

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health students: Placement readiness

Background

Successful professional experience placements (PEPs) are essential components of your health career pathway. Placements can be rewarding and exciting as you develop and expand your professional experience; but they can also be challenging as they are undertaken in unfamiliar health care environments for days, weeks or even months at a time. You can also find placements socially and culturally isolating as there are few Aboriginal health professionals in the health workforce.

The clinical and Aboriginal staff at the Centre for Rural Health have been working with staff from Riawunna and the Faculty of Health to develop this placement support program. The program is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking nursing, medicine, paramedicine, pharmacy, psychology, social work and exercise science degrees, and across all years. The program complements current support provided by the Aboriginal Higher Education Officers at Riawunna and Student Services.

Placements: A cycle of learning and application



(adapted from Levett-Jones and Bourgeois 2011)

Aim

- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health students are 'placement ready'
- Encourage students to develop inter-professional Aboriginal peer support networks
- Contribute to the graduation of Aboriginal health students
- Support the emergent number of Aboriginal professionals in the health workforce

Methods

- Briefing workshops: Preparing for placements
- Site visits and/or ongoing phone, e-mail contact: Support during placements
- Debriefing workshops: Facilitate reflective placements learning

Advice from Aboriginal health students

- "Always work within your scope of practice"
- "Be prepared to work long, odd hours"
- "Be respectful and polite to all on placement"
- "Preceptors/supervisors understand student's situation"
- "Be courteous, open-minded and inquisitive"
- "Ask questions, ask 'lots' of questions"

Conclusion

Our immediate objective is to empower you to succeed while undertaking placements. Our reward is to see you graduate and begin your career as health professionals. We also see our program as contributing to the Aboriginal health workforce, and ultimately to advancing the health of Aboriginal peoples.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the staff from the Centre for Rural Health, Riawunna, the Faculty of Health, Social Work, and PEP coordinators for your support. And thank you to the Aboriginal health students for sharing your experience and advice.

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