

What is Occupational Overuse Syndrome?

Occupational Overuse Syndrome, OOS for short, was formerly known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). OOS is a collective term for a range of conditions characterised by discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. Early symptoms of OOS include:

- muscle discomfort
- aches and pains
- hot and cold feelings
- numbness
- tingling
- fatigue
- generalised soreness
- muscle tightness
- stiffness
- trembling
- muscle weakness

Barriers to learning

- In-class notetaking
- Written assessments
- Mobility around campus
- Coping with workload and deadlines
- Difficulty with extended periods of immobility (e.g. lectures)
- Difficulty with extended periods of constant mobility (e.g. field trips)

Strategies to assist the student

Lectures

- Provide additional time for students to copy the material from the overhead or datashow
- Allow students to use a dictaphone to tape lectures (talk about respect for privacy if appropriate)
- Ergonomic furniture or accessories may help some students with OOS. Encourage them to contact the Disability Liaison Office for information
- The student may need to negotiate pain relief movement, and may at times need to stand and stretch during lectures. (If the student stretching is disturbing the class, talk to the student in private after class and negotiate that they sit at the rear of the class or at the end of a row)

- Provide copies of lecture notes and handouts at the beginning of the lecture to limit the amount of notetaking
- Students with OOS may have difficulty in carrying heavy books and may bring only the minimum they need to class. If specific material is required in class (i.e. a particular book) they will need advance notice
- Have regular breaks during long lectures to prevent "information overload" and joints becoming inflamed

Assignments and Assessments

- Be flexible with deadlines and extensions
- Consider negotiating an individual learning program for students with OOS. This can include flexible deadlines for assignments to take into account the effects of their disability
- Encourage students to apply for alternative assessment arrangements (extra time for stretching and moving around to avoid muscles freezing, locking or going into spasm; a quiet room; use of adaptive technology, an exam writer and a supervisor)