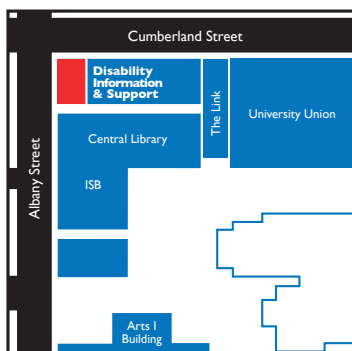


# Imagine

"You don't have to be great to start,  
but you have to start to be great."  
Zig Zagler

Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 2 2015



Our physical address is:  
Disability Information & Support  
West Lane  
Information Services Building  
Cnr Cumberland and Albany Streets  
Dunedin

Welcome to 'Imagine', Disability Information and Support's newsletter. This is our last edition for the year and I think you will find it very informative. As I write the welcome, it seems somewhat hard to believe that the end of the year is fast approaching. As we reflect on 2015, many remarkable events and achievements spring to mind. Student Success is particularly at the forefront of my mind and it has been pleasing to see and hear of students graduating. In addition, a number of students have completed individual papers with fantastic grades. This is certainly a testament to the many hours of hard work that students have put into their studies.

DI&S has also worked with a number of students who have experienced some difficult situations. Personal challenges can hit any of us at any time and I have been greatly impressed by

the levels of compassion shown by some departmental staff members towards students. I need to make it clear that students with disabilities and/or impairments are not looking for an advantage; rather they are looking for a level playing field. I would like to extend thanks to those staff members who have provided exemplary levels of pastoral care, as without committed staff, Otago would not be the caring and compassionate place it is.

Finally, I would like to thank our team for their dedication, enthusiasm and tireless efforts to ensure top quality learning supports are available and implemented for students with a documented need. This year's journey has been encouraging and we are already looking forward to 2016.

Melissa Lethaby, Manager



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# Student Profile

“It is also great to develop relationships with staff in the Department, and older students who have been there done that, as they are always happy to offer advice and help if you need it”



## STACEY EDWARDS

Stacey Edwards is in her 5th and final year of study at the University of Otago. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Nutrition in 2013 and is expecting to complete her Master of Dietetics at the end of this year. “My family have a history of obesity, heart disease and Type Two Diabetes, so I have always had some interest in those issues”.

When Stacey was aged 13 her parents felt there was something not quite right with her hearing. At first they thought she was just being a typical teenager with ‘selective’ hearing but then realised there had been some issues her whole life. Stacey explained that there were often times when she was unaware people were talking to her or she had forgotten things that people had recently said to her. An appointment with an Audiologist confirmed that she had an auditory processing disorder. This meant that Stacey’s hearing was fine, but she struggled with the processing of verbal information.

Stacey’s biggest challenge at University has been keeping up with lectures and managing mental fatigue. Trying to process verbal information in a lecture and write it down whilst trying to process the next lot of information was a huge challenge for Stacey. After having a day of classes where she was constantly working hard to process information, she was left exhausted and this was difficult socially as she never felt like doing much with her friends.

According to Stacey, the support offered through Disability Information and Support was fantastic and she doesn’t believe she would have completed her degree without it! She received assistance with note-taking and tutoring which she said helped a lot and made studying more enjoyable. Stacey also found support from her peers invaluable. Making friends with other students doing the same degree and having flatmates who understood her impairment was awesome and made her study experience better. Stacey now has some great friends for life! “It is also great to develop relationships with staff in the Department, and older students who have been there done that, as they are always happy to offer advice and help if you need it”.

Stacey’s message to students with impairments who are either thinking about attending University or currently studying is please don’t be afraid to ask for help. She said that there is nothing to be ashamed of. “It just means that the way you learn will be different to others, and that’s not a bad thing”.

# News Bites

## Thesis Information Guide

This valuable guide provides advice and support to postgraduate students who are writing a thesis. It includes useful information about how to plan your research, find existing theses and dissertations and review literature. Additional information relating to copyright, writing a thesis, its submission and publication is also available at the following site [otago.libguides.com/thesisinformation](http://otago.libguides.com/thesisinformation).

## Students Studying from a Distance

If you are a student studying from a distance you may be interested in the *Top 10 Tips for Study Success* that has been put together by the Distance Learning Team.

1. Make sure computer and internet facilities are adequate
2. Become familiar with your course material
3. Create a workspace
4. Prepare yourself for OtagoConnect or audio conferences
5. Set a study schedule and stick to it
6. Become familiar with using the library
7. Update your academic writing skills
8. Keep in touch with your instructor and other students
9. Take practice exams
10. Reward yourself!

Visit the Distance Learning website for more information about these study tips. [otago.ac.nz/courses/distance\\_study/otago020814.html](http://otago.ac.nz/courses/distance_study/otago020814.html)

## Recreation Services

A balanced healthy lifestyle is important for everyone. Recreation Services offers a great range of recreational activities, including cardio and weights, group fitness classes, equipment hire, social sports opportunities and outdoor trips. Entry into Unipol is free for all students with their student ID card. Their website is definitely worth looking at and you can access it from here [otago.ac.nz/recreation/index.html](http://otago.ac.nz/recreation/index.html).

## Hands-On at Otago Scholarships

Disability Information and Support Scholarships provide a great opportunity for secondary school students with an impairment/disability to participate in the weeklong Hands-On at Otago programme. Each of the four Scholarships will cover flights, accommodation, meals and programme activities to a maximum of \$1500.

All successful applicants will travel to Dunedin from 17-22 January 2016, and experience what it is like to be a student at the University of Otago. These opportunities aim to inspire and motivate secondary school students who have an impairment/disability to develop their passion for learning.

Complete the Hands-On at Otago application form which can be downloaded from

[otago.ac.nz/hands-on-at-otago/registration/index.html](http://otago.ac.nz/hands-on-at-otago/registration/index.html)

## N G Stewart Scholarship

The N G Stewart Scholarship is awarded to a student of the University who has a disability that makes attending university a challenge. The scholarship was established in 2003 with funds bequeathed by Norman George Stewart (1913-1997) through the Stewart Coombs Trust.

Applicants must:

- Be New Zealand citizens or a New Zealand permanent resident.
- Have a disability of at least six months or longer.
- Be intending to enrol, or already be enrolled in an undergraduate degree at the University of Otago.

For additional information and an application please click on the following link. [otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/database/otago0146531.html](http://otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/database/otago0146531.html)

## 2015 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award

Voting for the 2015 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award is now open and we would like you to be on the lookout for teaching staff that are deserving of this award. By voting you are also advocating for inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity. We, therefore, challenge you to find and nominate a university staff member whose teaching;

- responds to the diversity of all learners,
- is respectful of students with disabilities, impairments or medical conditions,
- promotes quality inclusive practices,
- shows commitment to understanding disability,
- advances equity and opportunities for all students.

For more information visit [ousa.org.nz](http://ousa.org.nz)  
Voting closes 18 September.

# Transition Support



“Part of my job is to help the University understand what the needs of the student will be. The University of Otago really stands out with its support systems for students with disabilities.”

Ministry of Education Transition Advisor Ian Craven offers help and advice built on many years of helping young people with disabilities transition from secondary school to a range of post secondary settings including university.

If you press him hard he will tell you that it is important to begin the process early and to make sure there is slightly too much, rather than too little support in place when students start out.

“Most students want to have as little support as possible while fitting in as well as possible in the new environment. What I need to do is encourage them to take more support than they think they will need so that we can back that off after the first semester if it's not needed. Having to go the other way isn't a nice feeling.”

Ian's main focus is with students on the Ongoing Resource Scheme (ORS) whose disability can have quite a significant effect on their ability to learn or access material at school.

Transition Support was set up seven years ago in Otago following a Parent Reference Group recommendation and the blueprint for what he does has now gone nationwide.

“Most of the students I have worked with have had significant special education support in secondary education and that needs to be carried on into tertiary education for students to remain successful.”

Ideally he likes to work with young people over their last two and a half to three years of secondary school.

Ian organises University visits up to two years ahead so that by the time students are there and working with DI&S they already have some familiarity with the University and the departments they are likely to work with most.

“That way there is plenty of time for DI&S to find the right tutors and the right note takers, and look at things such as whether the timetable is realistic in terms of getting between lectures,” he says.

“Part of my job is to help the University understand what the needs of the student will be. The University of Otago really stands out with its support systems for students with disabilities.”

For additional information please click on the following link [education.govt.nz/](http://education.govt.nz/) or contact the Ministry of Education, 414 Moray Place, Dunedin, phone (03) 471 5200.

## Check out DI&S's website

Check this out!

Did you know that you can provide confidential feedback on our service via our website at

**[otago.ac.nz/disabilities](http://otago.ac.nz/disabilities)**

Also, did you know you can access past Imagine newsletters via our website?

# Graduate Profile

“Also crucial, I had an Advisor backing me from the Disability Information and Support office”.



## RACHEL COLLINS

Growing up with the Waitakere Ranges as her playground, Rachel wanted to extend spending time in the outdoors into a lifestyle. Driven by the outdoors and movement exploration and inspired by her PE teacher, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Physical Education, focusing on outdoor education and dance. For Rachel, PE was a gateway to more adventures while gaining a sound theoretical background.

Motivated by the concept of 'Forest Schools' in Sweden, Rachel realised that teaching would provide her with opportunities to work in a field that had flexibility and where her passion could be used in practice. Consequently, Rachel went on to complete a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education).

With two degrees and a new world of opportunity in front of her, Rachel is now an Early Childhood Teacher, working with like-minded people and transforming her ideas into practice.

However, Rachel's journey was not without challenges, at age 5 she was diagnosed with Irlen Syndrome and Dyslexia. "I found it hard to read for long periods of time, hard to read on different fonts and backgrounds due to my Irlen Syndrome. Then with my dyslexia in my written work it was difficult forming sentence structures and actually getting the right word and meaning out of my head onto the page".

Having a diagnosis meant Rachel was able to implement support, such as prescription glasses, coloured paper and reader/writers. In addition, Rachel attributes relationships with others as being crucial to her success. Support from family and friends as well as staff members in the School of Physical Education helped her through. "Also crucial, I had an Advisor backing me from the Disability Information and Support office". Her Student Advisor, along with the rest of the team, at Disability Information and Support provided continual and committed support as well as advocacy.

Rachel encourages potential and new students to "Go for it! All the support you could need is available, go and find it, make it worth your while"; and if you are about to graduate she urges you to "Keep going, finish up! Then start a new game, whatever that is for you. Work out what you are aiming for then go get it!"

# Note Taking at DI&S

Wish you had an incentive to take quality notes...want to improve your grades...contribute to the success of others... have more spending power?

## Become a Note-Taker

We asked four of our note-takers, Brittany, Chrissy, Jared and Michael why they provide notes:

At exam time I value the effort and time I put into my notes during the year.



Being a note-taker keeps you focused on lectures, which pays dividends at the end of semester.



It is also a simple way to earn some pocket money i.e. you have to take notes anyway.



It is a rewarding way to make some pocket money that helps rather than hinders your studies.



I feel a strong sense of personal reward by providing my notes, as I feel I am contributing to a supportive sense of community within the University.

The process has helped me understand how I learn and how others learn.



I have seen my grades dramatically improve since becoming a note-taker.



It improves the quality of your notes and provides incentives to attend class.



For more information, and to register your availability for 2016, simply send Disability Information and Support an email advising of your enrolled papers for 2016.

Email: [disabilities.notetaker@otago.ac.nz](mailto:disabilities.notetaker@otago.ac.nz)

## Feeling Stressed About Exams



Most people experience increased anxiety as they get closer to exam time. Here are some tips to help you keep that stress in check.

### TIPS TO KEEP YOUR COOL

- ~ **Study with a time table**, this will keep you on track and you can build in breaks to take guilt free rests.
- ~ **Eat well**, your body needs regular fuel to keep that brain working. Be prepared, if you know you are heading into a full on study week, head to the supermarket and pick up some healthy study snacks. Healthy snack ideas could include fruit, banana chips, pretzels, nuts, carrots, humus, salsa and muesli bars.
- ~ **Keep hydrated**, keep a water bottle with you at all times. Try to avoid having too many drinks that contain high levels of caffeine and sugar, these can affect your sleep and lead to an energy crash later in the day.
- ~ **Exercise**, you may be thinking that you have no time for exercise, but even a ten minute stroll around the block could help to clear your head.
- ~ **Have a laugh**, sometimes a good laugh is the best way to unwind. Balance out all that serious studying with a comedy film or stream some comedy festival clips on YouTube.
- ~ **Try to get a full night's sleep**, set up a relaxing routine before bed. This will help switch your mind from study-mode to sleep-mode.
- ~ **Talk about it**, if you are feeling stressed talk it through with a mate, a family member, or one of the counsellors at Student Health. They may have ideas or helpful strategies and sometimes just talking it out can help lighten the load.
- ~ **Have a change of scenery**, try taking your readings to a café. Dunedin also has beautiful botanical gardens which make a lovely spot to sit and read on a sunny day.
- ~ **Keep it in perspective**, you can only do your best so set realistic goals and be proud that you are doing the best you can. When exams are over try not to dwell on things you may have missed, instead look for the positives.
- ~ **Plan for fun**, start planning your holidays or what you'll do to celebrate when that last exam is completed. It's great to have something to look forward to.

### Important dates

- ~ Semester Two Exams 14 October – 7 November.
- ~ Hands-On at Otago Disability Information and Support Scholarships close 16 October.
- ~ NG Stewart Scholarship closes 15 January 2016.

## Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

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Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm