

MODULE 6

Supporting Student Placements in Healthcare

Get Started



Students as an integral part of the project

- 1 Students were deliberately integrated into project design:**
 - Building current and future workforce capacity, transforming culture
 - Increasing reach and impact of project
- 2 Students as 'part of the team'**
- 3 Systems focus rather than individual client care**
- 4 Students enacting co-design approach: problem identification to solutions**

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Students & the Communication for Safe Care project



Student Placements

- ✓ Organisation focused
- ✓ Project based
- ✓ The service is the “client”
- ✓ Application of theoretical knowledge
- ✓ Enhance work readiness



What does the research say?

Service learning placements are supported by a growing evidence base:

Service learning placements promote social learning. Students learn from a broader range of other health professionals and from each other when placed in pairs.

Held et al., 2019

Students learn through being fully engaged in authentic work practices that enhance workplace readiness.

Nisbet et al., 2020

“The provision of work integrated learning experiences that expose students to ‘real work’ in ‘real world’ settings that are of ‘real value’ to ‘real rural communities’ is imperative if we are to ensure a competent future workforce”.

Jones et al., 2015



Together, this evidence base underscores why service learning placements build a more capable, work-ready future workforce.

Placement Tasks

- ✓ Creating an inclusive communication tool
- ✓ Developing Easy Read resources
- ✓ Accessibility checks to support stakeholders
- ✓ Capacity building workshops



Placement Tasks

The cornerstone of this placement model was transference—the ability of students to apply their learning in meaningful and practical ways that benefited both their development and the healthcare service.

The model benefited both service delivery and student development while building workforce capacity for supporting consumers with communication disabilities.

Placements in regional areas were specifically designed to improve recruitment and retention in underserved locations.



Placement Tasks

Speech pathology students, supervised by qualified educators, were integrated into the project to:

- 1 Assess healthcare workers' communication support capabilities.
- 2 Evaluate environmental factors affecting communication.
- 3 Develop practical resources.
- 4 Deliver training on communication strategies.



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Supporting Our Students



How we supported our students

Students received training in:

- ✓ Co-design
- ✓ Health literacy
- ✓ Easy Read
- ✓ Communication strategies



Recognition of learning opportunities

Supporting students in maximising learning opportunities involved:



Structured reflections on skill development.



Explicit connections between tasks and clinical competencies.



Emphasis on transferable skills and their applications.



Recognition of diverse learning experiences.



Encouragement of professional growth through non-traditional activities.



The Communication for Safe Care Project provided students with a unique opportunity to actively shape their placement experience. Through direct participation in co-design processes, they took on leadership roles and contributed to program development and implementation.

Early information about the model and vision

On Day 1, students are introduced to the social model of disability and our role as clinicians in building the capacity of those that the person with a communication disability interacts with.

Students are introduced to **Speech Pathology Australia's 2030** vision and the profession's broader remit to improve communication access.



Explicit discussion of how placement tasks relate to capacity building for communication access

We talked to students about how project tasks related to areas of professional competencies.

A presentation or workshop shows competency in Implementation of Speech Pathology Practice, since "intervention" includes capacity building.

Project tasks allocated to students demonstrate how Allied Health professionals have a responsibility for removing participation barriers.

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Project tasks allocated to students demonstrate how Allied Health professionals have a responsibility for removing participation barriers.



For example, developing a presentation or workshop enables the student to demonstrate their competency with the unit Implementation of Speech Pathology Practice because speech pathology “intervention” involves both direct therapy and capacity building.

Student Assessments

Students on placement must demonstrate entry level performance on the professional and occupational competencies on the COMPASS® assessment.



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Student Reflections



Student Reflections

- Enhanced readiness for future clinical roles
- Improved work-life balance compared to traditional placements
- Greater autonomy in managing workloads
- Strong team integration and sense of shared values
- Increased motivation for patient advocacy
- Greater awareness of accessibility considerations

Systems and service thinking provide a holistic picture

“...it’s very focused on just that little session with your client, and you forget to look at that the whole picture. I think that as speech pathologists we can be involved beyond that, beyond just the clinical space, and be involved in working with other professionals to create service level or systems level change.”

Student

Multidisciplinary Learning

“ I think there’s lots of skills and stuff that we’ve learnt from this placement that have been helpful with things like collaborating, not even just like within our own discipline, but I think across disciplines as well”

Student

Characteristics of high performing students



Self-direction and initiative

Strong performers displayed independence, proactive learning, motivation, organisational skills, and initiative in seeking support.



Adaptability and learning orientation

They excelled through flexibility, openness to feedback, skill transfer, and enthusiasm for professional growth.



Reflective practice

High achievers engaged deeply in reflective practice, integrated feedback, recognised learning opportunities, and critically analysed performance.



Communication excellence

Top performers excelled in clear, professional communication, stakeholder engagement, meaningful contributions, strong documentation, and audience specific communication adaptability.

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Key Learnings



Recommendations



Pre-placement preparation

Provide clear onboarding resources, such as access checks, staff profiles, and welcome videos, ensuring students review them before starting.



Supervision models

Build rapport in hybrid supervision through structured check-ins, feedback, and personalised support. Balance autonomy and oversight to foster independence.



Orientation and onboarding

Tailor interactive tutorials and independent tasks to placement phases. Use icebreakers to enhance team connections.



Team integration

Involve students in decision-making and recognise their contributions to foster a sense of value and belonging.

Recommendations



Reflective practice

Embed reflection sessions linking project activities to clinical competencies and transferable skills. Provide tools for self-reflection.



Hybrid placement challenges

Use communication platforms like Microsoft Teams with structured channels. Address technical issues with reliable internet and equipment.



Co-design and problem-solving

Engage students in co-design to address skill gaps and develop innovative solutions using structured brainstorming methods.



Accessibility and inclusivity

Train students in inclusive communication and accessible documentation. Incorporate consumer input into resource development.

Recommendations



Expand placement impact

Align placements with organisational goals to build workforce capacity and address regional workforce shortages.



Continuous improvement

Collect feedback to refine placements and inform future strategies for student engagement and success.



Student Placement Snapshot

24 Students participated in the project

Student contributions

- Development of the Observation Tool and Resource for Inclusive Communication in Healthcare (OSTRICH)
- Delivered inclusive communication training
- Created accessible document guidelines
- Conducted site visits and accessibility audits
- Supported co-design workshops

Key outcomes

- Practical application of clinical skills
- Improved project delivery capacity
- Improved student readiness for clinical roles
- Piloted a hybrid model of student supervision

Student Placement Snapshot

Success factors

- Student autonomy and independence
- Strong team integration
- Regular reflection opportunities
- Structured project planning
- Workplace readiness





That's a wrap

You've completed Module 6:
Supporting Student Placements in Healthcare