

Sean Teow

International Students' Representative

2nd 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

Since there was no Clubs Day for Sem 1 this year Kat from Clubs and Socs decided to do a 'clubs week' instead which I then relayed to the Cultural Clubs through our Facebook messenger chat. She has also given the Cultural Clubs the opportunity to have a poster and description of their clubs on display at the link throughout the Semester.

OISA has been working very collaboratively with the International Office as well, we have been employing the International Student Blackboard page as an additional platform to promote our events and other such International Student opportunities.

OISA's website is now up and running. Students can easily access it through our social media platforms and the OUSA Clubs and Socs blurbs.

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

OISA has finally had the opportunity to run physical events after the restrictions relaxed a little. I personally oversaw and directed the first physical event: the OISA Mix and Mingle. It was a successful first event with many students coming that we don't usually see. The event was a small scale but intimate one where people got to know one another in groups, we utilized the OISA Mix and Mingle discussion prompts made by the previous team which proved useful in facilitating good chats. The students also thoroughly enjoyed the refreshments provided and we got some good feedback on how students found out about the event.

On the Postgraduate side of things, all credit is due to our Postgraduate Officer Lo Wei Hong for continuing to hold Postgraduate Drop-in Sessions. We have since moved to a hybrid physical-online format so that we may meet these students in-person. I attended the first physical drop-in session and it was great to see there was a dedicated space for Postgraduate International Students. The sessions always covered specific issues as well so it had more of a focus.

For Off-shore students, I have attended all except one "Off-shore Check-in Not Out" session. We have seen consistent and regular attendance from some students building a small connected community overseas for these students. While Daniel Bond from the International Office runs the more skills based part of the sessions by introducing speakers I contributed by adding fun activities and games for the students to get

involved in which has been successful in making these sessions more than just a 'lecture'.

During the examination period, OISA's Academic Officer (Christine Su) and Secretary (Erika YK Wong) lead exam study sessions for the students. We did 3 sessions with different students showing up for each one, I was in attendance for all 3 and they went successfully. We also provided some refreshments and snacks for the students should they want to indulge themselves during this stressful period.

The whole OISA Team is banding together to organize a big event which remains confidential for this report so we can reveal it to the International Students later on. Planning and admin for this event has already been underway and we are hoping to finalise details and promote it soon.

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 been present to all the meetings during this quarter. During these meetings, we discussed various issues that have affected the International Student community (Visa issues, flatting issues, etc), we had regular updates from each representative as well. This quarter focused on building up the admin skills of the OISA Team and establishing Club policy such as but not limited to a Social Media Policy and General Work Policy so we can adjust for work-life balance outside of our association work which we hope the future 2022/2023 committee will follow.

With the restrictions lifted we had discussions about planning for future events which we hope to do a lot more of in the Second Semester. We have also elected a new Residential Officer to the vacant position (Cyrus Yam) and he has been diligent in trying to provide support for international students, a flat survival guide is in the works at the moment for on-campus, incoming and prospective students.

We could finally host physical meetings and have been doing so since the restrictions lifted which has produced more fruitful discussions around how we can advocate better for our International community. Most notable discussions had during this quarter have been around the visa issue that has been developing during this year, reviewing events for international students and ensuring it upholds the standard and intention of serving these students' benefits, and general administrative optimization of our club's functionality.

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 all the meetings this quarter with the OISA committee. We have shifted to using the OUSA Exec Bullpen as our regular meeting venue on Tuesday, 7-8PM bi-

weekly. The Secretary would take meeting minutes, and other committee members to participate when they have comments to make, updates, questions, and concerns. Agenda is prepared by the chair, following up from other committee members and circulated beforehand. We have decided to share the workload of approving meeting minutes amongst the me, my Co-President, and my Vice-President which would then be circulated amongst OISA Committee members for approval.

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

During this quarter, the OISA Committee has been active in optimizing work efficiency and work-life balance so that we may attend to our duties while balancing our academic and normal lives. I always include them in our decision making process and ensure that they have a chance to contribute feedback on any ideas, issues, or projects that is of relevance to the team. They have contributed incredibly and I am grateful to have such a passionate team.

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

The continued format of online teaching for on-campus students has been a continued source of frustration for our students but from feedback given through word of mouth and attending cultural club events, students have been able to get by despite these frustrations and no one has contacted me specifically yet regarding any academic issues.

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

I have been active in representing our diverse cultural youth in Dunedin by joining the Otago Youth Vision Partnership Group (OYVPG) which was an opportunity presented to me by the Dunedin Multi-Ethnic Community (DMEC) President (Lux). So I now represent all youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds as a representative of DMEC and OUSA.

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 met with Sage Burke once this quarter and have asked him for regular updates should there be any pressing issues or themes raised within our International Student

community utilizing the student support centre services. No notable issues have been raised which is comforting to see.

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

During this quarter, the relationship between the International Office and not only me but my whole OISA team has improved considerably in terms of how we can collaborate in supporting International Students together. I regularly meet with the Director of the International Office (Jason Cushen) and we update each other on any matters regarding the students that is of relevance, we also discuss ways to go about those issues. I've also been diligent in catching up with the rest of the staff that work there (Danielle, Simone, Daniel, etc) for regular updates and discussions about international student wellbeing and specific issues that affect them (e.g. Visa processes for 2022).

I also chaired the second OISA x IO meeting which proved extremely collaborative and impactful in strengthening the bonds between student and staff. Discussions showed great contribution from both staff and students and there was a good balance of opinions that fed into a wider consensus on certain issues. Everyone found it very wholesome to be able to talk both formally and informally to one another and the experience proved valuable for both sides.

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 confident I have a good working relationship with Emily Fau-Goodwin (OUSA Finance and Strategy Officer 2022) and have worked closely on trying to secure more funding to help support International Students. I am also confident I have a good working relationship with Tulsi Raman (OUSA Clubs and Societies Representative 2022) and Kathryn Corry (Clubs Development Officer), we work closely together to support the Cultural Clubs and I am in the process of establishing a Cultural Clubs Council so that we can garner more student feedback on how better to advocate for them.

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 been catching-up with Maya (OUSA Admin Vice President 2022) when I can and she has always been an amazing help in directing my efforts towards supporting International Students. We communicate on a very regular basis and even if we don't catch-up more officially we are always updating each other through our chats on messenger.

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

I have fulfilled the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding by attending all the NZISA Reps Council meetings and contributing feedback and updates from the local Otago region. I have also been taking a more active role in leading more national wide student pressure on the visa situation this year, I hope to get an open letter drafted with the contributions of other NZISA Reps and submitting it to the Ministry of Immigration for further consideration. I have also been helping to plan NZISA's Roadshow by helping to book a venue for when the 'Roadshow' will reach Otago.

15.12 Perform the general duties of all Executive Officers

I have done all my general duties as an OUSA Executive which are described in 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 no less than 10 hours per week this quarter or at least made up for it in the following weeks.

Part Two: General Duties of All Executive Members

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

I have six months until the termination is applicable.

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;

N/A

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

I have asked my team and the OISA network for any contributions for international student related questions this quarter.

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 am present to all Executive meetings and also help out where I can with local campaign BBQs.

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;

The MOU between OISA and OUSA has been under review during this quarter by myself, the AVP, President, and FSO. We wanted to update the terms to align more with the prospects of being able to better support international students between both associations. A new budget proposal was created to account for additional funds being needed for a specific confidential event (yet to be revealed) which has been approved and is now underway.

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

My academia for this semester has provided useful insights into how prejudice affects us as a community (Social Psychology) and the impacts on colonization on local communities (Empires and Globalisations). These papers have further enhanced my consideration and understanding of my diverse community in Dunedin.

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

For all OISA events we have bought biodegradable plates and cups, we also recycle any and all material used/unused during these events. We also walk to the supermarket and back rather than use cars to pick up our refreshments and snacks.

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

I have taken five hours of voluntary service by contributing in a BBQ for the local elections as well as working with DMEC as one of their Youth Representative to advocate on Diverse Ethnic Youth issues.

3.4.5 Regularly check and respond to all correspondence received.

I have checked and responded at the very best through my e-mails as quickly as possible and Messenger from cultural club presidents and OISA FB Page.

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
- Study Dunedin Advisory Board
- Otago Summer School and Continuing Education Board

I was absent to a few meetings due to academic commitments (clashing tests/exams/due dates) and travel reasons but have always contributed my points in detail to these meetings despite my absence. Apologies were given for all absent meetings.

Part Four: Goals and Progress

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

From the student feedback I have received, people were very frustrated by the Covid restrictions set in place during the first half of semester and the main issues with that was the increasing isolation and loneliness felt by my community. The lack of events also contributed to that. With the second half of semester, being able to organize physical events have helped to alleviate some of these feelings and we have received feedback that students are grateful that they're able to meet each other physically again.

Homesickness was a prominent issue but OISA and the IO has been active in ensuring International Students received the latest news about going back home. The new borders announcement has given hope to students once again, they are excited at the prospect of seeing their families and loved ones again and now have dates to look forward to. From the people we have spoken to, it seems that everyone finally has dates they will reunite with family whether it be for their graduation or a trip back which has buffered the impacts of homesickness.

I hope to tackle more long term issues like facing discrimination on campus and have been doing so by working with TRM President Jade Mills and UOPISA President Elisepa Taukolo on establishing a more physical centre for addressing such issues.

Goal 2: Bridging students and university staff together, ensuring a stronger relationship between both parties (Semi-Completed)

With our OISA x IO meetings we have established a good tradition of meeting up with the IO to discuss issues in much greater detail which has worked to achieve this goal quite effectively. It has also made it easier for OISA to jump onto any opportunities (Off-shore check-ins, Postgrad drop-in sessions) hosted by the IO and be there for the students we advocate for. We also ask the IO to help us promote our events through Blackboard.

I have actively tried to involved my team in other aspects of IO work and they have always contributed. We work greatly together and my team is happy with our collaborative relationship. Overall, I'd say the bridge has solidified and will continue to be constructed further throughout this year.

Goal 3: Increasing Off-shore student support and their accessibility to student services (COMPLETED, see Section 15.2)

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

With the restrictions loosened we have been able to put on events to benefit the emotional and cultural wellbeing of our International Students. I can say we have effectively gotten a good start on this and we hope to ride on this momentum and churn out more events to do just that in the second semester.

Part Five: General

I love OUSA and everyone I work with. All the Executives are hardworking and passionate people that I am extremely honoured and privileged to work with. They have been so supportive of what I've been doing and I have loved being able to contribute here and there while having a fun time with them when it allows.

It's also been great to see my very own OISA team develop and am proud to establish a healthier work culture for our mental health especially since it's an aspect that is highly stigmatized in our home countries. Overall, even though I want to do a lot more, I am very satisfied with what I have done so far and proud to be working with such brilliant individuals. I have nothing but love for everyone I work with and for and am excited to work more during the next quarter.