



OTAGO

POLYTECHNIC

Te Kura Matatini ki Otago

Disability and Mental Health Guide



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PROLOGUE

Our third year Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree students enjoy community placements – they are asked to develop a sustainable and beneficial resource for the organisation they are working with.

Rebecca and Rebekah worked alongside Otago Polytechnic's Student Success's Wellbeing and Disability Advisor to create a booklet to promote disability and mental health services.

STUDENT REFLECTION:

“Our aim was to develop a sustainable booklet that prospective and current students, and staff can use and read. We wanted to make the information accessible and show what support is available to make studying an enjoyable experience.”



PHOTO:
Rebekah Thomas BOT and Rebecca Butler BOT

Disability and mental health services at Otago Polytechnic

This guide provides an overview of the disability and wellness support services available to all Otago Polytechnic students. If you have any questions about our services or have any individual requirements, please contact our Student Success team.

The Student Success team is located in Otago Polytechnic's The Hub, on the ground floor of H Block on the corner Forth and Union Streets.

Or they can be contacted by:

Phone: **0800 762 786**

Email: **studentsuccess@op.ac.nz**



Introducing Student Success

A large number of students have physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health challenges while studying at Otago Polytechnic. The Student Success team are here to provide support, assistance and advice to ensure that you can make the most of your time as an Otago Polytechnic student and achieve your academic goals.

Student Success has a broad range of support services that can help you through any challenges that might arise. We want you to be able to focus on getting the most enjoyable and rewarding experience possible, and not spend time worrying about the other stuff!

Student Success offers:

- > Disability support
- > Mental health support
- > Career services
- > Learning Advisors
- > Student Advisors
- > Māori/Pasifika support
- > International services

For an overview of the Student Success team and its services visit: www.op.ac.nz/students/support



STUDENT REFLECTION:

“I had trouble in my home life which had in turn started to have a huge effect on my study and my grades. I was feeling lost and out in the cold regarding everything. Finances were tight, I was having trouble even getting to the Polytechnic and when I was there I was feeling pretty down about everything.

I decided to seek some support regarding my grades from Student Success, mainly the Wellbeing and Disability Advisor. Not only did she provide really good support regarding my work but she also helped me out with other aspects. It was obvious to her that my ongoing problems at home and with my finances were contributing massively to my struggle with my grades.

With great care and empathy, the Wellbeing and Disability Advisor with the help of OPSA and some of the community sources, set about to not only help with my studies but also help with taxi chits, food parcels and my finances. It was unbelievable. I am not someone who asks for ‘handouts’ or help much because of my own stubborn sense of pride, but not once was I made to feel small or powerless. The care and love I was shown, first to get my finances in check, then the support and counselling around things at home and with my grades, was so awesome. To have someone guide you through a dark patch while still allowing you to hold some pride about things was so refreshing and I can’t thank the team at Student Success and OPSA enough. This wasn’t just a 9-5 thing either; the Wellbeing and Disability Advisor was available for me to contact anytime, and for any reason. I now feel more confident in myself to get through tough times and I no longer feel ashamed asking for this help.

I know they say they are ‘just doing their job’, but there are people in this world who get a job done and there are people like the Wellbeing and Disability Advisor and Student Success that not only get a job done but empower and build confidence whilst they do that job. I was in a vulnerable state and the care I was shown was like none I have experienced before. I hope these services are able to continue for years to come to help support students in an empathetic, non-judgmental, caring and safe way.”



Disability and mental health support

Student Success provides disability and mental health support for the following:

- > Mental health conditions
- > Learning disabilities
- > Impairment due to medical conditions
- > Physical/mobility impairments
- > Head injuries
- > Speech impairments
- > Vision or hearing impairments
- > Blindness or deafness
- > Panic/anxiety attacks
- > Temporary impairment (bereavement, broken bones etc.)

Our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor is a member of our Student Success team and their role is dedicated to ensuring the needs of all students who have a disability or mental health illness are fully supported during their studies at Otago Polytechnic.

Our Advisor can assist students by assessing individual needs and providing appropriate study support. They can help identify what is impacting your studies and life, what you need to do to stay on track, help you set goals and problem solve, and learn what services are available in the community. This is a confidential service and the support you receive can be reviewed on an ongoing basis while studying.

How the support service works:

Our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor will have an initial meeting with you and to find out about your circumstances. They will then develop a support plan that is tailored to your individual needs and requirements.

This service can be accessed when it suits and where it suits on campus. Under special circumstances, if you cannot make it to campus, our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can come to you. If you study at one of our regional campuses or by distance you can arrange to talk to our Advisor by phone or online.

Wellbeing and Disability Advisor

Student Success, H Block,
Forth Street, Dunedin
studentsuccess@op.ac.nz
0800 762 786



STUDENT REFLECTION:

“Throughout my three years of tertiary-level studies I have found Student Success to be extremely beneficial.

All the staff were very supportive and took the time to provide extra assistance to help my training. I really appreciated the extra support available to me to help with my dyslexia and being given extra time in my exams. I also utilised Student Success for extra assistance with my assignments and resumé and found this to be really helpful.”



Disability support

Disability support is a free service to support Otago Polytechnic students who identify as having a disability that will impact on their ability to participate in learning. Our aim is to support you to succeed.

We have a range of disability services to assist students with their studies. These include:

Alternative examination arrangements

This service is for students who have a disability that affects their performance in classes, assessments and examinations. The Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can liaise with your lecturers to provide a fair and equal assessment if your situation inhibits your performance. The Advisor can also arrange quiet rooms, reader-writers and extra time.

Assistive technology

Access to ReadSpeaker is available via Moodle, as well as suggestions for other apps and programs you can download. Our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can also organise voice recorders and source specialised equipment.

Peer tutors

Peer Tutors are students who have passed your programme and are available for one-on-one academic tutoring sessions.

Peer note-takers

Note-takers can be arranged if you have a disability and are unable to take notes in lectures. They are often fellow class members who take good, clear notes and attend all lectures/classes. Note that this is a confidential service so note-takers are unaware who they are taking notes for.

Financial and resource assistance

Our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can work with students to help them apply for financial assistance to access equipment and services. They can also source equipment on a short-term basis, while students apply and look for their own equipment.

Reader-writers

A reader-writer can be arranged if you have a disability and require assistance with reading and writing in examinations. The reader-writer can read the questions to you in an examination and record your answers – word for word.

Our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor will liaise with your Programme Manager/s and lecturers to arrange support and, if needed, arrange a special set-up for when you sit exams.

Disability-accessible facilities

WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBLE SHOWERS

A Block (Engineering)	A124
M Block (Hospitality)	M125 (Males) M126 (Females)
P Block (School of Art)	P104a
Y Block (Engineering, Construction and Living Sciences)	Y102

PARKING

There are a number of disability car parks around the Dunedin campus available for students to use with the applicable parking permit.

Sargood Centre (Institute of Sport and Adventure)

The Sargood Centre contains disability toilets, wheelchair-accessible showers and disability parking.



MAP LEGEND



Accessible toilet



Toilet

MCP

Mobility carpark

Mental health support

If you have a mental illness or are struggling with studies or daily living, our Student Success team can provide you with support. Along with the Counsellors at Otago Polytechnic's Student Health Centre, our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor is on hand to support your individual needs. They are there to talk to and help identify what may be affecting your study/life, and put strategies in place to help you stay on track, set goals and identify what community services you can access.

What to expect when accessing mental health support:

Appointments can be made for daily, weekly or monthly appointments via the Student Success team and you can be seen on an ongoing or intermittent basis depending on your needs. If you study at one of our regional campuses or by distance you can arrange to talk to our Advisor by phone or via Skype. Urgent last-minute appointments can be made if required.

Meetings may assist you with:

- > calming things down
- > problem solving
- > gaining information
- > setting and reviewing goals
- > maintaining hope.

Above all the advisor will:

- > identify what is impacting on your study/life
- > what you need to stay well and on track
- > enable you to set specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, time bound (SMART) goals
- > refer you to appropriate services within the community that you can access.

The support offered includes:

- > emotional support
- > practical help and advice
- > assistance in crisis
- > study planning
- > advocacy
- > liaising with external agencies
- > managing pressures and challenges
- > surviving on a tight budget
- > wellbeing – sleep, diet, and exercise
- > networking with academic staff.

Workshops

Student Success offers a range of workshops aimed at assisting students with their mental wellbeing. These include:

- > Is wellbeing in your control? (Aspects of wellbeing and how we can achieve this)
- > Sustainable practitioner (Boundaries and self-care in our work)
- > Anxiety management
- > Time management.

Workshops are held in groups of three to five students (minimum) and are run on request. One-on-one workshops can be done in special circumstances.

To book a workshop please email: studentsuccess@op.ac.nz

Eligibility

DISABILITY

Any student enrolled in an assessed programme/course who has a temporary or permanent disability that impacts on their ability to study is eligible to register with the Disability Service at any stage of the academic year. This applies whether studying at the Dunedin campus, or at our regional campuses or by distance.

In order to register you must provide supporting documentation expressing an appropriate professional's opinion of your disability/medical condition and its possible impacts on your study so Student Success can develop a support plan with you.

If you suspect that you have a specific learning difficulty and do not have supporting documentation, our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can refer you to be assessed.

MENTAL HEALTH

Any student enrolled in an assessed programme/course is eligible to register with the Mental Health Service at any stage of the academic year. This applies whether studying at the Dunedin campus, at our regional campuses or by distance. For more information about registering please email: studentsuccess@op.ac.nz

You do not have to have supporting evidence or documentation to access our services, but it is recommended to ensure your support at Otago Polytechnic is appropriate.



Services associated with Student Success

Depending on your circumstances and any extra support you may require, our Wellbeing and Disability Advisor can communicate with outside agencies with regard to your care.

Some of these include:

MENTAL ILLNESS:

- > **Able Southern Family Support**
Can refer students who are living with a family member with a mental illness. They are great for education and advocacy.
- > **Artsenta**
Can refer students who would benefit from this creative outlet, which may also be an alternative to study.
- > **Ashburn Clinic**
Deliver monthly public educational seminars regarding mental health and wellbeing as well as specialised topics.
- > **Community Alcohol and Drug Service (CADS)**
Can refer students for specialised addiction treatment options.
- > **Emergency Psychiatric Services (EPS)**
Can refer students who are in crisis.
- > **Life Matters**
Can refer students who have been affected by suicide or experienced suicidal thoughts.
- > **Otago Mental Health Support Trust**
Can refer students for peer support.
- > **Rape Crisis**
Can refer students who require specialised counselling regarding rape.
- > **Wakari Hospital**
Can be involved in a student's discharge meetings.

SUPPORT:

- > **NZ Police**
Related to criminal matters, court proceedings etc.
- > **Presbyterian Support**
Can provide students with counselling, emergency food, power funds etc.

DISABILITY:

- > **Blind Foundation**
Work together with vision-impaired students to provide support plans, equipment and funding.
- > **Community Occupational Therapists**
Work together with support plans for students.
- > **In 2 Learning**
Can refer students for learning assessments.
- > **Literacy Aotearoa**
Can refer students who need ongoing literacy support.
- > **Mobility Solutions**
Provide a range of equipment for students with disabilities.
- > **Otago Brain Injury Association**
Can refer students who have had brain injury (concussion etc.) for specialised treatment/strategies.
- > **PACT**
Support workers are available to assist students with disabilities (e.g. in class support, helping with routines/daily functioning tasks).
- > **Work Opportunities Trust**
Can refer students to gain work experience.
- > **Workbridge**
Can refer students for funding options while studying and integrating into the workforce.
- > **Salvation Army**
Can provide students with emergency food.
- > **Women's Refuge**
For students and children who need a safe place to go with regard to domestic violence, and for specialised sessions related to this issue.

Māori and Pasifika support

TE PUNAKA ŌWHEO

Te Punaka Ōwheo is the Otago Polytechnic's Māori centre, and it includes Poho which is the Māori student space, which is equipped with computers, internet and a kitchen.

There is kai available for breakfast and staff also cook lunches for Māori students every Wednesday at **12.00pm**. Te Punaka Ōwheo provides a range of services, support and advice for Māori students – to make sure you get the most out of your time at Otago Polytechnic.

There are also a friendly community of Māori support staff available to help you have a great Otago Polytechnic experience.

For more information please visit:

www.op.ac.nz/students/maori-students

PASIFIKA STUDENTS' ROOM

The Pasifika Students' Room is a home away from home and available for Pasifika students to relax, have shared lunches, movie nights, do homework and catch-up. Food such as tea, coffee, bread and spreads are supplied.

Student Success has a Pasifika counsellor who provides support to students who identify as being Pasifika. They encourage students to approach their studies and life holistically to ensure wellness and wellbeing.

For more information please visit:

www.op.ac.nz/students/support



Otago Polytechnic Assessment Policy

The purpose of the Otago Polytechnic Assessment Policy and supporting procedures is to establish key principles and values relating to assessment at the institute, and provide the foundation for the conduct of assessment of learning on-site and off-site settings, and flexible learning environments.

Each school and department within the Otago Polytechnic has a contact person, so please contact them before contacting the Wellbeing and Disability Advisor. If extra support is required they can then be contacted.

Impaired performance/aegrotat is carefully managed:

1. Where a learner is unable to undertake an assessment through critical circumstances beyond their control, an impaired performance/aegrotat application will be considered.
2. Such circumstances might include illness, injury, bereavement, family crisis or other unpredictable events.
3. Where a learner considers that their performance in an assessment has been seriously impaired through critical circumstances beyond their control which may include illness, injury, bereavement, family crisis or other unpredictable events, an impaired performance application may be made for reconsideration of result.
4. Heads of School/College are responsible for ensuring that all applications are processed according to the approved Otago Polytechnic guidelines.
5. Any reconsideration of a result following an impaired performance application must not disadvantage the learner.

For more information about Otago Polytechnic's Assessment Policies, please visit:

www.op.ac.nz/about-us/governance-and-management/policies



Important information:

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Because of the sensitive nature of the information provided to staff and the privacy requirements, staff will maintain confidentiality with respect to students.

This means we will not disclose anything confidential unless:

- > you expect us to do so and this is agreed at an interview. Please note some disclosure may be necessary in order to provide support
- > you give us written permission to do so if disclosure was not automatically anticipated, or we are required by law to do so
- > there are compelling reasons such as there is a significant risk to you or other parties.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities (that do not allow them easy access down stairwells) should be assisted to the nearest stairwell landing. Where necessary, a support person may be designated to stay with you.

This procedure is advised for the following reasons:

- > The stairwells are designed and built as self-contained fire cells and have a very high fire rating. In the short time it takes the fire service to respond, people in the stairwell are safe, unless the fire is in that stairwell.
- > During emergency evacuation, there will be a large number of people moving rapidly down through the stairwell. Attempts to carry or assist people with disabilities down stairwells may impede this flow and could result in injury.
- > The Fire Service personnel have breathing apparatus and are trained to quickly assist individuals in need including carrying them safely down stairs.





New Zealand **0800 762 786**

Email **info@op.ac.nz**

Visit us at **www.op.ac.nz**

