



3 October 2023

By email: K fyi-request-23655-181d5fba@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe K

I refer to your request for information dated 5 September 2023 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (**the Act**). You have requested information in relation to the Bachelor of Arts (**BA**) at the University of Otago:

“I previously asked for Māori Studies graduates from 2015 until 2023. Could I please have that but only for people with a major in Māori Studies.”

As advised in our response to your previous Official Information Act request, we combined the completion numbers for where Māori Studies was taken as a major, a minor and an Honours BA degree for the years 2015 – 2023 in order to protect the privacy of our graduates.

Section 9(a) of the Act provides that information may be withheld if this is necessary to protect the privacy of natural persons. We were concerned that releasing the number of people who majored in Māori Studies from 2015 – 2023 could lead to those individuals being identified, or their identities being inferred, and thereby intrude on their privacy and wellbeing. The Ombudsman guidance provides that the individual does not have to be identifiable to the world at large, so long as the information “has the capacity to identify the individual to some members of the public.”¹ Similarly, the guidance provides that where statistical information is sought and the numbers are relatively small, then there is a higher risk that individuals will be identifiable and personal information disclosed.

However, we also wanted to assist you and to provide as much information as we could, acknowledging that there is a public interest in release of statistical information in relation to degrees undertaken at the University of Otago. In our view, combining the numbers for where Māori Studies was taken as a major, a minor and an Honours BA degree was the most appropriate way of balancing these competing concerns under s 9(2)(a). Again, this is in accordance with the Ombudsman guidance which provides that one way of getting this balance right is by releasing “information for a larger cohort to make it more difficult to connect the information with identifiable individuals.”²

I trust that this information will be helpful. If you are not satisfied with our response to your information request, section 28(3) of the Act provides you with the right to ask an Ombudsman to

¹ [Ombudsman’s Guidance](#), Privacy, November 2020, at page 8.

² [Ombudsman’s Guidance](#), Privacy, November 2020, at page 13.

investigate and review this response. However, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns with you first.

Yours sincerely,

Kari Schmidt
Office of the Registrar