Required and recommended background subjects

Each year we field many questions from students, teachers and parents regarding prerequisites for first-year courses. Students are keen to know which Year 13 subjects they should take in order to best prepare them for success in their chosen university programme.

Below is a list of programmes offered by the University of Otago, and recommended school subjects. Most of these are not compulsory but are useful for best preparation.

The key

The Language-rich* category includes reading, research and written communication-based subjects such as English, History, Classics and History of Art, etc.

(+) Background learning useful
(++) Background learning recommended

If you have questions about course requirements, please contact the Liaison Office: liaison@otago.ac.nz

Arts/Humanities

It is possible to begin all Arts/Humanities (BA) majors (Anthropology to Tourism, Languages and Cultures) without a background in those subjects – even languages. Students who enjoy subjects at school such as English, History, Classics, Media Studies and Drama are encouraged to consider the full range of Arts majors as options for study. Music Performance students should have a background in music and are required to audition.

Specialist degrees	Language-rich*	Other
Law (LLB)	++	Drama, Debating
Social Work (BSW)	++	Social Sciences
Theology (BTheol)	++	Social Sciences, Religious Education
Music (MusB)	++	Music
Performing Arts (BPA)	++	Drama, Music, Dance
Teaching (Secondary)	++	Focus on teaching areas
Teaching (Primary/Early Childhood Education)	++	Year 12 English, Mathematics and Sciences

Commerce/Business

	Statistics	Calculus	Language-rich*	Other
Accounting	++	+	+	Accounting, Business Studies
Economics	++	+	+	Economics, Business Studies
Entrepreneurship (BEntr)			+	Business Studies
Finance	++	++	+	Accounting, Economics, Business Studies
Human Resource Management	++		+	Business Studies
Information Science	++	+	+	Digi Tech, Business Studies
International Business	++		+	Economics, second language, Business Studies
Management	++		+	Business Studies
Marketing	++		+	Business Studies
Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)	++		++	Economics
Tourism	++		+	Geography, Tourism, Business Studies

Health Sciences – required background subjects to Year 13

	Chemistry	Biology	Physics	Statistics	Calculus	Language-rich*
Oral Health		14 credits L3				10 credits (5 reading, 5 writing from L2 or L3 English)
Dental Technology	14 credits in: 2x Level 3 NCEA approved subjects from Science, Maths or Technology; Physics strongly recommended					
Radiation Therapy	16 Level 3 credits in: Physics or Biology/Maths or Calculus or Statistics/English or Te Reo or History or Art History or Classics or Geography					

Health Sciences – recommended background subjects to Year 13

	Chemistry	Biology	Physics	Statistics		Calculus	Language -rich*	Other
Health Sciences First Year	++	+	++	++	or	++	++	PE
Biomedical Sciences	++	+		+			+	PE
Bachelor of Health Sciences (all majors)		+		++			++	Social Sciences, Chemistry, Health, PE
Pharmaceutical Science	++	+	++			++	+	PE

Sciences

	Chemistry	Biology	Physics	Statistics		Calculus	Language -rich*	Other
Agricultural Innovation	++	++		+				Geography, Sciences, Digi Tech
Anatomy	++	++		+				
Applied Geology		+		+		++		Geography, Sciences
Aquaculture and Fisheries	+	++		++	or	+		Geography, Sciences
Biochemistry	++	++		+				
Botany		++		+				Chemistry, Sciences
Chemistry	++			+				
Computational Modelling				+		++		Digi Tech, Physics
Computer Science				+		++	+	Digi Tech
Consumer Food Science		++		+				Business, Food Tech Home Ec, Chemistry
Data Science				++		+		Digi Tech
Ecology		++		++				Geography, Sciences
Economics				++	or	++	+	Economics
Energy Management			++			++		Geography
Energy Science and Technology			++	+	or	++		Geography
Engineering Intermediate	++		++			++		
Environmental Management		+		++	or	++		Geography, Sciences
Exercise and Sport Science		++		++				PE, Sciences
Food Science	++	++		+	or	+		Bus Studies, Food Tech, Home Ec, Sciences
Forensic Analytical Science	++	++		++		+		Physics
Genetics	++	++		++		+		
Geographic Information Systems				+	or	++		Digi Tech, Geography
Geography				++				Geography, Sciences
Geology		+		+		++		Geography, Chemistry, Physics
Human Nutrition	++	++		+			+	Food Tech
Information Science				++		+	+	Digi Tech
Land Planning and Development				+		++		Geography, Physics
Marine Science		++		++	or	++		Chemistry, Geography, Physics
Mathematics				++		++		Digi Tech
Microbiology	++	++		+				
Molecular Biotechnology	++	++		+				
Neuroscience	++	++	+	+				Physics
Pharmacology	++	++		+				
Physical Education, Activity and Health		++		++			+	PE, Sciences, Social Sciences
Physics			++			++		Electronics
Physiology	++	++		+				Physics
Plant Biotechnology	++	++		+				
Psychology		++		++			+	
Software Engineering				+		++		Digi Tech
Sport Development and Management		++					+	PE, Bus Studies, Social Sciences
Sport and Exercise Nutrition	++	++		+				PE, Food Tech, Home Ec
Statistics				++	or	++	+	
Surveying (BSurv)				+		++	+	Geography, Digi Tech, Physics
Surveying Measurement				+		++	+	Geography, Physics
Zoology		++		++				