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**4<sup>th</sup> QUARTER REPORT 2019**  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This quarter has been busy and rewarding, with a diverse range of opportunities thrown at me to make a difference for postgraduate students at Otago. As the year comes to a gradual close, I am grateful for all the support that others have given me to achieve my goals, and I am on track to tie off my projects before Christmas.

My fourth quarter has been dominated by the inaugural Postgraduate Support and Success Expo, a cross-party postgraduate support event held in the Main Common Room that aimed to equip students with skills to succeed and connect them with services to assist them. It featured an excellent range of speakers and a student panel, as well as free food to draw the crowds in. The project was a huge success, and it is now scheduled to be held once a semester.

My biggest win this quarter, indeed this year, was in working alongside the University to convince them to expand their offering of hardship support for students. This started as a project to establish a fund to support students who had to take unexpected scholarship leave, after a conversation with the Graduate Research School (GRS) about a pattern we'd noticed, and evolved into a meeting with Student Services where a case was successfully made to expand the existing hardship fund by tapping into an unused pool of money in the institutional coffers. The GRS and the Clocktower have gone away to develop the policy and do the paperwork for this, and will continue to liaise with me as needed during the process.

I have additionally kept busy with projects such as an OUSA submission on the government's review of the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), working on the Save Marine Science campaign (including writing a submission from the Otago Postgraduate Association (OPA)), development of a postgraduate section on the OUSA website, and organising the OPA AGM in September.

## **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 postgraduate students.

Developing a postgraduate-supportive environment on campus is challenging due to the silo nature of postgraduate departments; it is an uphill battle to create cohesive, pan-campus spaces when most students are provided for by their departments, and existing common areas are heavily undergraduate focused. I have continued my work on connecting with and listening to pockets of postgraduate students in the last quarter, through a range of initiatives.

The biggest postgraduate support project this quarter has been the Postgraduate Support and Success Expo, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. I ran this in collaboration with the Graduate Research School and the Otago Postgraduate Association, with support from other student support teams around



campus. Now scheduled for once a semester going forward, I established it as an afternoon public event in the Main Common Room, where guests gave short presentations on different aspects of the graduate experience and how to overcome associated issues. The event also featured a student panel, a free BBQ, and drop-in stalls around the room to field student queries about different campus support services. Projected attendance was upwards of 60 students.

Outside of the expo, I have continued to meet with postgraduate departments to establish connection and share information about support networks. Earlier in the quarter I ended up facilitating a conversation with the leadership of a particular school to carry complaints on behalf of students that came out of one of these meetings, which yielded more traction than existing efforts by students had been achieving.

I have continued to work closely with the Otago Postgraduate Association to facilitate events and support for postgraduate students, including the fortnightly postgraduate morning teas, which have seen a slight increase in numbers this quarter. I chair their fortnightly meetings, and have most recently been working to secure funding for them through the terms of the MOU with OUSA, as well as building a website page for them, a project that I will be carrying through until the end of the year. My engagement with the organisation allows me to cast my net of representation wider to reach a greater number of students, which is a win for all involved. Last week, Jade and I presented about the association and its support/community structures at the PhD Induction Session, which will be a regular happening from here onward. I was chiefly responsible for organising and chairing the recent AGM, which saw a full executive team elected for the new term, and engagement with about 30 postgraduate students. Our end of the year event will be a Christmas BBQ at Woodhaugh Gardens.

#### 1.2 Work with the University and the Student Support Centre to implement OUSA's policy on Postgraduate Student Representatives.

I maintain contact with other postgraduate student reps around the university where possible and relevant. There has been less engagement on this front than usual this quarter as the Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee has not met during this period.

#### 1.3 Be one of the Association's representatives on the University of Otago Senate.

I have been appointed to the University Senate, and we have sat once this quarter.

#### 1.4 Where required, assist the Education Officer to administer aspects of the Departmental Postgraduate Student Representatives system including:

- 1.4.1 Maintaining regular contact with representatives from postgraduate classes or programmes via email or other means; and
- 1.4.2 Encouraging regular postgraduate class representative meetings, and attend these meetings whenever possible.

I have not been required to assist the Education Officer with the class reps system this quarter, but William and I have worked together on campaigning to prevent the Marine Science staff cuts and collaborating with the university to gather knowledge for a submission on the government's review of the Performance Based Research Fund. I have maintained contact with the PhD reps on the



Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee, and check in regularly with the divisional reps on OPA.

At the beginning of my appointment to the role, I emailed every university department and learning centre, asking to be put in touch with their postgrad students so that I could drop in on them and see how they were doing, and a number got back to me. This quarter, I have visited four departments, and have tried to follow up on a number of others but to no avail.

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

- 1.5.1 Postgraduate Committee;
- 1.5.2 Education Committee; and
- 1.5.3 Welfare Committee.

According to the MOU, the OPA executive can fulfil the functions of the Postgraduate Committee, and the executive meets fortnightly. I have attended every meeting this quarter bar one. I have not been notified of any Welfare Committee or Education Committee meetings this quarter.

1.6 Chair monthly meetings of the Postgraduate Committee, 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 committee are adhered to.

The OPA executive meets fortnightly and carries out this duty. I chair these meetings and collate the agenda, and assign action points.

1.7 Take direction from the Postgraduate Committee on all matters relevant to postgraduate members.

I consult with the OPA Executive on all substantive postgrad matters. We have an active Facebook chat where we flag things with each other outside of meeting times. This quarter we have collaborated on the Save Marine Science campaign and the Postgraduate Support and Success Expo as our main projects.

1.8 Normally be the Association's representative on the Board of Graduate Studies.

I have sat on the Board of Graduate Studies once this quarter, and contributed well to discussion and debate. Education Officer William Dreyer sat once in my absence.

1.9 Maintain a good working relationship with relevant OUSA staff, ensuring that information is shared on issues of relevance to postgraduate students.

I have liaised with Student Support to ensure that OUSA's support services are well advertised to postgraduate students. I maintain regular contact with the Club Development Officer and the Recreation Manager to ensure good resourcing for postgraduates, and I have sought support from Events for resourcing the Support and Success Expo. I have worked with Marketing and Comms to ensure that campaigns and events are kept on students' radars, and in building the website page for the Otago Postgraduate Association.



1.10 Facilitate a variety of student representation on postgraduate related University Committees.

I have been working with Academic Committees to improve the lack of Masters student representatives on the Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee, a committee that I sit on myself. I also sit on the Graduate Research Committee and the Animal Practice and Compliance Steering Group.

1.11 Maintain a good working relationship with the Director of Graduate Research Services and endeavour to meet with them on a monthly basis.

Rachel Spronken-Smith and I have a good working relationship and meet regularly. I bring issues to her attention and ask for advice on certain topics, and she helps me to navigate the maze that is the university network. I have had conversations with her about postgrad induction sessions, postgrad student email lists, and funding models for postgraduate study. Rachel was an invaluable support in my lobbying the University to develop a new hardship fund for scholarship students, and the end result saw us convince the Director of Student Services to greatly increase the size and scope of the University Hardship Fund, with Rachel identifying an unused revenue stream.

1.12 Maintain links with and assist affiliated Postgraduate bodies.

I am an ex-officio executive member of OPA, I chair their fortnightly meetings, and I work with them closely to ensure smooth operations, that their projects are strong and well-resourced, and to maintain robust links between them and OUSA. Through OPA, I have had contact with the Otago Postdoctoral Association, and although we attempted to run a collaborative event, they did not have the capacity to commit to the project in the end. Outside of Otago, I have worked with NZUSA and the Victoria Postgraduate Students' Association on the restoration of the Postgraduate Student Allowance, a project that is very close to achieving its ultimate goal.

1.13 Maintain a good working relationship with the Administrative Vice President, proactively bringing issues relevant to postgraduate students to their attention, and meeting with them on a weekly basis.

Georgia and I meet on a weekly basis and we go over my goals for the week and what I have been up to during the week prior. She ensures that I am well supported and resourced to meet these goals, and I look forward to these catch ups.

1.14 Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers.

See Part Two.

1.15 Where practical, work not less than ten hours per week.

I work an average of twenty hours every week.

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



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;
- 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;
- 2.1.3 Collecting for the capping charity; and
- 2.1.4 Assisting with elections and referenda where appropriate, including but not limited to advertising the election and collecting votes.

Most of these events and initiatives did not take place this quarter, however I was involved as an executive member in assisting with the Valid Voter campaign for the Local Body Elections.

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 nearly all Executive meetings this quarter. As well as being involved with the Valid Voter campaign, I have worked with NZUSA at the national level on the campaign to restore the postgraduate student allowance, and I attended the Student Job Search AGM and NZUSA Congress in Wellington as a representative of OUSA.

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 spent any of the collective Executive budget this quarter in my capacity as Postgraduate Officer.

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.

I am available by phone and email most of the time, and so students or other stakeholders can contact me whenever they need to and we can organise a time that suits. I attend nearly every fortnightly postgrad morning tea drop in session, so students can find me there if they want a regular time and space. I do not maintain consistent public office hours as my schedule makes this impractical and I do not feel it is a good use of my time.

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

I have served the community as a volunteer for Dunedin Pride Incorporated and an executive member of Generation Vote, working on queer community support and teaching civics education in high schools respectively. Between these initiatives I have far exceeded five hours this quarter.



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

I sit on a wide number of committees and boards this year and contributed to discussions and decisions in different areas of the university:

**University Senate** – Overarching university-wide decision-making body. Scheduled to meet monthly, meetings approximately an hour long, and has met once this quarter.

**Board of Graduate Studies** – Oversees the approval of new or amended postgraduate courses, and deals with strategic decisions regarding the university's postgraduate offering. Meets monthly, meetings are two hours or longer, we have sat twice this quarter.

**Graduate Research Committee** – Supports research postgraduate students and oversees university systems and processes that are a part of their university experience. Meets monthly, meetings are just over an hour, we have sat twice this quarter, with one more meeting to go.

**Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee** – Facilitates dialogue between the university and postgraduate research students about issues faced by students. Meets four times a year, meetings are approximately two hours, has not met this quarter, with one meeting to go.

**Animal Practice and Compliance Steering Group** – Oversees the university's animal research practices, reviews policy, and advises on external communications. Meets four times a year, meetings are between one and two hours, has met once this quarter, with one meeting to go.

**OUSA Welfare Committee** – I have not been notified of any meetings this quarter.

**OUSA Education Committee** – I have not been notified of any meetings this quarter.

**OUSA Postgraduate Committee** – The OPA Executive functions as this committee. Meets fortnightly, meetings are an hour long.

### **PART FOUR: GOALS**

My goals for this semester were set at the end of July when I was elected.

#### **1. Improve communication between postgrad students and OUSA regarding services and opportunities.**

I have set up meetings with postgraduate students in their departments and provided support and advice, as well as information about what OUSA and OPA offer postgrad students. I have listened to concerns and ideas about what can be done better. I have fronted conversation with department heads based on feedback received from these meetings.

I have liaised with the Graduate Research School, the International Office, and departments to advertise upcoming postgraduate events and initiatives, in particular the Postgraduate Support and Success Expo, and have secured presentation slots for OPA at postgrad induction sessions. I have established and carried out a new system for filling student spots on the Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee, and have helped to fill existing vacant Masters student slots.



I have established a website page for the Otago Postgraduate Association to serve as a hub for information and opportunities, and I have used Facebook networks to keep postgraduate students up to date with what is going on.

**2. Work with NZUSA to restore the postgraduate student allowance.**

I am a member of the NZUSA Postgraduate Allowance working group, and have assisted with tasks to lobby MPs and prepare for presentation sessions, with the goal of seeing the allowance restored by the government. This project has been successful in securing support wins along the way, and it looks set to achieve its ultimate goal in the next year.

**3. Set up an MOU between OUSA and OPA to address the gap between what postgraduate students need and what is being provided to them.**

In the third quarter, I secured an MOU, officially passed by both parties, that brings the two parties together to work on the shared goals of academic support, community connection, and professional development. This document lays out processes for funding, website space, event promotion, and committee representation, and will allow OUSA to achieve bigger wins for postgrad students and interests. This quarter, I have worked on establishing the website, and have supported the OPA team to prepare their funding proposal for 2020.

**PART FIVE: GENERAL**

There is no work that I have done for OUSA this quarter, other than general executive tasks and planning, that is not already contained within this report.