



Otago uni **students'** association

Tēnā kotou,

This quarter has been especially challenging due to my academic workload, graduation looming on the horizon and the increased frequency of events. Much of the time I have committed to my role during this quarter has extended beyond the traditional scope of my duties; that is not to say the work put in this quarter is irrelevant to the role, rather that this role has extended far beyond the traditional events-centric approach – international students now have national representation and networks thanks to the New Zealand International Students' Association (NZISA). I hope to see more of this divergence in the future.

During this quarter, I attended and supported multiple events centric on themes of inclusivity and diversity, such as the International Food Festivals, Silverline events, and the Matariki Global Citizenship Party. I am currently in the process of promoting the International Cultural Carnival, which is taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> September. I attended and spoke at two conferences, the New Zealand International Education Conference (NZIEC) and the ISANA NZ Conference, focusing on the international student experience, amplifying the international student voice and making recommendations to professionals in international education on matters related to international students and international education. I attended two meetings with the Ministry of Education and one meeting with Education New Zealand, within the my capacity as Otago's International Officer and NZISA's Representative Council member.

Most important to note is my goal progression, as detailed at the end of this report.

If anyone has any questions or clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [international@ousa.org.nz](mailto:international@ousa.org.nz).

Ngā mihi,

Sabrina Alhady

International Students Officer

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Report 2019

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## **PART ONE: EXECUTIVE OFFICER POSITION DESCRIPTION DUTIES**

### **1.1 Promote via publications, promotions and campaigns, an environment within the Association and on campus which is supportive of cultural diversity.**

As mentioned in my previous report, the second semester International Food Festival took place. This event was promoted via Facebook by OUSA and the OUSA-affiliated cultural clubs that partook in this event. The event was also shared through the international students' Blackboard plugin.

I supported Amal Abdullahi, the International Student Wellbeing Coordinator, with Silverline's international student focus and initiatives. The event itself was shared on Facebook by Silverline, on their website and on the international student Blackboard plugin. I attended the Silverline Hype Night for their #ItsNotAwkwardBro and International Student Wellbeing campaigns, respectively. I also attended the Silverline Festival.

I attended the Matariki Global Citizenship Party, an initiative to raise awareness among the student cohort on the concept of 'global citizenship', to formulate understandings of what this concept means to different people, and to encourage interaction and discussion on the concept.

### **1.2 Organise and run events of specific interest and relevance to international students.**

#### **(a) International Food Festival**

Following from the report of the previous quarter, I assisted Shannon van Rooijen from OUSA Events with cultural club communication and administration. Prior to the event, I organised kitchen schedules, oversaw clubs during their kitchen sessions and ensured that food safety regulations were adhered to. During Re-Orientation Week, I dedicated 40 hours in total to both my regular duties and the International Food Festival.

## **(b) International Cultural Carnival**

The Cultural Carnival is taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> September. I have worked with the OUSA Marketing team to oversee promotion of this event on social media and on campus. Shannon from OUSA Events has actively assisted and guided me through the organisation of this event. I organised club registrations for the event, worked with clubs to prepare promotional material and have finalised the event run-sheet with Shannon's guidance.

### **1.3 Be a member of appropriate internal committees of the Association, including, but not limited to:**

#### **1.3.1 International Cultural Council;**

International Cultural Council has been updated and is currently International Committee (ICOM). I chair ICOM meetings.

#### **1.3.2 Welfare Committee; and**

N/A

#### **1.3.3 Education Committee.**

N/A

### **1.4 Chair monthly meetings of the International Cultural Council, ensuring that all committee members are advised of meeting times, that the agenda is prepared and circulated beforehand, and ensuring that the standing orders of the Council are adhered to.**

This quarter, ICOM has not held formalised monthly meetings due to my academic responsibilities, schedule constraints, commitment to my goals and the planning of the Cultural Carnival.

### **1.5 Take direction from the International Cultural Council on all matters relevant to international student members.**

As stated previously, I have not chaired any formalised monthly meetings with ICOM. I bring relevant matters to the attention of ICOM members through our line of communication as they arise.

## **1.6 Work on issues specific to international students at the University of Otago, including, but not limited to:**

### **1.6.1 Academic issues within the University; and**

During this quarter, I have attended meetings with the Director International and members of the International Student Support team. As always, I remain in contact with the staff at the International Office and bring to their attention any matters as they arise. The staff at the International Office have always been happy to meet and collaborate on ways to approach and tackle international student issues.

### **1.6.2 Social and welfare related issues within the University and the wider community.**

#### **(a) International Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Silverline: I have actively supported the international student initiative under Silverline and attended Silverline's Hype Nights and the Silverline Festival.

NZISA: Within my capacity as Representative Council member, I have attended conferences in Auckland and Wellington, at which I shared insights on international wellbeing and ways to improve the international student experience with professionals in international education from all around New Zealand. The conferences also provided perspective on how other institutions have adopted systems and methods to improve international student wellbeing and tackle international student work exploitation, which I will put into practice where possible.

## **(b) International Student Health – StudentSafe insurance**

Sexual health survey:

I am currently in the process of arranging a meeting with Nishanthi Perera, a PhD candidate from the Department of Sociology, to discuss the results of her survey, 'Sexual health knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of international university students of Otago University'. I am hopeful that these results may provide the insights needed to push for more accessibility to sexual health services under StudentSafe insurance.

International Student Services and Mobility:

During this quarter, I met with Danielle Yamamoto-Kerr, Manager of International Student Services and Mobility to discuss points of interest with regards to the StudentSafe insurance policy, expanding direct debit to other pharmacies and health practitioners in Dunedin and making insurance information and policies more accessible and coherent for international students.

### **1.7 Maintain a good working relationship to the OUSA Student Support Centre Manager and Advocates so that the opportunity to share information about academic and welfare issues of relevance to international students is available.**

I am confident the Student Support staff and I have a good working relationship. We have not had scheduled meetings to discuss any international student issues this quarter, but I will arrange for a meeting at some point in the next quarter to exchange this information and progress the goals set for this year.

### **1.8 Maintain a good working relationship with the International Office of the University, sharing information and ideas with them when appropriate.**

I am confident that I have a good working relationship with Jason Cushen, the Director of the International Office, and other staff members from the International Office.

- 1.9 Maintain a good working relationship with the Administrative Vice President, proactively bringing issues relevant to international students to their attention, and, where reasonable, meeting with them on a weekly basis.**

I am confident Georgia Mischefski-Gray and I have a good working relationship. We are in regular communication and meet weekly to discuss my goals and projects.

- 1.10 Work in conjunction with the Finance Officer, the Clubs Development Officer and the Recreation Portfolio Executive Officer to ensure the affiliation and support of international student groups.**

I am confident Bonnie Harrison and I have a good working relationship. Bonnie has assisted me with all matters related to budget and expenditure, and has provided helpful advice throughout the planning of various international events.

- 1.11 Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers.**

During this quarter, I have done my best to attend and actively participate in majority of the OUSA Executive meetings.

- 1.12 Where practical, work not less than ten hours.**

I regularly fill in a time sheet, which the Administrative Vice President has access to. This method has proven extremely useful to track my time and maintain accountability within my role. I am confident that I have worked, on aggregate, for at least ten hours each week.

## **PART TWO: GENERAL DUTIES OF ALL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

- 2.1 Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are expected to assist as volunteers for OUSA events and functions, including, but not limited to:**

**2.1.1 Assisting at the OUSA Tent City marquee and other activities during Summer School, Orientation and Re-Orientation;**

During this quarter, I assisted OUSA Events with Re-Orientation Week by liaising with the cultural clubs, organising the kitchen times and kitchen supervisors, and answering any questions relating to the Food Festival.

**2.1.2 At an individual Executive Officer's discretion, be a safety contact during Orientation, Re-Orientation and other OUSA events throughout the year;**

During this quarter, I have not been a safety contact. I am happy to assist as such should the need arise.

**2.1.3 Collecting for the capping charity; and**

N/A

**2.1.4 Assisting with elections and referenda where appropriate, including but not limited to advertising the election and collecting votes.**

I have dedicated time, where reasonable, to provide the aforementioned assistance to the Executive.

**2.2 Where reasonable, all Executive Officers are to be available for Executive meetings, national conferences, national and local campaigns, Executive training sessions and Executive planning sessions.**

I have attended a majority of the executive meetings. I have put in some hours to assist the Executive with Local Body Elections and the Valid Voter Campaign. I have attended NZIEC and the ISANA NZ Conference, national conferences on international education.

**2.3 All Executive Officers with control of budget lines, or who have been allocated a budget line, shall maintain detailed budgets and not exceed their budgeted expenditure.**

I have not exceeded the budget line assigned to me by the Finance Officer. As in the past, I will maintain detailed expenditure of this event and invoices incurred with the OUSA Accounts staff.

**2.4 All Executive Officers, where possible, shall maintain regular, publicised office hours, and are expected to regularly check and respond to all correspondence received.**

To the best of my ability, I have maintained regular office hours and regularly check and respond to all correspondence I receive.

**2.5 All Executive Officers shall, every quarter, undertake five hours of voluntary service which contributes to the local community.**

During this quarter, I have volunteered my services to cultural clubs and international events such as International Food Festival and International Cultural Carnival.

### **PART THREE: ATTENDANCE AND INVOLVEMENT IN OUSA AND UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

I have attended meetings for the following university committees: Otago Internationalisation Committee; Otago Health Science Internationalisation Committee; and Otago Tertiary Chaplaincy Trust Board. I was unable to attend meetings of the following university committees due to illness and scheduling constraints: Otago Distance Learning Advisory Board; and Summer School and Continuing Education Board.

### **PART FOUR: GENERAL**

During this quarter, I attended and spoke at two conferences, the New Zealand International Education Conference (NZIEC) and the ISANA NZ Conference. At NZIEC,

I presented with Lukas Kristen, NZISA National President, on the NZISA Wellbeing Conference held in 2018, focusing on the importance of empowering students, amplifying the international student voice and funding international student wellbeing initiatives. At the ISANA NZ Conference, I shared my experience as an international student, insights from the perspective an elected international student representative, the importance of the international student experience and the significance of increased engagement between international and domestic students. At both conferences, I actively participated in workshops and made recommendations to professionals in international education.

I also attended two meetings in Wellington: the first with the Ministry of Education to discuss and provide feedback for the Tertiary Student Voice Discussion Document, and the second with both the Ministry of Education and Education New Zealand to relay local international student concerns and areas of interest that could be improved in international education. Both meetings were extremely productive and I am hopeful that our concerns and recommendations will be taken on board.

## **PART FIVE: GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(i) International student wellbeing**

The export education sector contributes nearly NZ\$5 billion to the New Zealand economy (see: International Student Wellbeing Strategy report), with an economic value of more than NZ\$5 billion (see: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/international-education-contributes-51-billion-new-zealand-economy>). At the core of this sector are the students who make up the units of export education. Inarguably, these students need adequate support during their stay for the duration of their studies. Research has shown that the recent drop in university rankings all across New Zealand is due to inadequate support and wellbeing-centric initiatives, as well as the lack of awareness of these support services and initiatives, which are vital for delivering an excellent international student experience.

During this quarter, I attended meetings with Simone Freeman, the Team Leader of International Student Support, and Danielle Yamamoto-Kerr, the Manager of International Student Services and Mobility, to discuss

information accessibility. This particular aspect has been identified as a crucial area for improvement to ensure that international students are aware of the services available for the maintenance of their wellbeing. Many students are still unaware of what services they are able to access through insurance and on campus that can benefit and improve their overall wellbeing. I have made recommendations to both parties and will be sure to pass on this information to the OUSA Student Support team in our future meetings.

**(ii) Health insurance**

As stated in Section 1.6.2 (b), progress is still underway.

**(iii) Work exploitation**

Attending both NZIEC 2019 and the ISANA NZ Conference 2019 has provided exceptional insight into how professionals in international education are trying to minimise the harms of work exploitation and address the issue among the student cohort. I am pleased to say that the progress being made on a national level is largely positive and will be sure to pass on this knowledge to the relevant parties within the University. My next step is to refine and improve the processes currently in place in Otago by collaborating with both the International Student Support Team and OUSA Student Support. At the recommendation of the Executive, I will also be sure to reach out to the Careers Development Centre regarding this matter.

**(iv) Community engagement**

Community engagement, and particularly, relations between international and domestic students, has been a difficult issue to tackle. With recent news sources detailing domestic students' refusal to cooperate with international students who "can't speak English" in tutorials and classes, this goal has become increasingly significant. Professionals in international education have also addressed this issue, as this lack of engagement is preventing students, both domestic and international, from becoming global citizens and hinders the active adoption and practice of values such as diversity, tolerance and racial awareness.

While events are one way to approach this concern, a holistic approach needs to be taken, i.e. encouraging interaction in both a learning and social environment, in order to better cultivate these values. I am still brainstorming potential ideas for this and am open to suggestions from the Executive or beyond.

**(v) Handover document for future International Officer(s)**

As mentioned in my foreword, this role has gone through many changes since the handover document was first written. I have yet to properly edit the entire document, but in the meantime, will train up the next International Officer (or should I say, International Representative) after the OUSA Executive Elections so that they are sufficiently prepared for this role.

**(vi) Otago International Friendship Network (OIFN)**

Due to the internal restructuring of the International Office, this goal is no longer viable. However, I strongly recommend that after a permanent staff member is appointed to the role of taking charge of OIFN, this should be explored further.

**(vii) International student course fees**

I have not yet had the opportunity to conduct research into an alternate course fees structure. I hope to progress this goal further in the last quarter and establish the basis for a potential model. It is necessary to note that changes are unlikely to take place in the near future, but I am positive that the next International Representative will be able to pursue this matter further.

683 words