

REVIEW SUMMARY

Clinical Placements Strategic Review 2020-21

In 2020, Queensland Health undertook a strategic review of the clinical placements program. The aim of the review was to evaluate the program's effectiveness, with a view to ensuring that the program's strategic frameworks are appropriate, contemporary, and fit for purpose.

How we reviewed the program

The review focussed on evaluating strategic aspects of the clinical placements program, particularly in relation to governance, resourcing, risk, and policy.

Key consultation and engagement activities undertaken as part of the review included the release of a discussion paper, one-on-one stakeholder meetings, forum presentations, and the issuing of three different surveys to key stakeholder groups.

What we learned

Stakeholder contribution to the review was extensive, highly valued, and carefully considered. Some of the key findings of the review are described below:

Strategic governance

The review found a good level of support for the current clinical placements program governance arrangements and hybrid operating model. The centralised strategic frameworks enable program effectiveness and efficiency, while the decentralised operation of the program supports local-level flexibility. Opportunities to enhance stakeholder compliance through existing frameworks may include better communication of responsibilities, streamlining of processes, and promoting increased standardisation of requirements across HHSs.

Stakeholders considered it timely to look at opportunities for update, streamline and contemporise the Student Placement Deed and other legal instruments.

Resourcing

Stakeholders noted that both the demand for and complexity of placements is growing, and this warranted enhanced support structures and streamlined processes to ensure that resourcing reached the appropriate areas. There was interest in expanded program management functions, including

Queensland Health clinical placements program

The Queensland Health clinical placements program provides a legal, governance and operating framework that enables health students to undertake pre-entry clinical education and training placements in Queensland health facilities.

Medical, nursing, midwifery, dental, and allied health placements are supported under the program, as well as placements for vocational education and training (VET) courses such as enrolled nursing, aged care, and allied health assistance.

Through these placements, students gain essential practical experience and exposure to the healthcare environment and fulfil the practical training requirements related to the health course or module of study in which they are enrolled.

By supporting student learning through clinical placements, Queensland Health is helping to develop and build the future healthcare workforce and, in this way, contributing to quality and sustainable healthcare for Queensland.

strengthened policy, communication, resource development, and compliance systems.

The review found support for a flexible, principles-based approach to placement fee-setting by Hospital and Health Services. There was minimal appetite for a prescriptive fee schedule given the diverse and distinctive contexts across placement locations, work settings and clinical disciplines.

Stakeholders generally supported students having access to Queensland Health Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems, identifying technology interface as an increasingly important aspect of clinical practice. Any system-wide response to this matter should include a policy framework addressing factors such as funding source, types and levels of access, patient privacy, and administrative processes.

Risk

Stakeholders were generally satisfied with how clinical placement risks are managed, although additional program structures or frameworks could strengthen current arrangements. Mechanisms such as expanding the existing policy framework and strengthening communication processes would aid clarity of, and compliance with, responsibilities across the program. Additional frameworks such as for risk management or reporting, may also be considered.

Stakeholders largely supported the introduction of a clinical placements management system. Perceived benefits include streamlining placement processes, helping to mitigate risks related to compliance and funding, and aiding consistency and transparency across the program. Potential concerns with the introduction of a statewide system included the possibility of additional administrative burden, and duplication in clinical placement coordination.

Policy

Stakeholders desire additional program-level policy information and guidance. A strong, well-communicated policy framework would aid in operationalising the legal instruments and other existing governance structures within the program. It would enhance clarity about stakeholder expectations and responsibilities and may strengthen compliance across the program.

The clinical placements program was found to be robust in responding to the challenges presented during 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders reported being able to utilise existing strong

partnerships to adapt and respond flexibly to manage impacts on placements during affected periods. The pandemic also prompted some new policy questions to arise, such as managing students undertaking virtual learning while on placement.

The review found that the clinical placements program is highly valued for its contribution to student learning and development. The program may be further leveraged in support of other strategic workforce objectives, such as workforce sustainability, capability building for placement supervisors, and strengthened rural and remote, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce pathways.

How we are responding

Queensland Health seeks to balance the needs and views of all stakeholders in striving for the best outcomes for the current and future health workforce.

Queensland Health has considered the findings of the review and will implement program enhancements commencing in 2021, subject to available resourcing.

Key priority enhancements to be commenced in 2021 are as follows:

- Review and revise the clinical placements program legal instruments prior to the expiry of the existing agreements at the end of 2021.
- Develop clear, comprehensive, user-friendly guidelines, policies, and other information resources as required, to support the implementation of the revised legal instruments.
- Streamline and clarify student orientation processes and guidelines, and support their standardised application.
- Develop a principles-based fees framework which provides guidelines for setting and implementing clinical placement fees.
- Develop a proposal for a program-wide approach to access to information technologies and programs for students on clinical placement.
- Develop a clinical placements program communication strategy and action plan to support the availability of clear, responsive, user-friendly, targeted information.

The review has provided Queensland Health with greater insight into the current functioning of the clinical placements program, its strategic alignment, and opportunities for streamlining and enhancement.