

17 September 2024

By email: [fyi-request-28123-31456e6a@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-28123-31456e6a@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe John

I refer to your request for information dated 20 August 2024 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have requested:

*"I am writing to request information under the Official Information Act regarding the halls of residence at the University of Otago.*

*Specifically, I am seeking the following data for the 2024 application cycle for students intending to study in 2025:*

*Total Number of Applicants:*

*The total number of applicants to each hall of residence.*

*This data should be further categorized by:*

- Māori*
- Pacific*
- Other*

*Ensuite Room Applications:*

*-Where applicable (e.g., Te Rangihīroa Hall), please provide the number of students who applied specifically for ensuite rooms.*

*If this information is not yet available, I kindly request that you delay your response until all relevant data is complete and can be provided in full."*

I also note your clarification email of 21 August 2024, in which you also requested:

*"When providing the total number of applicants to each hall, could you please also include a breakdown of how many of the total applicants chose the halls as first choice, second choice, and third choice options?"*

Insofar as your request relates to the "total" number of applications to the University's Residential Colleges in 2025 (application cycle taking place in 2024), we are declining your request pursuant to section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the University, and there are no reasonable grounds to believe it is held by, or more closely connected with the functions of, another agency subject to the Act.

We note that applications for entry to the University's Residential Colleges in 2024 are still open, and do not formally close until early March 2025. In order to be considered for initial offer release, applicants must submit their application by 30 September 2024. Applications continue to be accepted after 30 September, but these applicants will not be considered for the first round of offers. Therefore, as application processes are still underway, information relating to the "total"

number of applications to the Residential Colleges in 2025 has not been finalised and will not be known until applications close in March 2025. We would be happy to consider a new request from you in March 2025 if you still wish to receive this information.

We considered whether we would be able to make the information currently in existence (e.g., number of applications as at today's date) available to you, and while we consider this to not be the intent of your request, a formal request for this information would need to be declined pursuant to the following grounds of the Act:

- Section 9(2)(i) – to enable the University to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities;
- Section 9(2)(k) – to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage.

We are operating in a highly competitive commercial environment with other tertiary institutions to attract and recruit students. Release of data regarding patterns of student demand across the University's various and varied Residential Colleges would provide competitors (other domestic and international tertiary institutions) with information that is likely to prejudice the commercial position of the University and provide our competitors with an improper gain or improper advantage. This information would provide our competitors with an opportunity to revise their own recruitment strategies to gain market share.

We considered whether we would be able to make the information available to you in another high-level form which would avoid the prejudice or harm protected by sections 9(2)(i) and 9(2)(k) of the Act. However, it was determined that until recruitment and application processes for the University's Residential Colleges are complete, this information is equally commercially sensitive, and could still amount to an improper gain or advantage.

With respect to the information we have withheld, we do not consider there are any other factors which would make it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available to you. In this case, the overall public interest would not be served by the release of information that would undermine the University's efforts and ability to recruit students in a very competitive market.

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

Ngā mihi



Kelsey Kennard  
Official Information and Compliance Coordinator  
Office of the Registrar and Secretary to the Council