

26 March 2026

By email: fyi-request-32625-81ca9c81@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe C. Neilson

I refer to your information request dated 26 February 2026 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have requested the following information made in an earlier request dated 22 October 2025:

Could you please tell me which residential colleges had the most applicants put them as their first choice when applying for a place for initial offer release (applications that closed 30 September 2025) for the 2026 academic year. If you could please list the top 10 in order of number of first choice applicants.

Could you also say how many applicants were put on the waitlist after the initial offer release.

Our response to your request follows.

Further information about the University of Otago's Residential Colleges, including the application process and waitlist, is available on the University's website: [Frequently Asked Questions: Residential Colleges](#).

The University operates in a highly competitive commercial environment, competing with other domestic and international tertiary education institutions to attract students. The information you have requested is commercially sensitive and would help to inform the strategies of competitors.

The University of Otago operates ten colleges, in addition to four colleges affiliated to the University but operated by independent organisations. While we see no commercial prejudice in identifying the top six colleges applied for as a first preference, we do see commercial prejudice in identifying colleges with a ranking below six, and the number of applicants on the waitlist as at offer day, as this may influence future applicants' decision making.

Accordingly, we decline to provide the top ten Residential Colleges applied for as a first preference for residence in 2026 by college, or the number of applicants on the waitlist as at offer day (7 October 2025) for residence in 2026:

- under section 9(2)(i) of the Act, to allow the University to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities, and

- under section 9(2)(k) of the Act, to prevent improper gain or improper advantage.

In the cases above, we consider that good reasons exist for withholding information, not outweighed by other considerations which would make it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

We can however provide the top six Residential Colleges applied for as a first preference in October 2025 for residence in 2026, and the number of applicants currently on the waitlist for a Residential College (as of 3 March 2026), as this information may be helpful.

The top six Residential Colleges applied for as a first preference for residence in 2026 (based on numbers of completed applications on 1 October 2025):

1. Te Rangihiroa College
2. Selwyn College
3. University College
4. Arana College
5. Carrington College
6. St Margaret's College

Residential College Waitlist

The number of applicants on the waitlist as of 3 March 2026 for a Residential College is **21**.

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

Ngā mihi



Jo Pearson
Coordinator Official information and Compliance