General Meetings.
- Stand for election to the Executive Committee (subject to affiliation rules by OUSA).

4.3 Termination

Members must adhere to the Constitution and the Society's Code of Conduct.

Membership may be suspended or revoked by the Executive Committee where a member's behaviour poses a risk to the safety, well-being, or reputation of the Society.

5. Subgroups and Member-Led Initiatives

- 1) Members may organise cultural, academic, or community initiatives under the Society's umbrella.
- 2) All subgroups and initiatives must align with the Society's objectives, comply with this Constitution, and be approved by the Executive Committee.
- 3) Subgroups do not represent official endorsement of political positions by the Society.

6. Executive Committee

6.1 Composition

The Society shall be governed by an Executive Committee consisting of:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Events Coordinator
- Communications Officer

Additional roles may be created by constitutional amendment if required.

6.2 Duties of the President

The President shall:

- Provide leadership and strategic direction while ensuring the effective functioning of the Executive Committee.
- Chair meetings.
- Represent the Society externally in accordance with decisions of the Executive and the Society's objectives.
- Ensure compliance with this Constitution and OUSA requirements.
- Promote inclusivity across the diverse ethnic, and cultural groups represented within the Iranian community.

6.3 Duties of the Vice President

The Vice President shall:

- Support the President in carrying out their duties.
- Act in place of the President in their absence.
- Assist in strategic planning and development of the Society.
- Oversee internal coordination between Executive members.
- Support the organisation of major Society events and initiatives.
- Promote member engagement and participation.
- Undertake additional responsibilities as delegated by the Executive Committee.

6.4 Duties of the Secretary

The Secretary shall:

- Manage official correspondence.
- Provide notice of meetings.
- Support the President in coordinating meetings and ensuring proper notice is given.
- Keep accurate minutes of meetings.
- Maintain membership records and all constitutional documentation.

6.5 Duties of the Treasurer

The Treasurer shall:

- Manage finances responsibly.
- Maintain accurate financial records.
- Present financial reports at the Annual General Meeting.
- Ensure compliance with any OUSA financial policies.
- Oversee budgeting for events and initiatives.

6.6 Duties of the Events Coordinator

The Event Coordinator shall:

- Plan, organise, and oversee social, cultural, and community events of the Society.
- Develop event proposals and timelines in consultation with the Executive Committee.
- Coordinate logistics, including venue booking, equipment, catering, and scheduling.
- Work with the Treasurer to ensure events remain within budget.
- Collaborate with the Secretary and Communications Officer to coordinate event promotion and related communications.
- Ensure events align with the Society's objectives and inclusive values.
- Evaluate events and gather feedback to improve future activities.
- Ensure that umbrella initiatives and events reflecting Iranian heritage, culture, or solidarity are evaluated in accordance with the Society's secular and inclusive principles.

6.7 Communications Officer

The Communications Officer shall:

- Manage the Society's communication channels, including social media platforms, and email accounts.
- Draft and distribute communications as directed by the Executive.
- Promote Society events and initiatives in coordination with the Events Coordinator.
- Maintain member mailing lists and communication records.
- Maintain the Society's public presence and brand consistency, ensuring communications align with the Society's objectives and values.

6.8 Executive Operations

- **Collective Responsibility:** The Executive Committee shall act collectively in the best interests of the Society and its members.
- **Decision-Making:** Decisions are made by majority vote. The President has a casting vote in the event of a tie.
- **Executive Oversight:** The Executive retains final authority over all events, initiatives, and use of the Society's name and resources.
- **Removal of Executive:** Any Executive member may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote at a Special General Meeting for serious misconduct, neglect of duties, or breach of this Constitution.
- **Continuity:** The Executive Committee shall ensure appropriate handover of records, credentials, and operational knowledge to incoming Executive members.

7. Meetings

7.1 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Society shall hold, with at least 7 days' notice given, an AGM annually to:

- Receive reports from the President and Treasurer.
- Elect the Executive Committee.
- Consider amendments to the Constitution.

7.2 Special General Meeting (SGM)

An SGM may be called by the Executive Committee, or by a written request of at least 10 members.

7.3 Inaugural General Meeting (IGM)

The first meeting of the Society shall be called the IGM, where:

- The constitution shall be presented and approved.
- The inaugural Executive Committee shall be elected.
- Membership of the Society shall be confirmed by recording the names of all attending and formally registered members. Additional members may be accepted at any time. (*Section 4*)

- The date of this meeting shall be recorded as the official date of establishment of the Society.

7.4 Quorum

Quorum for General Meetings shall be one-third of registered members, with a minimum of 5 members. Decisions are made by simple majority unless otherwise specified.

8. Code of Conduct

- 1) Members must communicate respectfully and refrain from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination.
- 2) Members must not engage in unlawful behaviour under the Society's name.
- 3) Members must comply with the University of Otago, OUSA, and Society policies.
- 4) Members shall ensure their activities and advocacy are consistent with the Society's objectives, secular nature, and the cultural values of Iran, and shall not represent or support the Islamic Republic of Iran or its sympathizers.
- 5) Members shall take reasonable care to protect the safety and privacy of themselves and others when participating in lawful advocacy or umbrella initiatives that may involve political or social issues.
- 6) The Executive Committee may investigate alleged breaches and apply sanctions, including suspension or removal of membership.

9. Finances

- 1) The Society shall operate on a non-profit basis.
- 2) Any income, donations, membership fees, ticket sales, sponsorship, or fundraising proceeds shall be used solely to further the objectives of the Society.
- 3) The Treasurer shall maintain financial records, prepare annual budgets, and present a report at the AGM.
- 4) No member shall receive financial gain from the Society except for reimbursement of authorised expenses.

5) All payments must be authorised by two Executive signatories, being any two of the following officers: the President, Treasurer, or Secretary.

6) Financial records shall be made available to members upon reasonable request.

7) Upon dissolution, any remaining assets shall be distributed in accordance with OUSA policy.

10. Events and Funding

10.1 Funding Allocation

- Funding for Society-supported events shall be allocated by the Executive Committee.
- Priority will be given to events that:
 - Serve the broadest membership or have the largest expected attendance.
 - Align most closely with the Society's objectives.
 - Are time-sensitive or otherwise critical to the Society's calendar
- In the case of multiple events proposed for the same date with overlapping resource requirements, the Executive shall:
 - Attempt to reschedule one or both events to avoid conflict.
 - If rescheduling is not feasible, allocate funding proportionally or based on agreed Executive prioritisation criteria.
 - Ensure decisions are documented and communicated to the affected subgroups.

10.2 Event Organization

- The Executive Committee shall plan, coordinate, and oversee all Society-endorsed events, ensuring they align with the Society's objectives, secular nature, and the cultural values of Iran.
- Events may include cultural, educational, social, and solidarity initiatives that foster community, heritage, and belonging.
- Society-endorsed events shall not promote religion and shall remain secular, inclusive, lawful, and non-partisan.

10.3 Umbrella and Member-Led Initiatives

- Members or subgroups may propose initiatives or events under the Society's umbrella, that address cultural, heritage, or solidarity initiatives, including those responding to contemporary

social issues relevant to Iran, provided they align with objectives, remain secular, inclusive, and lawful.

- All proposed events must be approved by the Executive Committee and must comply with this Constitution and OUSA policies.
- Umbrella initiatives shall provide a safe platform for members, protecting participants from scrutiny, misrepresentation, or association with regime sympathizers or propaganda networks.

10.4 Event Participation and Fees

- Membership in the Society is free. Participation in most Society events shall not require a fee.
- Major events, including flagship cultural celebrations such as Nowruz, may require a reasonable ticket or participation fee to cover venue, catering, and logistical costs.
- Fees shall be set transparently by the Executive Committee and communicated to members in advance.

10.5 Safety and Inclusivity

- All events must provide a safe and inclusive environment, respecting the diversity of Iranian heritage, culture, language, ethnicity, and religion.
- Events shall not provide a platform for regime sympathizers or propaganda networks, and reasonable measures shall be taken to protect members' safety and privacy.

11. Inclusivity and Community Structure

1) The Society recognises that Iran is a diverse country comprised of multiple ethnicities, religions, languages, regional identities, and cultural traditions.

2) The Society is committed to fostering mutual respect and equal participation.

3) Cultural, linguistic, or community-specific groups may organise initiatives or events within the framework of the Society, provided such activities align with the Society's objectives and non-partisan status.

4) The Society shall maintain a safe and respectful environment for discussion, cultural expression, and mutual support.

12. Amendments

- 1) This Constitution may be amended at an AGM or SGM.
- 2) Proposed amendments must be circulated at least 7 days prior to the meeting.
- 3) A two-thirds majority of members present is required to pass an amendment.
- 4) Any amendment must remain consistent with the University of Otago and OUSA policies to retain affiliation.

13. Dissolution

- 1) Special General Meeting Required: The Society may be dissolved by a two-thirds majority of members present at a Special General Meeting called specifically for that purpose, provided quorum is met.
- 2) Asset Distribution: Upon dissolution, any remaining assets shall be transferred to another non-profit organisation with similar objectives, or as directed by OUSA in accordance with its policies.
- 3) Notification: Members shall be given at least 14 days' written notice of the Special General Meeting to consider dissolution, including the proposed plan for asset distribution.