

13 May 2026

Ahmed AL-Suleiman

By email: fyi-request-34490-37bb5a53@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Ahmed

I refer to your information request dated 14 April 2026 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have requested the following information:

I am planning to apply this year for one of the University of Otago's Health Sciences Professional Programmes under the Rural Origins sub-category (Post graduate). I understand from your previous response that eligibility cannot be formally assessed until an application is submitted.

However, I wanted to seek some general guidance. Based on the Geographic Classification for Health (GCH), Morrinsville is classified as a rural area. I attended Morrinsville College, and I have lived in rural areas my entire life. So I am trying to understand whether applicants from this area are typically considered under the Rural Origins category.

I understand that final decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and consider multiple factors, but any general guidance you could provide would be greatly appreciated to help me better understand my position before applying.

Our response to your request follows.

Please note that further information regarding admission to the University of Otago's Health Sciences professional programmes is available on the University website:

[Guidelines for Admission to Health Sciences professional programmes](#)

For applications based on a rural residential address or attendance at a rural school(s) the University classifies rural as per the Geographic Classification for Health (GCH). For the purposes of this policy, applicants will be eligible if the address or school(s) on which the rural equity group application is based on, is classified within Rural 1–3.

There are multiple different ways of defining urban and rural areas. The University of Otago has adopted the Geographic Classification for Health (GCH) to determine who is urban and who is rural for the purposes of rural origin entry into health professional programmes. This is because the GCH is the only rural-urban classification system specifically designed and validated for use in health policy. The GCH more accurately identifies those communities whose health status and access to services is impacted by distance from the cities. The GCH has been adopted by government for health monitoring and policy.

Using the map image in the link below, you can undertake an informal check of the classification of the residential area provided in your application:

[GCH New Zealand map](#)

It is important to note that this should be considered as a guide only. The Statistical Area 1s (SA1s) of the residential address and/or the school(s) provided will be checked against the GCH database during the

assessment of your application. If your application is found to not be eligible under the rural category you will be notified, and your application will be processed under the general category.

We hope this information will be helpful. It is strongly recommended that students wishing to apply under the Rural sub-category contact the Rural sub-category support person, Riiti Conway, in the Health Sciences Divisional Office:

Email riiti.conway@otago.ac.nz

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Pearson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jo Pearson
Coordinator Official information and Compliance