

1. The USP OS programme got a major boost with three international experts reviewing the programme late last year. Some very useful feedback were received, and we are working on those. I think the biggest of all will be a complete merger of OS and PD courses in a single programme. We are working on this idea to cash on the possible synergies of the two. Also we will rebrand the OS as “Development Statistics” we are thankful to Ofa for leading the panel on the OS review. Our Programme Advisory membership has endorsed this as well.
2. Despite the COVID19 pandemic, our first yr. OS student numbers are 170 (sem2), and this is about 7% increase from the last year. The final year number is 35, an increase of 20% from last year. These are encouraging.
3. We advertised two positions in our PD programme - hopefully we will be able to get some new blood in the system. One of our star graduates- PD student (Sumeet Lal) got a scholarship to Hiroshima University (Japan) for PhD studies. This will boost our internal capacity in the near future. His research paper “Projecting Populations for Major Pacific Island Countries With and Without COVID-19: Pro-active Insights for Population Policy” has been accepted by an A ranked journal (Journal of Population Research). There are a few other research on OS and PD disciplines now taking shape.
4. Using the latest trade statistics produced by the SPC, we are able to complete another analytical paper on the effects of COVID19 on the PICs. We will be happy to communicate this to a suitable journal and to the wider stakeholders in about 2 week’s time. For first time 1 OS and 1 PD course is being scheduled for summer school this break.
5. The Modelling Centre is dysfunctional at this stage, but we hope to get it rolling early next year, when USP governance issues are sorted out. In light of the latter, we are now re-organising our Faculty as “School of Accounting, Finance and Economics,” which will now house the OS/PD programme.