

OSMS Strategic Plan 2008-2012

THE OTAGO SCHOOL OF MEDICAL SCIENCES STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2012

Vision

A research-led School with an international reputation for excellence in biomedical research and research informed teaching.

Mission

The School will promote and undertake research of an international standard of excellence in the biological and biomedical sciences that is attuned to the needs of both New Zealand and the global community. The School will build on the established international reputations of its five academic departments, to enhance quality, academic rigour, innovation and the highest of ethical standards in teaching and research so it can continue to contribute to the academic vitality of the University of Otago (UO) and the wellbeing of the wider community.

About the Otago School of Medical Sciences

The Otago School of Medical Sciences (OSMS) was established as a separate entity at the beginning of 1996. It is part of the Faculty of Medicine and is located administratively within the Division of Health Sciences.

The five departments comprising the OSMS are Anatomy & Structural Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology & Immunology, Pharmacology & Toxicology, and Physiology. The School has around 97 academic staff, 95 research staff and 140 general staff and has a net annual budget in excess of \$25,000,000 with external research income accounting for around one third of the total income.

The OSMS departments, because of their large size, have had the status of independent cost centres since 1996. Unlike other departments within Health Science they are unique in the respect that they have teaching responsibilities to two separate Divisions. As such, each department has been required to prepare its own departmental Strategic Plan.

Strategic Imperatives

The University's Strategic Direction to 2012 provides six strategic imperatives. Each imperative addresses an area regarded as vital to the future of the University. These imperatives provide the framework for the Otago School of Medical Sciences Strategic Plan.

1. Achieving Research Excellence
2. Achieving Excellence in Research Informed Teaching
3. Ensuring Outstanding Campus Environments and Student Experience
4. Contributing to the National Good and to International Progress
5. Strengthening External Engagement
6. Building and Sustaining Capability

1. Achieving Research Excellence

Background

The OSMS is the University's major centre of biomedical research. The OSMS has a strong history of research excellence. All five departments are research active, with strong research cultures and vigorous postgraduate programmes. Each department achieved high ratings in the 2006 PBRF exercise with Otago staff obtaining the highest score in Biomedicine. The OSMS attracts a significant proportion of the contestable research funding within New Zealand (>\$21 million in 2007) and has strengths in a wide range of biomedical and biotechnology research areas. The OSMS plans to build on these strengths to enhance its research performance and external research income.

Strategic goals

- To recruit and retain high quality academic and general staff
- To continue to increase the numbers of high quality postgraduate research students
- To support and develop the careers of emerging researchers and research-only staff
- To effectively position the OSMS to be able to respond to new funding opportunities
- To develop new space within the School to allow expansion of existing, and development of new, research activities
- To foster activities and structures within the School and wider University that facilitate the development of larger functional research structures
- To encourage, foster and support opportunities to develop and expand external links and collaborations, both nationally and internationally
- To foster opportunities for staff to pursue the commercialisation of science where this is in the strategic interest of the School

2. Achieving Excellence in Research Informed Teaching

Background

The OSMS teaches in all professional health science programmes, namely Dentistry, Medicine, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy. In addition each of the departments within the OSMS offer degrees in discipline-based BSc programmes and in the interdisciplinary Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences (BBiomedSc) programme. The BSc majors offered by departments within the OSMS are Anatomy, Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology, Neuroscience, Pharmacology, and Physiology. These seven majors are all administered through the Division of Sciences and Genetics and Neuroscience are interdepartmental/interdivisional programmes, as is the multi-disciplinary BBiomedSc degree.

One of the most important recent new undergraduate teaching initiatives has been the implementation of a new common Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) foundation programme in 2007. This major development, led by the OSMS and in collaboration with the Division of Sciences, involves all 5 departments within the OSMS, both as contributing departments to the teaching of the new HSFY foundation programme and as end-user departments of the new programme. The aims of the new HSFY programme were to provide a foundation programme for the health professional and related science degree programmes and also to encourage students to take an active role in their learning.

Postgraduate teaching plays a key role within the OSMS. There is a strong and vibrant research culture and commitment to research-informed teaching in all five departments within the OSMS and all departments offer Honours, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and PhD programmes. The strength of these programmes is evidenced by the number, quality and reputation of the students who graduate from the OSMS with postgraduate research degrees. Postgraduate students make a vital and valued contribution to the research and social life of the School.

Strategic goals

- To promote, encourage and support excellence in teaching
- To recognise, reinforce and promote interdependence between teaching and research
- To attract and retain high quality undergraduate and postgraduate students
- To develop in each student a mastery of a coherent body of knowledge through systematic disciplined study
- To develop the lifelong learning skills of students
- To encourage students to reflect upon and evaluate the ethical and social implications of their knowledge
- To develop in students skills, attitudes and knowledge that enhance their employment prospects and their capacity to make a positive contribution to society
- To foster international content, context and vision in the learning environment of students
- To encourage and support the development of innovative approaches to the delivery of research informed teaching and learning

3. Ensuring Outstanding Campus Environments and Student Experience

Background

The OSMS is the largest school in the Faculty of Medicine, and within the Division of Health Sciences. The OSMS is also the school that has grown most quickly over the last 2 years both in terms of student and staff numbers. The increase in staff numbers in part reflects the increase in teaching related activities but also encompasses the significant research and commercial activities within the School. Unfortunately, the increased activity within the School has not been accompanied by an increase in space and this provides a significant challenge to the OSMS.

Strategic goals

- To increase the space available to the School for teaching and research
- To enhance the quality of the existing space by appropriate refurbishment
- To provide a safe, compliant and adequately resourced learning environment for students and staff
- To provide a safe, compliant and well resourced environment that will facilitate research activity
- To provide resources within the School to fund strategic items of equipment
- To ensure that all staff and students have appropriate access to library and information technology to meet their educational and research needs

- To provide appropriate support for students and staff from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- To communicate effectively with our undergraduate and postgraduate students and involve them in the life of the OSMS and its constituent departments

4. Contributing to the National Good and to International Progress

Background

The OSMS contributes to the national good and to international progress through its undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes and its excellent research activities.

Strategic goals

- To encourage high quality research in areas relevant to national good
- To provide an appropriately trained workforce for New Zealand in the areas of biomedical science and biotechnology
- To strengthen engagement in commitments to Maori and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- To encourage Maori participation in research and research training within the School
- To promote research on Maori and Pacific Island health issues
- To undertake community service activities to deploy research outcomes which may contribute to the welfare and development of New Zealand
- To work with the Centre for Communication of Science to communicate and educate the wider community in the area of biomedical science

5. Strengthening External Engagement

Background

The OSMS as a research-led school is heavily reliant on external sources of research funding. In order to maintain and improve the School's reputation as a provider of high quality research the OSMS will be required to draw increasing amounts of funding from disparate external sources including researcher-initiated funds, outcome driven research funds and industry funded research. Engagement with government and other key external bodies is crucial if this process is to be successful.

Strategic goals

- To engage with and contribute to key government bodies who have policy responsibilities for the development of the scientific work force within New Zealand
- To further develop relationships with key research funding bodies and research agencies nationally and internationally
- To increase the OSMS representation on external funding bodies
- To demonstrate a commitment to national research priorities and processes

6. Building and Sustaining Capability

Background

The School's most important resource is its staff and students. The recruitment and retention of high quality staff plays a vital role in the School's ability to achieve excellence in both research and teaching. The School recognises the need to recruit both excellent academics and general staff and acknowledges that the general staff play a crucial role in the life of the School. The OSMS has strong postgraduate programmes but realises that further development in this area is important for the long term health of the School and the future of biomedical science within New Zealand.

As mentioned earlier provision of space is an important goal for the OSMS to achieve in order to build and sustain capability.

Strategic goals

- To recruit and retain high quality staff
- To provide adequate start-up funds to facilitate the development of the careers of new staff
- To provide adequate strategic funding to support new research initiatives
- To attract high quality postgraduate students
- To provide prestigious summer studentships to attract high achieving students to the OSMS
- To increase the space available for teaching and research