



12 June 2023

Wilson Harlow

By email: fyi-request-22805-fbdeb4e5@requests.fyi.org.nz

Kia ora Wilson

I refer to your information request dated 15 May 2023 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have requested:

“any information the University has regarding why the University of Otago Bachelor's degree certificate does not contain the majors/minors as done at other universities. Any information regarding consultations, reasons, or policy would be appreciated”.

We provide the following response to your request.

For the purposes of efficient administration, we have decided to provide the information you have requested in the form of a summary, in accordance with section 16(1)(e) of the Act.

1. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Nicholson received a memorandum from OUSA Executive requesting that the University of Otago print students' subject majors on their physical degrees. The memorandum noted:
 - a. there is significant student support for the inclusion of majors on degrees, with students citing a number of reasons for wanting them printed;
 - b. there is a change.org petition to include majors on certificates with over 1,500 signatories from both past and present students who wish to see their work recognised on their degrees;
 - c. practices at other Universities vary, with some choosing to include majors and others choosing to include the overarching degree;
 - d. due to the broad nature of degrees, two people could have the same degree despite having studied very different topics. As students put a lot of time and energy into choosing a major and completing the required pre-requisites they would like the degree certificates to reflect this;
 - e. the University currently prints majors on degrees at Honours level and above. To some students this feels as though the University is saying that if you're not 'smart enough' to study at that level then it doesn't matter what your major is in. All students put in significant time and effort into the majors of their choosing and their degree should reflect this regardless of whether they choose to continue their study into Honours,
 - f. students are very proud of their degrees, and many students have noted feeling disappointed and a loss of mana when they receive their degree only for it to not show the subjects they spent significant time on;

- g. overall, there is clear student opinion in support of the inclusion of majors on printed degrees in order to recognise the mahi of students during their time at Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo.
2. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Nicholson consulted with the University's Head of Student Experience and the Acting Registrar about whether there were any legal or logistical concerns regarding OUSA's proposal. Preliminary discussions confirmed that there did not appear to be any legal or policy reasons to prevent the proposal.
 3. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Nicholson submitted a memorandum/manatu dated 7 July 2022 to the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) requesting endorsement of OUSA's request. A copy of the memorandum from OUSA was attached. It was noted that the Head of Student Experience had discussed the matter with ITS Business Systems and had found out that it was technically possible to print majors on the degree certificates but that double majors would present challenges. There would need to be some system changes and appropriate testing. It was further noted that since the graduation year runs from December to August, the earliest that this change could be implemented is December 2023.
 4. SLT received and discussed the 7 July 2022 memorandum at its meeting on 18 July 2022. It noted that:
 - a. the feasibility of including two majors on the degree certificate could be considered;
 - b. if implemented this would apply to a degree certificate from that time onwards, with replacement degrees before that date showing the degree only; and
 - c. the matter be forwarded to Senate and then Council.
 5. Senate, at its meeting on 31 August 2022, endorsed that the following recommendation be approved by Council.

"7. Major Subjects on Degree Certificates

The Senate

RECOMMENDED that the inclusion of major subjects on degree certificates, as outlined in a manatu from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in response to a request from the Otago University Students' Association, be approved, *noting that:*

- *There is mixed custom in this area across Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.*
- *Putting a single major subject on a degree certificate would be logistically straightforward while double majors and combined degrees would require some development work, but are also feasible.*
- *While there was some support for also including minor subjects, this would create space issues on degree certificates.*
- *Major subjects would appear on all degree certificates, and students would not be able to opt out.*
- *A separate piece of work would be needed to investigate including major subjects in the graduation booklet."*

6. The University Council approved Senate's recommendation at its meeting on 11 October 2022 as follows:

"Major Subjects on Degree Certificates

the inclusion of major subjects on degree certificates, noting the earliest this change could be implemented is December 2023."

7. Currently, this work is on a list of items for review, development and implementation by the IT Systems team. It is noted that whilst this might seem like a straight-forward change, it is actually quite complicated due to the multiple permutations of degrees that can be obtained through study at the University of Otago. It is currently expected that majors will be included on degree certificates in 2024, starting with the May 2024 graduations.

I trust that this information will be helpful.

Ngā mihi



Jenny Shaw
Official Information and Compliance Coordinator
Office of the Registrar