



An Online Professional

Development Model for Clinical Educators

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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Abstract

The Faculty of Health Sciences online modularised education program for clinical educators was developed by the Centre for Health Innovation and Solutions and is supported by QLD Health. It consists of a 20 hour online program covering a broad range of teaching and discipline-specific principles that relate to clinical educators involved in the clinical learning of Health Sciences students. The program is part of QLD Health's Professional Development program for staff and offers the opportunity for accreditation and articulation into a Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences (Clinical Education) offered by The University of Queensland.

Context

The Faculty of Health Sciences at The University of Queensland has seven schools. Across the schools, there are 4600 equivalent full-time students and 986 full-time equivalent staff members, with 61% of these academic teaching staff citing their location of employment as a hospital or health centre. The focus of this case study is on the complex challenge of providing clinical educators that typically are employed full-time by a hospital or other health agency with training and development.

Aim

To implement a flexible professional education program for a dispersed community of clinical practitioners.

Outcomes

10 flexibly delivered online modules, each of two hours' duration, which focus on clinical education

900 participants have already completed the program

Contract with Queensland Health to train clinical educators

What was done?

Development of online training modules and community of practice

10 flexibly delivered online modules were developed for clinical educators employed both within and external to the university. Participants can enrol at any time, and form part of an online learning community. There is a paid online facilitator.

Program

The 'Introduction to Clinical Education: Principles and Practice' course has been designed by, and is presented by, experienced and respected educators from a range of backgrounds.

Their main goal in coming together is to assist clinicians from all backgrounds to extend their knowledge and skills and become more effective educators.

Introduction to Clinical Education: Principles and Practice

Topics covered

- the characteristics of adult learners, the principles of adult learning and different learning styles;
- the clinical setting, as a learning environment; how it impacts the clinical educator, the learner and the patient;
- core teaching and planning skills, and behaviours, that promote student learning;
- who is the learner - the effect of cognitive, motivational, developmental, social and generational differences;
- developing learning goals, learning plans and strategies to evaluate student progress;
- effective communication;
- different teaching approaches suitable for the clinical setting;
- giving effective feedback;
- strategies to enhance student learning and manage challenging situations; and
- assessment tools used in clinical education.

Each module takes about 2 hours to complete.

The content is presented in an audiovisual format (slides and audio), interspersed with interactive quizzes, polls, discussions and case studies to reinforce and apply learning.

The participants can opt to be assessed with a series of multiple choice questions and a reflective essay.

Successful completion can be credited towards the Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences (Clinical Education).

Educational link with Queensland Health

The University secured a contract with Queensland Health to offer the professional development module to a large number of its employees involved in student clinical education.

Additional/ alternative support

In addition to this course, each school in the faculty has its own discipline-specific support and educational processes for clinical educators.

Typically, clinical educators are trained in the assessment protocols that comprise the formal evaluation of a student's attendance at a clinic.

These assessments are sent to the academic attached to the School who is coordinating the course.

Other assessments that contribute to the evaluation of a student in their clinical practicum are marked by staff employed by the School.

Review and improvement

The faculty initially developed a website for sessional staff to provide a blanket educational and relationship-building exercise. Although it was of good quality, it was not taken up by clinical educators. This online program was intended to improve access and interest. The development of an online learning community has had a positive effect on participation and satisfaction.

A comprehensive evaluation strategy is in place for this online module comprising pre and post module student survey tools and evaluation of the educational outcomes through analysis of assessment data. General demographic data has also been collected to allow analysis of what factors might predict best outcomes.

Critical Success Factors

The program is sustainable given the ongoing market with Queensland Health and other employer groups. There is always an ethical and professional obligation in the health industry to train future generations.

Challenges

There are not as many formal opportunities for sessional staff to feed back into the course as there could be.

Links and Resources

The University of Queensland Health Insitu portal
www.healthinsitu.uq.edu.au