

Sean Teow

International Students' Representative

1st Quarter Report 2022

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## **Part One: Executive Officer Position Description Duties**

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

There was no Clubs Day during Orientation week so I only relayed key information regarding the promotion of Cultural Clubs from Kathryn Corry, the Clubs Development Officer (CDO) to the Cultural Clubs Execs Messenger chat.

The Otago International Student Association's (OISA) Social Media Officer (SMO, Gerald Ryan) and Postgraduate Officer (PO, Lo Wei Hong) have diligently created a new OISA website that will further promote Cultural Clubs this year. During Orientation Week, I encouraged OISA members to actively promote OISA to students.

I was invited by Arina Aizal to feature in an episode of Connecting Cultures, a show under OARfm (105.4FM) representing diverse individuals within our intercultural community here in Dunedin. I got the opportunity to talk about my goals as the International Student Representative (ISR) this year and also talk about crucial issues that International Students face such as but not limited to: homesickness, racism and discrimination, and increasing international student fees. I also was able to promote OUSA and OISA during this episode.

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

Due to the current restrictions, the usual planning of events has been delayed and I am now reviewing OISA's focus towards having online events for International Students during the first half of Semester 1. The event management part of my role has also been shifted towards my other OISA Co-President (Tee Seu Wand) as agreement for fair division of workload between both Co-Presidents.

OISA and the International Office have been actively collaborating on events. One of which is the OISA x IO Meet and Greet where members of the International Student Community could meet each other and staff, I actively worked with Daniel Bond (International Student Support Advisor) to create this event. The other of which are the

Check-in sessions organised by the International Office for Off-shore students which has occurred twice, I have been present to both sessions and OISA's Academic Officer (Christine Su) has attended the second session.

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

**15.3.1 Otago International Students' Association**

I have attended all 3 meetings for this quarter.

**15.4 Chair monthly meetings of the Otago International Students' Association, 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**

I have chaired 3 meetings with the Executive members of OISA. Meeting times have been facilitated to the best of every members' availability and a regular meeting time is to be organised by the Secretary (Erika Wong) in the next quarter. Erika has been diligent in taking meeting minutes, circulating agendas prepared by the Chair, and ensuring members are well informed of the meeting date and time. Other members have also contributed their thoughts and updates to these meetings and added any agenda items of concern.

**15.5 Take direction from the Otago International Students' Association, 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**

Despite the restrictions put in place, OISA members have been extremely active in ensuring that we are there for the students by attending orientation seminars for new International Students during Orientation week and sharing important information around what support services are available. They have been great at connecting with the first-year students. OISA plans to be more accessible this year and be closer to the students we support through the refinement of our various platforms. I plan to work with them to create more culturally sensitive events that tailor to the welfare of the International Student community.

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

**15.6.1 Academic issues within the University**

I had individual meetings with each Associate Dean of the Internationalisation Committee (ADI) and fostered a stronger working relationship with them to ensure that the delivery and quality of online learning is being upheld. I have conveyed that should any International Student have any issues with their course OISA would be able to facilitate better academic support for them through these newly developed networks. OISA aims to be a dependable point of contact for these ADIs this year and I hope our working relationship together will help resolve the key academic issues that students face.

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

I have been actively working with the IO and OISA to provide valid information regarding the border situation for International Students being able to return to their home countries. OISA has created an infographic to help students understand the key information on how and when they are able to return to their home countries. More social and welfare issues details have been covered under section 15.2.

#### **15.7 Maintain a good working relationship to the Association 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 have organised a meeting with Sage Burke of the OUSA Student Support Centre that will happen in the next quarter.

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

I have strengthened the relationship between the IO and OISA this quarter by chairing the first ever OISA x International Office Collaborative Meeting which was a massive success in bringing the two parties together. OISA Exec members are now working more closely with the International Office than ever before. These meetings will continue to occur every quarter throughout the year.

#### **15.9 Work in conjunction with the Finance and Strategy Officer and the Clubs Development Officer and the Clubs and Societies Representative to ensure the affiliation and support of international student groups**

I am part of the Finance and Expenditure Committee this year and have attended one meeting. I have also had a meeting with the CDO, Michaela Tangimetua (Clubs and Socs Manager), and Tulsi Raman (Clubs and Socs Representative) on how to better support Cultural Clubs this year.

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

I have met with Maya Polaschek (Administrative Vice President) and set up a weekly regular meeting time with her. I have also upheld a good working relationship, asking regularly whether there's anything I can help out with but also bringing issues relevant to the International Students to her for further discussion. Should there be any issues or concerns from my end I will contact her throughout my term.

**15.11 Sit on the New Zealand International Students' Association (NZISA) as a member and maintain and fulfil the terms of Memorandum of Understanding held between Association and NZISA**

During this quarter, I have attended the NZISA SGM as a Council Representative and cast my votes on who should become the NZISA Secretary and Campaigns Officer.

**15.12 Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers**

I have performed the general duties expected of me as an OUSA Executive, details of which will be under "Part 2: General Duties of All Executive Members"

**15.13 Where practical, work not less than ten hours per week**

I am confident that I have worked an average equivalent to no less than hours per week.

**Part Two: General Duties of All Executive Members**

**3.1 The appointed term for all OUSA Executive Officers shall commence from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and will terminate on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December of the same year.**

I am currently 3 months into my term and my term will terminate in 9 months' time.

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

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

During the Summer break, I actively helped out with Summer in Duffers, an initiative from OUSA to do something for students who are here during the Summer. There were performances, music, and Radio One and OUSA Exec Team were giving out ice cream to the students which I took part in regularly.

During Orientation, I gave a speech at the International Student Welcome and attended an orientation seminar, introducing myself to the new students. At these

events, I promoted OUSA, OISA, and the other affiliated Cultural Clubs and also informed students of the support services they are entitled to. I assured these new students that these associations and clubs are definitely looking out for their wellbeing and are inclusive to all regardless of personal background or demographic.

I volunteered during OUSA Tent city, under the current restrictions, we could only give out ice cream to the students which I did.

The International Food Festival was unfortunately cancelled this year due to current restrictions, so I ensured that Cultural Clubs were well informed of this situation.

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

N/A

**3.3 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 was present at all Executive meetings except one Standing Committee Meeting. I was also present for the whole of Strategy Day as well as any other training sessions and Executive planning sessions.

**3.4 All Executive Officers shall:**

**3.4.1 Keep up to date with the Finance and Strategy Officer's Executive budget, bringing to the Finance and Strategy any spending proposals, keeping track of their spending and ensuring they do not exceed budgeted expenditure;**

See section 15.9 for details.

**3.4.2 Educate themselves on needs and experiences relevant to historically marginalized demographic groups including intersectionality and promote and encourage all demographics to participate, where relevant, in clubs, societies, committees and OUSA events**

Racism, discrimination, and xenophobic sentiments due to the Covid-19 pandemic has also been brought to my attention, which I would actively like to address throughout my term. Both my degrees actively focus around studying the history of marginalised demographic groups (Psychology and History).

**3.4.3 Prioritise sustainability and minimization of environmental impacts in all aspects of their role and keep up to date with environmental issues;**

OISA and I have promoted Drop For Good to ensure these items are finding a home.

**3.4.4 Every quarter undertake five hours of voluntary service which contributes to the local community**

I have undertaken the five hours of voluntary service through my contribution towards Summer in Dunners and Tent City ice cream giveaways.

**3.4.5 Regularly check and respond to all correspondence received.**

I have regularly checked and responded to all correspondence I have received in a timely manner. I have also been actively checking the OISA Facebook Messenger for any student concerns and responding urgently to any Cultural Club matters in the Cultural Club Execs Messenger chat.

**Part Three: Attendance and involvement in OUSA and University Committees**

- OUSA Executive
- Otago Tertiary Chaplaincy Trust Board
- Otago Internationalisation Committee
- Otago Distance Learning Advisory Board
- Otago Health Science Internationalisation Committee
- Study Dunedin Advisory Board
- Otago Summer School and Continuing Education Board

**Part Four: Goals and Progress**

**Goal 1: Address the underlying issues that have been affecting international student welfare**

Covid-19 has significantly hindered my original plans to create physical events that aim to address the welfare of international students. As such, I hope to adapt my approach towards a more online approach for the first half of Semester 1.

On-shore International Students have faced the precarious situation of not being able to return home for the past two years for fear of not being able to return to continue their studies. Although the news of border recovery for International Students has been very welcome, I suspect many International Students will not even get the opportunity to travel

back to their home countries during the mid-semester break. Being mindful of this I have worked towards trying to create an event especially for homesickness and emotional wellbeing in hopes of supporting our students here who have been away from their loved ones for so long. I have been in contact with some Clinical Psychologists here in Dunedin with an overseas background and hope to create some sort of event with them addressing this issue in the next quarter.

I also aim to address the racism and discrimination that this community has faced these past years through awareness campaigns. However, my main focus for the next quarter will be to address the emotional wellbeing of our students first.

#### Goal 2: Bridging students and university staff together, ensuring a stronger relationship between both parties

The previous ISR (Gerald Ryan) organised a meeting between the new OISA members and the staff of the IO in the previous year and it was agreed that OISA and the IO should meet like that more regularly. As detailed in section 12.8, the first meeting went extremely well. We spent the first hour addressing more serious issues in a formal meeting whilst the second hour was for networking. Overall, an already huge first step towards a much better relationship between the student representatives and staff members at the University.

#### Goal 3: Increasing Off-shore student support and their accessibility to student services

During the previous year I thought up the idea of creating a new role within OISA called the Off-shore Liaison Officer (OLO) which Gerald helped to motion during OISA's last AGM which was successfully passed. This role was created to ensure that there is always a present and dedicated medium of support for Off-shore students. The current person who occupies this role, Hannah Shahin, has been actively working with me in being present for Offshore students.

As detailed in section 12.2 there has already been a sudden increase in support for Off-shore students and I have personally seen to it that I am present for these students at the Check-in sessions. OISA's future online events would also make it more accessible to these students.

#### Goal 4: Create intercultural events that privilege the cultural diversity and minority groups of the University that are mindful of their personal and cultural wellbeing

I hope to create events that provide safe spaces for all groups of the University. A key part of this process is being able to involve the local community. I originally planned to have an International Student Hui at a marae to 'welcome' International Students into New

Zealand properly, but that plan has been postponed indefinitely until the restrictions loosen.

**Part Five: General**

- I have attended the Indonesian Community Association Welcoming Gathering