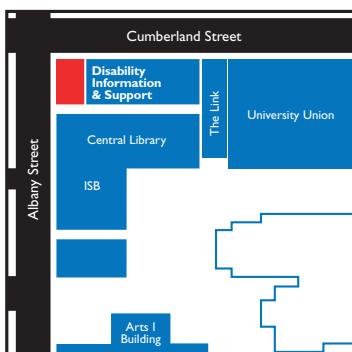


Imagine

"We are each gifted in a unique and important way. It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light." Mary Dunbar

Disability Information & Support Newsletter

ISSUE 1 2013



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

Welcome to our 2013 edition of 'Imagine', Disability Information and Support's newsletter designed to keep you informed. We have experienced a very busy period with Semester One exceeding our expectations in terms of the number of students requesting support and the significant increase in demand across all services. In comparison to the same period last year, we have seen a 20% increase in the number of new students using our service and an 88% increase in the number of contacts that students have made with our office.

We have certainly come a long way since the introduction of the New Zealand Human Rights Act 1993 which was the driver of change to improve access and participation for students with disabilities. Tertiary institutions are expected to consider the diverse needs of all students and we are proud that Otago continues to show a strong commitment to social justice and equity.

Recently, this commitment has been affirmed with approval being granted for us to employ additional fixed term staff to assist with the provision of appropriate learning support.

As you will likely know, our vision is to work in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. As a team, we have all worked diligently to realise this vision and we would like to thank the students and staff at Otago for their support in what has been an unprecedented busy year.

Semester Two promises to be a great semester and we wish everyone the very best for their study, work and leisure.

The Team
Disability Information and Support



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Introducing The team

The Disability Information and Support team is composed of dedicated people who are committed to providing a quality service. They have the skills and knowledge necessary to assist students achieve their goals.

THE TEAM:

Donna-Rose McKay	Head of Service
Melissa Lethaby	Learning Support Manager
Peter Zessin	Administrator
Eileen O'Regan	Administrative Assistant / Receptionist
Emma Holt	Student Advisor
Jackie Fox	Student Advisor
Jenny Weeks	Student Advisor
Rebecca McFadyen	Note-taker Administrator
Toni Patterson-Gallagher	Note-taker Administrator
Ali Charlton	Student Support Coordinator
Rachel 'Aluesi	Student Support Coordinator
Kerry Twemlow	Administrative Assistant

KERRY TWEMLOW

Kerry joined Disability Information and Support in 2012. Kerry works 10 hours per week with the Learning Support Team and provides administrative assistance in the Note-taking Service. Kerry is an integral member of our team and her upbeat personality is a breath of fresh air.



Important Dates

- ~ Alternative Arrangement Forms for Semester Two and Full-Year papers
Due on Monday 2 September 2013
(University-wide, excluding the MBChB programme which has its own procedures)
- ~ Semester Two Exams
14 October – 9 November 2013

Personal Performance & Development Coaching

Brian Johnston, Personal Performance & Development Coach, offers students one to one coaching sessions to help students achieve their academic potential.

He specialises in time management strategies, how to manage and overcome procrastination habits and create day to day structure and self-discipline. He also assists students to improve upon communicating effectively with research supervisors and to achieve a life/study/work balance.

Individual sessions with Brian cost \$15 so "Don't Put off till tomorrow What You Can Change Today!"
Email: Brian NOW for an appointment at brian.johnston@otago.ac.nz

Alumni Disability Support Scholarship

If you are considering studying at the University of Otago for the first time in 2014 and you have a disability, impairment or medical condition you may be eligible to apply for the Alumni Disability Support Scholarship, valued at \$5000. This is an undergraduate entrance scholarship for New Zealand citizens or permanent residents who have demonstrated academic ability and who can show financial need arising from a disability.

Online applications are now open and will close on Thursday, August 15 2013. More information can be found at www.otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/database/search/otago033024.html

Alternative Arrangements for Exams and E-Vision

Alternative Examination Arrangements – Deadline 2 September 2013

Alternative Examination Arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting exams under conventional circumstances.

Disability Information and Support can arrange readers, writers, additional time (the standard time extension is 10 minutes per hour of examination), ergonomic equipment, alternative formatting of exam papers, the use of a computer, as well as other arrangements that best meet the individual needs of students.

Please note that documentation from a relevant health professional or specialist (for example a doctor, physiotherapist or psychologist) is required before Alternative Examination Arrangements can be put in place.

If you are already registered with Disability Information and Support an Alternative Arrangements application form will be sent to you. If you have not received an application form by 15 August please collect one from Disability Information and Support.

The final deadline for applications for Semester Two Alternative Arrangements is Monday 2 September.

NB: The MBChB programme has its own procedure. Please contact the Dunedin School of Medicine Students Affairs Office for information.

Alternative examination arrangements will go online in 2014

We will be making the process of applying for 'Alternative Arrangements in Final Examinations' just that bit easier (Alternative Examination Arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting exams under conventional circumstances). From Semester One 2014 you will be able to apply and track your application online via your e:Vision portal (where you will also be able to pick and change papers, see your timetable, view your fees account, and review your course results).

How will it work?

- ~ You will no longer need to record your name and contact details – just log on to e:Vision
- ~ Your examination timetable will be presented to you. Simply select the paper(s) and specify the arrangements you wish to apply for.
- ~ You can track the progress of your application through your e:Vision portal.
- ~ Once completed, you will be able to view your examination arrangements (such as the room you have been reassigned to) through your personal timetable in your e:Vision portal.

Security measures will ensure that only the people that approve your application have access to any sensitive information.

Further information will be provided next year, closer to the time we go live. In the meantime, continue to use the existing paper forms to apply for Alternative Arrangements. If you have any questions, please contact Disability Information & Support.

Student Profile

“The School of Physiotherapy has been helpful and accommodating. I don’t really want special treatment as such just because I won’t get that in the real world, so I am just trying to ease myself into it.”



SAM HARVEY

A horse riding accident changed Sam’s life – not just because of the ongoing impact of the head injury she received, but also because it set her on a new career direction.

Sam was just 16 when she was injured after the horse she was riding fell awkwardly, taking her with it.

“I spent a month in hospital, which I don’t remember, and then I spent about two-and-a-half or three months in rehab. Even once I was home I did physio for another year or so.”

During her long recovery her time in the ISIS rehab centre had quite an impact on her: “Working with the physios there was actually quite fun and I thought it would be good to be able to do that myself.”

She is in what is effectively her fourth year of a physiotherapy degree and is keen to get into neuro rehab as an area of specialisation.

Sam says DI&S played a particularly crucial role in her first year of health sciences, arranging a tutor and course notes when needed.

When it came to exam time she was provided with a separate room and an extra 10 minutes per hour so she could rest to beat the fatigue.

“I still get fatigued. And when I get fatigued a whole lot of other cognitive issues start coming into it, like my concentration disappears and my processing is slower and I can’t come up with the words I should be able to,” she says.

“The School of Physiotherapy has been helpful and accommodating. I don’t really want special treatment as such just because I won’t get that in the real world, so I am just trying to ease myself into it.”

Sam is now on placement in Christchurch where she has been able to gain experience at Community Stroke Rehabilitation, as well as working in the surgical ward at Christchurch Public Hospital. She has also spent time at the Burwood Spinal Unit where she was able to work with two patients who had issues similar to hers so she was able to draw on her own experiences. She is now focusing on private practice and research.

“What has really got me through is just keeping that balance. Working really hard but also giving myself breaks and doing things that aren’t study and work. If you don’t do that then you just burn out.”

Providing Literacy Software Solutions – Text Help

TextHelp Read & Write Gold is a brilliant piece of software that helps users both create and read documents.

If you are writing a document TextHelp can read back what you've written, check spelling, and even predict what you are typing and offer suggestions.

Speech recognition features mean you can actually dictate while TextHelp puts your words down on the screen. It even offers help with homophones – words which have the same sound as another word but a different spelling.

TextHelp has a Word Wizard which can be used to provide a quick 'spot-check' of a word's meaning and there is also a choice of a basic or full dictionary, as well as a web definition function that can be used when you require more in-depth information about a word. A pronunciation tutor means you can also get the correct pronunciation of words, using a variety of voices enabling easy understanding.

The scanning facility can read a page of text in a book, or from some other source including photographs, and turn it into text. It can then be saved as a Word, PDF or HTML file, depending on what you need it for.

The Speech Maker function is a popular one with students. It can take a selection of text from any document and produce an audio file from it. This means you can scan assignments and revision notes and listen to them as MP3 files on your computer or on a portable MP3 player.

TextHelp also provides help with research. The fact Finder function enlists the help of several search engines to find information off the web that is relevant to your assignment. There is also the Fact Mapper research tool that allows you to capture text or images from any application, classify it, attach pictures and bibliography information and record its source.

TextHelp can be accessed from Student Desktop by clicking:

PROGRAMS>GENERAL SOFTWARE>UTILITIES

The Student IT Advisor's (Yellow jackets) in the libraries are familiar with the application, so if you are unsure of what to do just make contact with one of these very friendly folk.

2013 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award

Voting for the 2013 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award will be open towards the end of Semester Two 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.

Dr Gill Rutherford, Senior lecturer at the College of Education, was presented with this award in 2012 for the 3rd year running. Otago is blessed to have such an inspirational teacher and we are certain that there are many other great teachers at the University. 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.

DI&S APPRECIATION AWARD RECIPIENTS 2012

In November 2012, DI&S acknowledged the work of staff when it presented its Appreciation Awards for the second consecutive year. David Richardson (Director of Student Services) presented these awards at a ceremony at DI&S. 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.

The following Appreciation Awards were presented.

GENERAL STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For being an exceptional advocate for students on campus

Ashley Day (Warden at Carrington College)

GENERAL STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff

Jennifer Black (Academic Services)

DEPARTMENTAL CONTACT AWARD

For being an exceptional Departmental contact

Thelma Fisher (Central Library)

GENERAL STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For providing exceptional support to students and staff

Trevor Williams (School of Medicine, University of Otago Wellington)

TUTOR AWARD

For providing exceptional tutoring support for students

Chew Wuei Chong (student)

SUPERVISOR AWARD

For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Sanne Poulsen (student)

NOTE TAKER AWARD

For being an exceptional note taker

Yung Ching Chuang (student)

ACADEMIC AWARD

For providing exceptional support for students

Tony Zaharic (Department of Biochemistry)

Supportive Teaching Recognised



Biochemistry Senior Teaching Fellow Tony Zaharic was both touched and surprised by the special Appreciation Award he received last year from Disability Information & Support (DI&S).

"In my mind I really hadn't done anything over and above. I'd just responded to what they had asked and tried to find a way to accommodate."

A member of staff since 2002, Tony's main responsibility is as paper co-ordinator for a biochemistry paper (BIOC 192) that is part of the Health Sciences First Year programme, although he also teaches biochemistry to other year levels, including students in Medicine and Pharmacy.

It might be as simple as making larger print versions of hand-outs to make things easier for people with visual impairments or providing extra staff to help with some of the hands-on apparatus operation in labs.

"I think this is part of what we should be doing. We should be about increasing access. Even though you may need to put special things in place or there may be an extra cost – you are making a huge difference in that person's experience. And it's worth the investment."

Tony says it is often about thinking outside the box and being prepared to try something else if the initial steps don't work.

"Once you've started trying something with the student, it is important to engage them and also make them feel comfortable about saying – 'hey this isn't working!'"

His advice for students is to make sure they seek help early because many don't perceive their impairment as sufficient to need help, and it's only later when they miss labs or do poorly in exams that the issue comes to light.

A number of times he has come across students who have dyslexia related issues but have learnt coping strategies to get to this particular point in their education. But when they have to step up to the next level of work at University, these strategies can fall short.

"The biggest issue is the students we don't know about at all or the ones we pick up late - because often they just drift through the system or fade away altogether; and if we had known, we could have tried to do something to help. If we can create a culture on campus where students are both aware that support is available, and they feel comfortable accessing it, then that's a win all round."

