Preliminary evaluation of the clinical education and training for Allied Health Assistants in Queensland Health

This project was funded by the ClinEdQ Research and Publication Initiative to provide an evaluation of the Vocational Education and Training Sector Steering Committee’s initiative to offer formal qualifications for the Queensland Health assistant workforce. The summary below outlines the key outcomes of the project.

Summary

In 2009, the Vocational Education and Training Sector Steering Committee (the Committee) was formed. This Committee included representation from Queensland Health districts, clinical education units, delivery agencies and the Allied Health Workforce Coordination Unit and external representation from Health and Community Services Workforce Council, Department of Education and Training (DETA) and non government organisations (NGOs). The Committee provided oversight on a range of initiatives including allied health school based traineeships, VET in schools and University articulation. A major initiative was the progression of formal qualifications for the Queensland Health assistant workforce.

This evaluation study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Project in achieving project outcomes to date and to identify factors that acted as barriers and enablers to the project outcomes. The project operational objectives were:

1. Packaging units of competency of the Cert IV AHA
2. Developing contextualised learning support materials
3. Partnering with TAFE to deliver the Cert IV AHA
4. Trialling and modifying delivery of the allied health electives for Cert IV AHA.

At the time of the evaluation, each of these operational objectives had been achieved and progress had been made on the outcome objective of increasing the number of allied health assistants holding a formal qualification in Queensland Health. At the time of writing this report, over 300 students were enrolled in or had graduated from the Cert IV AHA. This number is over half the number of allied health assistants estimated to work in Queensland Health.

This preliminary evaluation has provided information on the activities and outputs of the Project to date from the perspective of allied health assistant students, allied health professional supervisors and Project Partners (Queensland Health and TAFE). From the survey results, there is room for improvement in preparing students, providing support and improving satisfaction with the course. However, the fact that student satisfaction with the
qualification increased from 38% for cohort 1 to 65% for cohort 3, and the percentage who
would recommend the qualification to others increased from 69% for cohort 1 to 88% for
cohort 3 suggests that the qualification has been improving steadily with each delivery.

Two main barriers/enablers were identified via the evaluation. The first relates to partnering
with TAFE. There has clearly been value in working together to deliver the course as each
partners has unique resources and expertise to contribute. However, the tone of the focus
group discussions indicated that the relationship between partners needs to be developed;
communication needs to be increased and shared problem solving needs to be enhanced.
The second barrier relates to resources. The time and human resources needed to implement
activities is often greater than anticipated and limitations in resources can cause stress and
delays.

In sum, the Project has achieved its operational objectives and is on track to achieving
desired outcomes. A range of problems were identified with course delivery, as would be
expected with any new initiative. There is a process of continual monitoring and making
changes to address problems so that the program is likely to continue to improve over time.
As for whether the project results in an increased capacity for the allied health workforce, this
remains a question for longer term evaluation.

For further information, phone 07 3131 6835 or email ClinEdQ_EdRes@health.qld.gov.au.

Read the full report (PDF, 710kb).