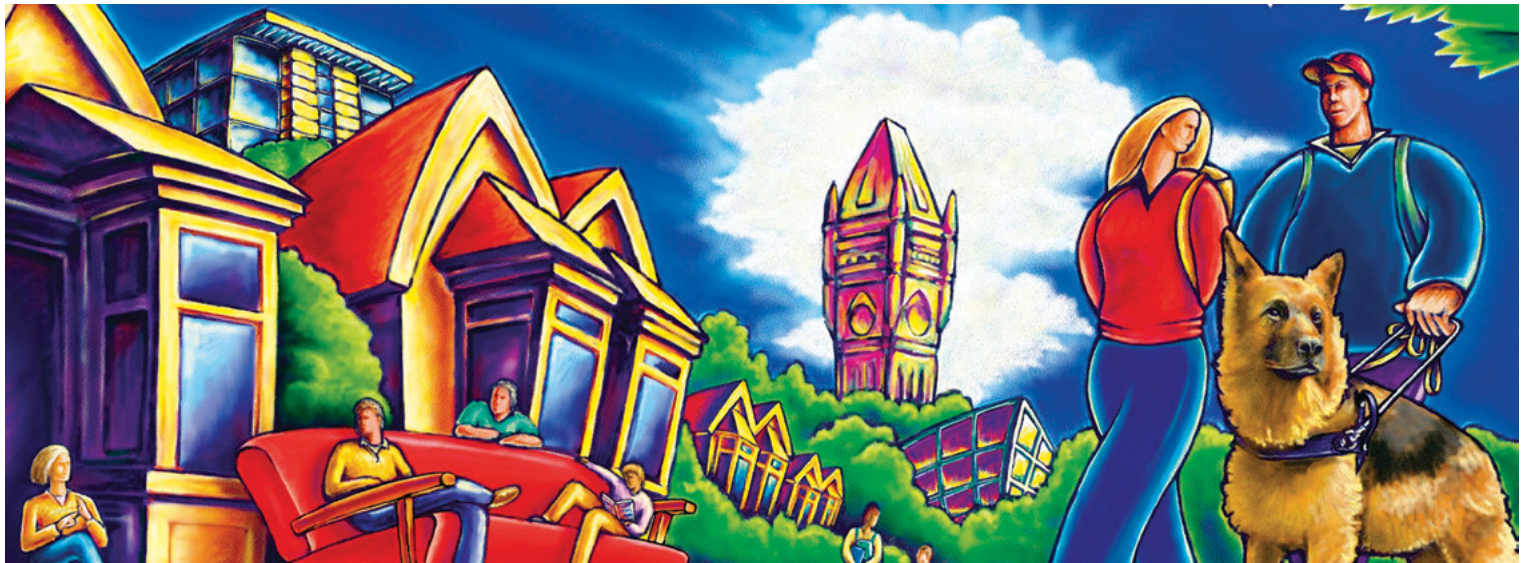


Imagine

“Every moment is a fresh beginning”

T.S. Eliot

Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 1 2019



Welcome to our first edition of 'Imagine' for 2019. In writing this welcome, our team would like to acknowledge the pain, hurt and shock we are all feeling as a result of the terrible acts of violence that occurred at the Christchurch mosques on Friday, 15 March. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those killed and injured and the Muslim community. As a service that greatly values diversity, we are saddened that this tragedy occurred and stand strong against intolerance, racism and hatred.

Secondly, it is my pleasure to welcome both new and returning students to Otago. The team at Disability Information and Support has met with a number of enthusiastic students in recent weeks and we continue to work behind the scenes to ensure appropriate support is implemented in a timely manner.

Disability Information and Support's vision is to work in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. In this newsletter you will see many examples of our vision in action. You will also see examples of appreciation, collaboration, inspiration, determination and success.

During 2018, Disability Information and Support staff had the privilege of working with 1427 students. Despite an increase in student numbers, Disability Information and Support remained committed to providing top quality learning support for students with a need. We were delighted with our Student Satisfaction Survey results, as these indicated that 95 per cent of respondents were either "extremely satisfied" or "satisfied" with the service we offer. In addition, our Happy or Not reports indicated high levels of satisfaction with our service's reception, so much so that we received an email advising that we are in the top five per cent of all businesses, companies or services who operate such a terminal. Disability Information and Support has always strived to provide an outstanding experience for students and these results are extremely satisfying and motivating. We are firmly committed to our partnership with students and welcome feedback at any time.

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 or if you are in Dunedin.

Melissa Lethaby
Manager



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Awards



Examination Supervisors among those celebrated in Appreciation Awards



Frances Couch (left) one of two examination supervisors to be acknowledged in the 2018 Disability Information and Support Appreciation Awards with the Manager of Disability Information and Support Melissa Lethaby. Charlotte Dunn, the second examination supervisor to receive an award was absent.

Photo: Sharron Bennett

Two examination supervisors were among 18 people to be recognised in the 2018 Disability Information and Support Appreciation Awards.

Frances Couch and Charlotte Dunn each received a Supervisor Award for “being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements”.

The Manager of Disability Information and Support, Melissa Lethaby, says the Awards, now in their eighth year, acknowledge and thank individuals who have worked towards the service’s 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.

The Awards also recognise those who offer exceptional support to our service and do their bit to ensure students have an outstanding experience while at Otago.

Mrs Lethaby says 2018 was a very challenging year for Disability Information and Support.

“We began the year with a 20 per cent increase in students accessing our services and this tracked steadily throughout the year.

“All of the support services we offer experienced growth in requests from students and additional staff resource was required to enable us to implement academic support in a timely manner.”

In addition, requests for alternative test and exam arrangements rose this year – and she says they could not implement the sheer number of arrangements they do without the support of their reliable and diligent supervisors – which include Ms Dunn and Ms Couch.

“They go above and beyond to ensure students are provided an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge by taking on roles of reading, writing or computer supervising.”

Ms Dunn says she was very honoured to receive this award, and is grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the wonderful team, contributing towards supporting an environment that values diversity.

“Alternative arrangements during tests and exams is just one of the services available to students through Disability Information and Support, and I believe that this is absolutely invaluable. Education is so important and should be accessible to all. This service ensures that all students can receive the support they need in order to reach their academic potential.”

She says the Disability Information and Support team at Otago is incredible.

“They are kind-hearted, innovative, and treat students as individuals, coming up with all sorts of creative and supportive solutions to ensure that all of their students have the opportunity to do the best they possibly can during their time here at Otago.”

Ms Couch agrees.

“The University does a great job with the help it offers students with disabilities. I know that the students who receive this help are grateful, and in some cases quite amazed at the help that they receive – not only at exam time but right through the teaching period.”

She says she felt very honoured to receive this award, and rather overwhelmed.

“You don’t do a job like this to receive acknowledgement. I really enjoy the work I do.”

Article: Lisa Dick, Staff Bulletin

Disability Information and Support's Appreciation Award recipients 2018

Tracey Adamson (Information Technology Services)
For transforming the notetaking service and providing outstanding support to our team

John Cornfoot (now AskOtago)
For providing quality IT support during final examinations

Frances Couch (Exam supervisor)
For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Dylan Davies (Residential Colleges)
For providing first-class tutoring support for students

Charlotte Dunn (Exam supervisor)
For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Steve Dunn (now AskOtago)
For providing quality IT support during final examinations

Arman Genobe (Information Technology Services)
For transforming the notetaking service and providing outstanding support to our team

Margaret Grundy (Accountancy and Finance)
For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students

Carol Hunter (Tutor)
For providing first-class tutoring support for students

John Marrable (Barrier free consultant)
For providing exceptional support and guidance towards making the University of Otago a more physically accessible place

Amanda McConnell (now AskOtago)
For providing quality IT support during final examinations

Jane Patterson (Information Technology Services)
For transforming the notetaking service and providing outstanding support to our team

Natalie Smith (Sociology, Gender and Social Work)
For providing exemplary support for students

Hayley Stent (Undergraduate student)
For being an outstanding note-taker

Chris Stoddart (University Registrar)
For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff

Ray Tobin (HR Shared Services)
For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff

Cathrine Waite (ex. Anthropology and Archaeology)
For being an outstanding Departmental Contact

Anna Wood (Botany)
For providing exemplary support for students



All of the recipients of Disability Information and Support's Appreciation Awards for 2018.

Alternative Arrangements: Creating a positive examination experience

Disability Information and Support (DI&S) provides comprehensive academic support to students with a disability, impairment, medical condition or injury to empower them to achieve their full potential. One of the many important supports available to students is alternative test and exam arrangements.

DI&S provide several different arrangements for students, depending on their needs. Arrangements can include; readers, writers, additional time (the standard extension of time is 10 minutes per hour of examination), ergonomic equipment, alternative formatting of exam papers or the use of a computer.

Jackie Fox, Learning Support Manager at DI&S, explains that there are many different reasons a student may require alternative arrangements. "Alternative test and exam arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting examinations under conventional circumstances," said Jackie. "Alternative arrangements have no impact on academic standards or the integrity of the degree structure as all applications are supported by evidence of need. Arrangements simply provide an alternative way to accomplish the requirements of the examination by eliminating or reducing the impairment related impact". Any student who would be disadvantaged in a test or exam due to the nature of their disability, impairment, medical condition or injury may be eligible for support and it is recommended they meet with one of the DI&S Student Advisors to discuss their needs.

"Alternative test and exam arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting examinations under conventional circumstances."



Alternative Arrangements: Creating a positive examination experience continued

Heidi, who has successfully completed two degrees, has a muscular condition which made writing and notetaking challenging. Heidi was adept at using voice recognition software for her internal work allowing full independence; and during exams she used either a writer or a computer to ensure she could accurately express her knowledge in the limited time frame that exams allowed.

Sam, was injured after the horse she was riding fell awkwardly. While studying towards her physiotherapy degree she had to manage significant fatigue. She explained that when she got fatigued a whole lot of other cognitive issues started coming into it, like her concentration, word recall and processing speed. Her recovery took a while, and for exams she was provided with a separate room and an extra 10 minutes per hour so she could rest to manage the fatigue.

Henny, now a Sociology graduate, was another student who required alternative arrangements, "I have cerebral palsy so everything takes me a little bit longer – that's just life," she explained. For Henny writing was difficult so, during exams, she received extra time to allow her to dictate her answers to a writer.

These are just three examples where support made a massive difference; enabling Heidi, Sam and Henny to achieve when the exam environment would otherwise have made that difficult. This support would not be possible without the diligence and commitment of the examinations team within Student Administration or Rachel 'Aluesi, Test/Exams Coordinator at DI&S. Rachel explains that her role organising tests and internal exams involves liaising with multiple staff around the university campus; "I do the background work to ensure students who apply for alternative arrangements are able to sit assessments at the same time as their peers. This involves liaising with DI&S Student Advisors, course coordinators, University of Otago admin staff and casual staff employed to work as supervisors, readers, writers and reader/writers. This collaboration with other staff is very important, we are all working towards the same goal – a positive experience and successful outcome for students who choose to study at Otago."

Over the years the role has become exceptionally busy, and Rachel's position has grown and developed as the demand increased. "In 2012, I was employed for 10 hours a week, but due to the continued increase in requests for alternative arrangements, I now work 30 hours per week." Just last year DI&S needed additional staffing to assist with coordination, "In semester two of 2018 we employed an assistant to work an additional 10 hours per week during semester. As the numbers increase, the work becomes more complex, especially working with constant deadlines."

The deadline to apply for alternative arrangements for final exams is 1 February for Summer School, 7 May for semester one, and 7 September for semester two. Applications for alternative arrangements for final exams are made via the eVision portal; whereas applications for alternative arrangements for tests and internal exams are managed differently, and students must submit an application form to DI&S at least 10 days prior to their test or internal exam. Jackie explains the reasons behind the strict deadlines when applying for test and/or exam support. "In 2018 we worked with over 1400 students, approximately 800 students applied for test and/or exam support and over 4500 arrangements were put in place. We employed approximately 80 invigilators and specialist staff," she said. "This all takes time, collaboration and coordination. It is a huge job. It is a fulltime role managing test arrangements and during the examination period it requires significant additional staffing to manage."

Regardless of the busyness, or perhaps because of it, Rachel really enjoys her role as she is able to be a "part of an energetic and hardworking team, who are instrumental in the successful support of students who require our service." Above all else, however, it is "to know that what I do makes a difference to so many students here at Otago."

Healing from Your Concussion

A concussion is a form of traumatic brain injury, which is the result of a head-knock or blow to the body that causes the head and brain to quickly move back and forth. Most people will fully recover from a concussion in a matter of weeks. Although there are usually no long-term effects, sometimes healing from concussion can take even longer.

As such, having a concussion has the potential to be disruptive to a person's life, and can specifically have a major impact on a student's university experience. Disability Information and Support spoke to Dr Bret Dougherty to discuss the various impacts a concussion may have on a student during their studies.

Dr Dougherty is a Clinical Group Leader at Student Health, as well as the General Practitioner (GP) for the new head injury clinic based in the School of Physio. Working within the School of Physio means that Dr Dougherty is able to "work hand in hand with physiotherapists to provide targeted support, treatment and follow-up."

The head injury clinic was initially set up because Dunedin rugby clubs were looking for a single place to send their student-athlete players that they were concerned about. "We started a clinic to be more responsive, thorough and consistent." Dr Dougherty says that while the original discussion was started by the rugby clubs, the clinic is for all students who have sustained a head injury.

"...having a concussion has the potential to be disruptive to a person's life, and can specifically have a major impact on a student's university experience."



Healing from Your Concussion continued

Awareness about concussion is increasing, which has resulted in more patients presenting to their doctor concerned about concussion. "The general willingness to see concussion as a concern has shifted in the last five years or so. Sporting organisations are moving towards having really clear policy, with definitive requirements that are, to the best of our abilities, maximising a safe return to contact play," said Dr Dougherty.

There are a wide range of symptoms which can affect each person differently, and not all concussion symptoms are necessarily present in each patient. Common symptoms may include; headache, difficulty concentrating or remembering, balance difficulties, nausea, dizziness, ringing in the ears, becoming light sensitive, sleepiness and fatigue, irritability and mild mood lability.

"Each individual might have a different cluster of concussive symptoms. Some people may be affected in balance, nausea or fatigue, someone else might have cognition or memory affected," said Dr Dougherty. To identify a concussion a GP often uses a symptom scoring system. Patients are asked the same set of questions so their GP knows exactly which symptoms they are experiencing and where treatment might focus.

While concussion is disruptive to all people, it can be particularly concerning for students as "all of these symptoms have an impact on study." Symptoms can be complex and varied, but the impact on the ability to concentrate or focus on study can make things complicated for students. "Not only are things more difficult, but the act of study itself can exacerbate these symptoms. If a student has dizziness or nausea and tries to study, these symptoms get worse or other symptoms will come on in addition. It makes everything more difficult – they just can't get their work done."

With the pressure of deadline driven study it is often difficult for students to hit 'pause' on their education. If symptoms continue for one, two or three weeks it can significantly set a student back in their studies. Even if extensions are granted, the work they need to catch up on will be waiting for them once they have recovered.

Therefore, it is essential that students seek support early. Dr Dougherty also warns students against trying to soldier on with their studies without seeking help. "You can make things worse if you use your willpower to try and battle on - often it can backfire." Instead, Dr Dougherty would typically advise "a short period of absolute rest depending on the severity. Then a modification of what one does, in both a physical and intellectual sphere."

If concussion is suspected, you should see a doctor within a day – even if it means going to Dunedin Urgent Doctors, or the Emergency Department if there are worrisome symptoms such as repeated vomiting, worsening headache, unequal pupils, weakness, slurred speech, seizures, loss of consciousness, or concerning behaviour. The doctor can set up a care plan to guide you to full recovery. To get an appointment with a doctor at Student Health, just call 479-8212 or 0800 479 821 (M-F 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM).

Every person is different and experiences their symptoms in different ways; "for everyone with a concussion there is a line in the sand, beyond which they will get symptoms. For one person it may be 10 minutes of study. Someone else might be able to do an hour." If that line is crossed, then the symptoms will begin to present. "Patients need to recognise what that line is and work around it. If you can study for 30 minutes before getting symptoms, then study for 25 minutes and then take a break. Brain rest is important." Managing the symptoms effectively is key to recovery and return to normal studying life, which is why it is crucial to see a Doctor as soon as possible.

If you've had a head knock, or any symptoms, see a doctor within 24 hours. Putting a recovery plan in motion is the best way to recover. "A doctor's job is to make sure we aren't missing anything more serious and to make sure the plan works. This is one thing students find difficult to do without guidance. If you get care and good advice and have a plan you will get better faster, and time matters in academia. "What we are trying to do is help students get through a concussion successfully. Our mission is to keep patients well, so that they can graduate."

Concussions are more than just a hit to the head: A student perspective



Midway through semester two in 2017, Rosie's studies were interrupted after playing in an intercollege game of rugby. The game resulted in her sustaining a concussion, "I received a blow to the lower right side of the face by another girl's shoulder." While she did not fall unconscious, she "became quite scatterbrained. I was taken immediately to the emergency centre by two of my housemates." As a result of the blow, Rosie has "little recollection of what happened following the game."

Rosie was impaired by post-concussion syndrome which continued for the rest of the semester and through her summer. She experienced a number of classic symptoms; "I experienced rapid mood swings, depression, headaches, impaired vision, sensitivity to light and noise, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, and ongoing vestibular disturbances." These symptoms affected her academic performance, as she was unable to complete assignments. Her concussion also resulted in her isolating herself from friends, "I became very socially withdrawn, as one would expect, and would not often interact with other people. This was primarily due to difficulty following a conversation and focusing when there were other things happening around me."

There are a few different ways to manage the symptoms of concussion. Through Student Health, Rosie received help from Dr. Bret Dougherty, who offered her "wonderful support throughout the semester." Other strategies that helped her manage her concussion were wearing sunglasses even when indoors and taking the time to rest, no matter how frustrating that became. "One of the biggest things I struggled with was boredom, as

I wasn't able to read a book or use screens." Her sleeping habits completely changed, "I spent a lot of my time sleeping. I normally only sleep about 7 hours a day, but during this time I would have been sleeping for about 16-18 hours per day." These changes to Rosie's routine obviously had a significant impact on her everyday life and

required a complete shift in the way she lived. Eventually she was referred to a vestibular specialist, who gave Rosie several exercises that assisted her recovery. While she did receive a lot of support from various services, Rosie found that "there is not a lot you can do to speed up recovery beyond rest."

Everyone experiences concussion in different ways to varying levels, and it's hard to determine what symptoms are likely to present in each patient. "At the time of the concussion, it was thought that I would recover within three to four days and be able to continue with my studies. Instead it took me about six months before I was no longer experiencing major difficulty, and I still experience minor impairment over a year on. It is difficult to predict the time it takes the brain to recover." For Rosie, if she had known how long it would have taken to recover, she would have withdrawn from all papers that weren't compulsory for her course. However, Rosie encourages students to follow the recommendation of medical professionals, "as recovery is so difficult to predict, I would probably tell a student to do everything that is recommended to aid their recovery, including lots of rest and taking time out if you need it. If possible, try and keep up with lecture content." Disability Information and Support can provide lecture notes and information about reducing your workload, she advises.

Rosie explains that "additional stress on students who might be at a disadvantage due to unforeseen health circumstances puts them at a further disadvantage," and she suggests that lecturers and tutors go beyond being sympathetic and consider reasonable options that may support students to balance their concussion related needs with their study commitments.

For any student who is struggling with a concussion, Rosie would like to encourage them to follow the recommendations of medical professionals and take the rest time seriously. "While it might be boring, taking as much rest as you need to recover is incredibly important. There's nothing wrong with having to take time off from study. It's purely a matter of doing everything you can to speed up recovery. The brain is a spectacular organ and has the ability to bounce back from a huge range of things."



News Bites

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 2019, please visit otago.ac.nz/locals/index.html

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

Student Health consists of a team of qualified professionals who provide high quality health care to students at the University of Otago. A comprehensive range of primary health care services, including doctor, nurse, mental health and well-being and psychiatry appointments are available to students. For additional information about these services you can check out their website at otago.ac.nz/studenthealth Student Health can also be contacted on 0800 479 821.

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/support or contacting them at 479 5449.

Enhance your leadership potential

The University of Otago Student Leadership Award is an extended leadership programme designed to enhance student leadership potential. The Award is about leadership with a purpose, working towards positive change in the community and developing the student's own leadership practice along the way.

For more information about the Award, and to register your interest in attending an information session on 3 April, please refer to the Social Impact Studio, otago.ac.nz/social-impact-studio/programmes/leadership-award/index.html

Healthy Campus Recreation magazine

The Healthy Campus Recreation magazine is a fantastic resource. It includes information on the 50 plus courses, competitions and activities available to students each semester. Check out the following link to view a copy of the magazine.

otago.ac.nz/recreation/about/magazine/index.html

Important dates

- Alternative Examination Arrangements – deadline for applications **7 May**
- Semester One Exams – **5 to 19 June**
- University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) – information about, and application dates, for alternative/access arrangements can be found at www.ucat.edu.au

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

DI&S provides learning support, advice, advocacy and information to students who have a disability, impairment, injury or medical condition that affects their study for a period of four weeks or more. Please look at our website for information about the services we provide.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/services/index.html

If you would like to provide confidential feedback on our service, please click on the following link.

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

Hands up for Hands-On



Recipients of the 2019 Disability Information and Support Hands-On at Otago scholarships.

Hands-On at Otago is a programme designed to allow secondary school students to experience a week of the Otago student life, living in a residential College, undertaking detailed studies and learning from some of the foremost researchers in the country.

This year, four students were awarded a Disability Information and Support scholarship to attend. These scholarships are offered to students who have a disability, impairment or medical condition as a means of inspiring and motivating students to develop their passion for learning.

Emma, Winnie and Olivia, recipients of the 2019 scholarships, shared some of their experiences and it seems that meeting new people and making new friends was the best aspect for all. *"I really enjoyed meeting so many wonderful, like-minded and inspiring teens from all over the country and being able to make memories that'll last a lifetime,"* says Winnie.

Having an opportunity to participate in a research project, interactive mini-projects, and numerous social activities has inspired all three young women.

Emma felt inspired as *"Hands-On pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me realise that I can be independent."*

For Winnie, attending Hands-On has inspired her to work hard and achieve her goals, *"You really do develop skills and ideas that can push you toward the path that you're interested in."*

Prior to Hands-On Olivia was hesitant about attending university, now she feels inspired to attend. *"I learned through the experience just how many resources are available to students at Otago University and how accepting everyone is of not just disability but the extent of everyone's ability."*

Winnie encourages any secondary school student who is thinking of attending Hands-On in 2020 to go for it. *"Hands-On is SO WORTH IT!"*

Postgraduate students: Ways to well-being

Peer groups. Take time to meet other postgraduate students, and discuss ways you can support each other; especially when times are stressful.

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.

Eat well. Your body needs regular fuel to keep your 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.

Healthy habits. Incorporate healthy habits into your schedule; for example with your peer group, organise a regular coffee date or plan a fun event once a Fortnight.

Ask for help. Talk to your Supervisor or Departmental Disability Contact. They are available to assist you.

Plan for fun and have a laugh. Set aside time for fun, make a plan and stick to it. 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.

Talk about it. If you are feeling stressed talk it through with a friend, a family member, or one of the clinicians at Student Health. They may have ideas or helpful strategies and sometimes just talking it out can help lighten the load.

Sleep. Good sleep is essential for physical and mental well-being. Set up a relaxing routine before bed; this will help switch your mind from study-mode to sleep-mode.

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.

Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

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New Zealand

Tel: 03 479 8235

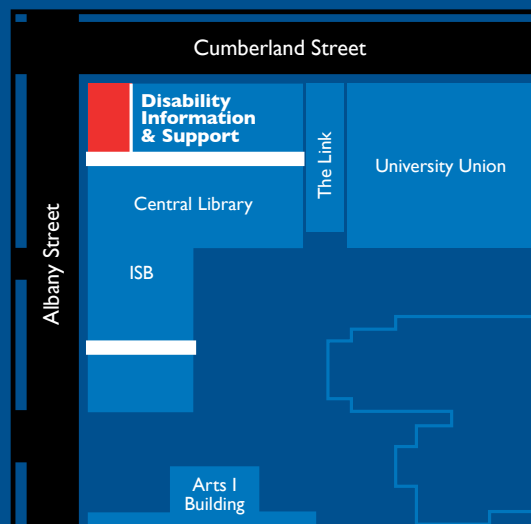
or 0800 80 80 98

Fax: 03 479 5873

Email: disabilities@otago.ac.nz

Web: otago.ac.nz/disabilities

Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm



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