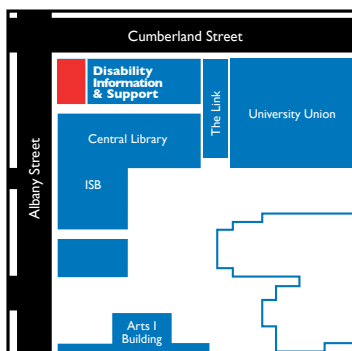
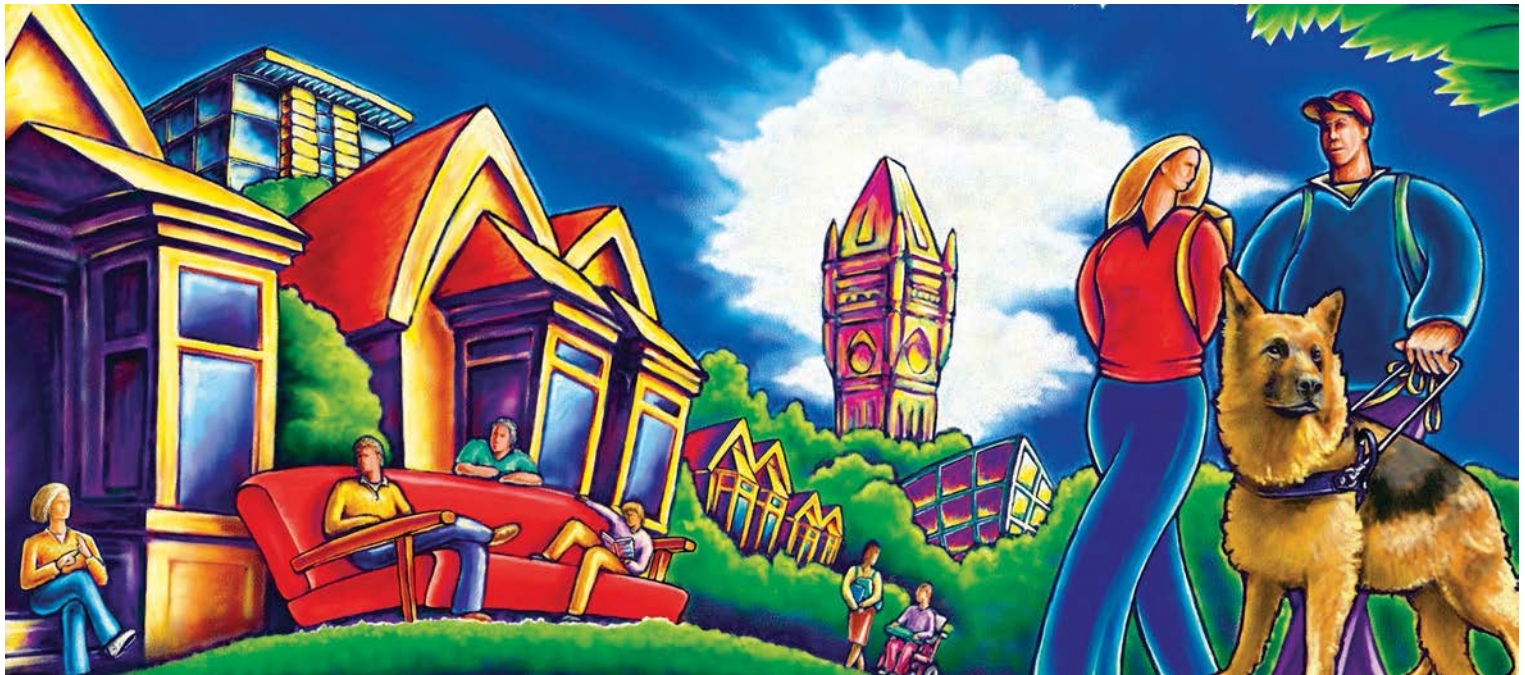


Imagine

"Peace begins with a smile"
Mother Teresa

Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 1 2017



Our physical address is:
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Welcome to our first edition of Imagine for 2017. The team at Disability Information and Support would like to extend a warm welcome to both new and returning students. As we prepare this newsletter, the campus is well and truly coming alive with the energy the students bring. It is a very exciting time of year for us and we greatly enjoy working with students to ensure they have their academic learning support in place prior to the academic year commencing.

As we go forward into the year, we also reflect on the previous year and it is worth mentioning that 1087 students contacted our office for advice or support during 2016. Our Student Satisfaction Survey also indicated that 95% of respondents found the support they received to be extremely

satisfactory or satisfactory, certainly a result we are delighted with. That said, we are always looking to improve our services, so please feel free to provide us with feedback via our website.

In April, Disability Information and Support will be celebrating 25 years of providing support services and this is a significant milestone for us. We are proud to be a leader in the field of disability support and our dedicated team strives to ensure we work in partnership with students to tailor support to meet their individual study requirements.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best with your studies this year and encourage you to visit our service when you are passing.



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- Robbie Francis and The Lucy Foundation
- Collaborative relationships enhance student experience
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Rio Paralympics



Photo: Getty Images.

Rio Paralympian Jacob Phillips

When paralympian and Otago student Jacob Phillips has a goal he quite literally sprints for it. As a 100m and 200m runner Jacob trains anywhere from 5-7 times a week. However, when preparing for bigger events he will taper his training prior to the competition. Jacob, who competes in a classification for athletes with cerebral palsy, says competing at the Rio Paralympics was an amazing privilege and has left him wanting more.

"I learnt so many things whilst I was away but the biggest thing for me was learning how to control my nerves and remain focused despite how overwhelming it all seemed," he says.

"My sporting goals are to continue to improve on my times and to hopefully compete at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2020, and to improve on my performances in Rio."

Jacob's sporting prowess also extends to his study at Otago where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Physical Education, hoping to major in sport and exercise science.

"I find this degree extremely beneficial as I am learning so many important things that will help my sporting endeavours immensely," he says.

"Sometimes it is extremely challenging to balance my sport and studies, however, I am only doing a couple of papers in the semesters I have big competitions on. Otago is also very accommodating when it comes to working around my travel."

His advice for students wanting to get involved in competitive sport is to try a bit of everything.

"It's never too late to get involved with a sport, because with the right amount of determination and perseverance anything is possible. Also try not to be discouraged by setbacks, I have had several big hurdles I have had to overcome to get to where I am today but its been worth it. "

Paralympian Jacob Phillips, a Physical Education student at the University of Otago, competes against Nicolas Aravena of Argentina at the 2016 Paralympic Games in the Men's 100m final.

Robbie Francis and The Lucy Foundation



The Lucy Foundation visiting a local family who live on an inaccessible and hard-to-reach mountain top in Pluma Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Sipping coffee in a comfortable cafe with The Lucy Foundation social enterprise founder Robbie Francis seems a world away from a Mexican mountainside where the people she is trying to help struggle with the challenges of growing coffee.

Turn back the clock just a few years and it wasn't really on the 27 year-old's radar, as she studied interfaith dialogue as part of a BA at Waikato, prior to tackling a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies at Otago.

It was at that point a conversation with the late Donna-Rose McKay challenged her thinking.

"She said: 'Robbie, have you ever thought about what happens to people like us in conflict?' I was really hesitant because it really wasn't my jam back then, but I couldn't shake that question. So here I am."

Robbie, who is now tackling a PhD, sees real gaps in the research in this area, especially when people with disabilities are the most marginalised out of any in conflict.

"When you think about it, it crosses religion, it crosses ethnicity and sexism. All of these other things that might affect an individual's experience of life in a conflict and then you put disability on top of that, it's exponential."

Resources are limited in refugee camps and communities affected by conflict and services for people with disabilities are often the first to be cut, she adds.

"There is still this mindset of, why would I put money into that when I can put money into something that is going to affect the wider non-disabled population, which is a way of thinking I want to combat.

"I want to switch it on its head and say if we consider the needs of people who might have more need, then the rest of the human rights for all the population will flow."

An internship in Mexico City, as a monitor of human rights abuses, also challenged her thinking.

One place that sticks in her mind was an institution for men, mostly with learning and mental health disabilities who had been rounded up off the street - a place for 300 men with two working toilets.

"It was just horrific. It was their whole life. They had no chance of ever leaving that.

"I've travelled 23 countries, mostly on my own, and I've never seen anything like this. It was torture," she adds.

"I came back with this thought that, actually, I can't turn away from this, I can't ignore it - this is my community. It could have been me."

Her response was The Lucy Foundation, named after the nickname for her prosthetic leg as a child, set up to empower people with disabilities by working with local communities to develop employment and education opportunities.

Right from the start Robbie and her colleagues were passionate about it not being simply a charity, because they felt it would impede its development. A business model was not right either because it is directed by people with power, working through boards where people with disabilities are under-represented, so they opted for a social enterprise model.

Robbie sees it as the way of the future - a more sustainable, ethical model that doesn't require people always reaching into their pockets.

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The Lucy Foundation and local families after a workshop on building compost bins from recycled materials.

“We want to see people with disabilities engaged and participating, but also contributing and having responsibility and contributing to family and community life.”

At the moment The Lucy Foundation is relying on donations and fundraising until its community enterprise begins growing enough coffee to generate an income.

They are targeting the specialty coffee market and already have a buyer in New Zealand who is willing to pay a higher price, which means more money for the families. Farmers get paid a fair price for what they grow and the rest of the money is put back into the project to develop it.

Their first project is in Oxaca, a mountain area known for its heirloom varieties of coffee grown by the indigenous Zapotec population. Their coffee plants had been hit hard by a bad storm many years before and their plants had become sicker and sicker, picking up diseases such as leaf rust.

Jess and Ryan, two Lucy Foundation team members moved there last year with their two children. They are working with limited support using their excellent farming skills to run workshops on coffee growing.

There are already signs of success on a number of levels, the least of which is the way people with disabilities, who used to barely leave their family homes, now spend hours at the coffee plot working.

Eventually they would like to see ownership transferred to the local families and they can have that direct relationship with the buyer. That would free them up to go and begin something elsewhere.

“The overall goal is a lot broader than Mexico,” Robbie explains. “We want to help create a value chain of coffee that is inclusive, as well as being good for the environment and good for the economy.”

Her aim is to see people with disabilities involved right through the value chain, from growing the coffee through to the baristas making the coffee. It is also important to support employers and businesses in how to be inclusive.

“We want to see people with disabilities engaged and participating, but also contributing and having responsibility and contributing to family and community life. It takes time, patience and a lot of flexibility but I think we’ve shown in Mexico it is possible.”

Robbie says people with disabilities have the highest unemployment rate and are the largest untapped source of labour.

“You ask people with disabilities – they want to work. Sometimes they just need a little bit of assistance.

“It benefits everyone. Diversity is good for morale, it’s good for business, it’s good for everyone,” she says.

“It is hard work finding the money, changing people’s attitudes and perceptions - it’s slow work.

“Quitting is not an alternative. I don’t ever entertain the thought of walking away from it or stopping or quitting. I know these people - I know their names.”

News bites

Pathways Conference

Changes, Challenges and Choice – Embracing the future.

The Pathways Conference is a bi-annual event organised by the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND). It brings together a range of people who share the common goal of creating inclusive environments that enable students with disabilities to participate fully in higher education and training. The 2016 conference, held in Canberra, had the theme: **Changes, Challenges and Choice – Embracing the future.** Our Manager and Learning Support Manager, Melissa and Jackie, attended and described the conference as an exciting opportunity to network, learn, and share knowledge with their Australian counterparts.

“It was great to affirm that Otago is doing exceptionally well in the area of disability support and can pride itself on being one of the leaders in New Zealand. However, there are still areas in which Otago can improve and attending Pathways has provided some positive food for thought”, says Melissa.

One inspiring presentation was ‘Inherent Requirements: Working towards graduating a student with quadriplegia from the Doctor of Medicine’. During this presentation the graduating student, Disabilities Service Officer and Clinical Skills Senior Lecturer shared their experiences of working together to ensure reasonable accommodations were in place while inherent course requirements were being met. The positive result saw the student graduate (with academic and clinical awards for excellence), and accept a medical internship at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

This presentation highlighted what is possible when we respond to individual student’s requirements while maintaining the academic integrity of a program. According to Jackie, “It was one of many presentations that challenged assumptions and focused on positive change for a positive future”.

If you are embarking on study at Otago you might find the following information useful!

The Locals Programme

If you are in your first year of study at the University of Otago, the Locals Programme may interest you! The Locals programme is for any University of Otago student who is in their first year of study and living in Dunedin either at home, boarding, renting or flatting. It is designed to create an enjoyable and supportive first year experience for new students who are not living in Residential Colleges. Students are able to access academic, social, sporting and community-based opportunities through the programme. It is a great way to make new friends and find out more about the academic support available to students.

For more information, and to register for Locals 2017, please click on the following link locals.otago.ac.nz.

Student Learning Development (SLD)

The SLD provides academic support to all students studying at the University. This support is free and confidential and available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Comprehensive information is available on their website at slc.otago.ac.nz/ and includes details about their workshops, PASS programme (Peer Assisted Study Sessions), Peer Writing support groups and Conversational English groups. Students are also able to check out the SLD calendar to see which events and workshops are coming up.

Student Health and Counselling

Student Health and Counselling provides a comprehensive range of primary health care services to students, including medical, counselling, nursing, psychiatry, health education and specialty clinics, such as healthy lifestyle, travel, immigration and sexual health. For additional information about these services you can check out their website at otago.ac.nz/studenthealth. Student Health and Counselling can also be contacted on 0800 479 821 or 03 479 8212.

OUSA’s Student Support Centre

The Student Support Centre at OUSA provides a free and confidential service designed to assist students who are experiencing issues that are impacting on their studies. You can find out more information about the support they provide by visiting their website at ousa.org.nz/main/support/ or contacting them at 479 5449.

The University of Otago Student Leadership Award

The UOSLA is a quality extra-curricular activity. It has been designed to enrich the student experience by harnessing student altruism, enhancing student leadership potential and engaging students to make meaningful societal contributions. Approximately 50 students are accepted into the programme each year. Please click on the following link for more information. otago.ac.nz/volunteer/leadership/

International Day of Persons with Disabilities



Participants enjoy IDPD day on the Union Lawn at the University of Otago.

“...aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.”

On 5 December the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was celebrated at the Otago campus. Initiated by Disability Information & Support and in partnership with Recreation Services; School of Physical Education, Sport & Exercise Sciences; ParaFed Otago; Dunedin Boccia Club; CCS Disability Action; Disability Information Service; OUSA; and with the support of many Otago students including the Unicrew volunteers the event was a huge success.

Adapted sports were on offer and Otago staff and students, as well as visitors to the campus, enjoyed a competitive game of blind football and sitting volleyball. While everyone enjoyed the barbeque, outstanding performances could be seen in the Wheelchair Orienteering and Boccia.

In addition to the sports on offer, participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet Paralympians Holly Robinson and Caitlin Dore who spoke about their experiences at Rio, their commitment to their sport and what has, and continues, to inspire them as world class sports women.

It was the first time the University of Otago had observed IDPD, an event which aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The role of Student Advisor

Important dates

- Alternative Examination Arrangements – applications due 7 May
 - Semester One Exams – 7 to 21 June
 - Disability Matters: Making the Convention Real conference – 26 to 29 November 2017
-

Check out DI&S's website

If you are interested in reading more about the experiences of other students at Otago have a look at the profiles on our website.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/index.html

Are you aware that most Departments have a Departmental Disability Contact? If you would like to find out who your Departmental contact is please look on our website.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/about/departmental-contacts/index.html

Our website also provides you with opportunities to provide confidential feedback on our service or website. Please click on the following link to provide feedback.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/questions/feedback/index.html

DI&S Student Advisors

With a new year underway and a new semester looming it was time to sit down and talk to student advisors Jenny, Emma and Rebecca to find out about their role.

Essentially Student Advisors contribute to the recruitment, retention and success of students with a disability, impairment, medical condition or injury by working in partnership with students to establish individual learning support plans.

Jenny says at this time of year they spend time sitting down with students to have a discussion about their study and impairment related needs so that appropriate support can be put in place.

"We aim to make students feel relaxed and welcome so they know that this is a good place to come, that they can trust us and we provide that supportive environment for them".

Jenny, Emma and Rebecca explained that as well as providing advice, advocacy and information, they organise the provision of specific learning support; for example, note-taking, tutoring, alternative examination arrangements and reformatted course materials.

DI&S works in partnership with students and student autonomy and independence are important. According to Emma, "as students progress through their degree it is not unusual to see less of them as they become more independent and establish positive networks."

Emma suggests students come and see them early on, rather than wondering whether they should ask for help. "We still come across students who say they wish they had known about us at the start of the semester".

Rebecca says students need to know that DI&S work within the principles of the privacy act and that DI&S provides a confidential service. In addition, meeting with a Student Advisor, or receiving support, does not show anywhere on a students academic record or qualification.

"This is important as sometimes students are concerned about whether the information will go further and that can be quite daunting. Often they come in and their first question is: Do you have to tell anyone?"

Emma reiterates the importance of confidentiality and advises that they only approach the department if they have the student's consent. Generally, they encourage students to do this themselves but will always try to direct students to the most appropriate person. They also have a list of departmental contacts on their website which students can use themselves to make direct contact.

All three thoroughly enjoy what they do and the variety the role brings.

"We see a name in our calendar and we have no idea about the person that's going to walk through the door," says Jenny. "The diversity of our students is awesome, we feel privileged to do what we do. Our students blow us away at times."

Emma is full of praise for the DI&S team, who she says does a fantastic job.

"We are just part of a wider team who are committed to providing students with the best possible support".

Collaborative relationships enhance the student experience

“It has to be about equal opportunity and a level playing field, so students aren’t disadvantaged by the situation or advantaged by the support they receive.”

Positive relationships contribute to the success of students with impairments studying at the University of Otago. One such relationship exists between Disability Information and Support (DI&S) and the Examinations Office. Each year they work collaboratively to organise an excess of 2000 alternative arrangements for examinations.

Alternative arrangements for examinations assist students if they experience difficulty sitting examinations under conventional circumstances. They are designed to alleviate substantial disadvantage without affecting the integrity of the examination.

Examinations Office Group Leader Sonya Stewart says the alternative arrangements process happens because of the excellent level of collaboration that has developed between them and DI&S to ensure all students are provided with equal opportunities to participate and achieve in their exams.

“One of our strengths is we understand each other’s roles really well. So if we have students presenting to the Exams Office we can identify what their requirements might be, we can then advise them knowing what DI&S offer – we can actually advise them on what could be a more appropriate course of action”.

“We can work together, as opposed to being quite siloed in our roles.”

DI&S Learning Support Manager Jackie Fox tells a similar story: “I can call Sonya’s team and brainstorm some of the more challenging situations, then together put in place the support that is going to provide the student the best possible chance of sitting their exams,” she says.

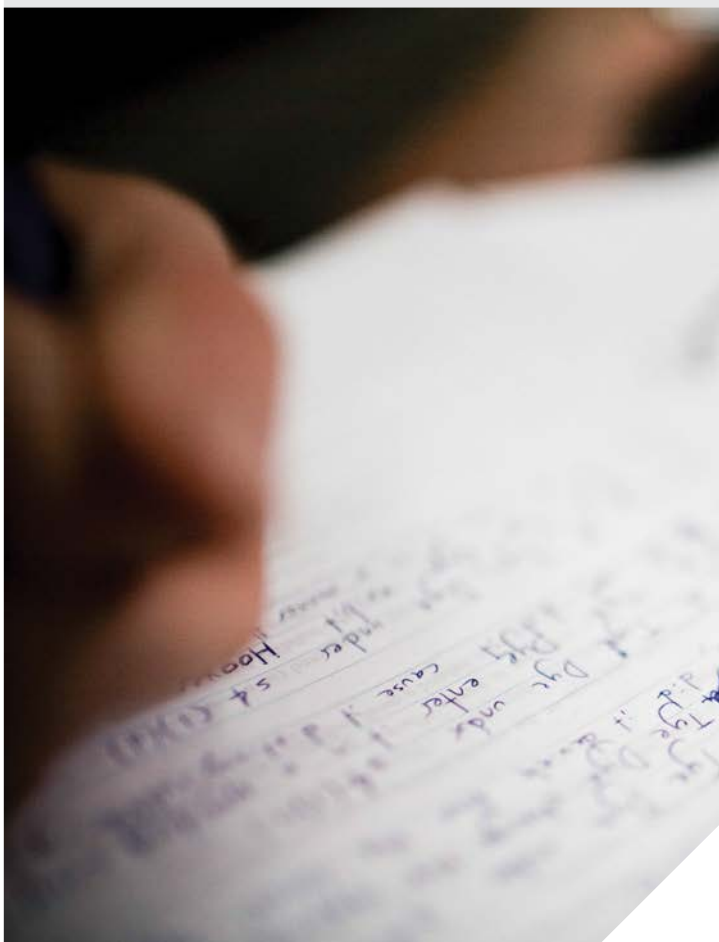
“It has to be about equal opportunity and a level playing field, so students aren’t disadvantaged by the situation or advantaged by the support they receive.”

Student’s impairments are unique to each individual and the examination support provided recognises this and is tailored accordingly. Alternative arrangements include, but are not limited to, readers, writers, additional time, ergonomic equipment, alternative formatting of exam scripts, the use of a computer and separate rooms.

“We look at the student’s individual needs,” says Jackie. “For example, some students will require additional time due to a specific learning disability, which means reading or writing, may take longer for them. Ultimately the exam is not there to test their reading and writing skills - it’s there to test their knowledge of the subject.”

Much of the focus for Sonya’s team is on logistics. “We have to assign rooms, we have to make up individual examination packs, we have to know we’ve got enough space on campus for students’ requirements. Having that information going between our offices in a timely manner is really important.”

Both say they enjoy their working relationship and, as Jackie says: “We get a lot of satisfaction out of knowing students can just get on with it.”



Appreciation Awards



The Manager of Disability Information and Support Melissa Lethaby (left) with the 2016 award winners (from left) Nicola Beatson, Marie-Louise Neilsen, Ashley Day, Kirsten Eichstaedt (on behalf of Jamie Gilbertson), Sophie Bond, Christian German, Florence Stone, Stephen Willis (Chief Operating Officer), Helen Gilmore, Mike Young, Hayley Nehoff, Marguerite Hunter, Michael Fox and Shirley Gillett. Absent: Tasman Forgie, Diane Inder and Bernard Madill. Photo: Sharron Bennett.

In November 2016, DI&S presented our Appreciation Awards at a ceremony held at the Staff Club. These awards acknowledge and thank individuals who have worked towards our vision of working in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. We were delighted that Stephen Willis, Chief Operating Officer, was able to attend and present these awards. Congratulations to all award recipients!

The following Appreciation Awards were presented.

Nicola Beatson – For providing exemplary support for students

Department of Accountancy and Finance

Sophie Bond – For providing exemplary support for students

Department of Geography

Ashley Day – For providing exceptional support to students and an unfaltering commitment to inclusivity for a sustained period

Te Rangi Hiroa College

Tasman Forgie – For being an outstanding note-taker

Michael Fox – For being an outstanding note-taker

Christian German – For demonstrating a good understanding and commitment to accessibility on campus

Property Services

Jamie Gilbertson – For providing exceptional support to students

Arana College

Shirley Gillett – For providing first-class tutoring support for students

Helen Gilmore – For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Marguerite Hunter – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students

Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Diane Inder – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students

Department of Psychology

Bernard Madill – For providing exceptional support to students and staff

Department of Media, Film and Communication

Hayley Nehoff – For providing first-class tutoring support for students

Marie-Louise Neilsen – For being an outstanding Departmental Disability Contact

Faculty of Law

Florence Stone – For providing exemplary support to students and staff over a sustained period

Mike Young – For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

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