

# Rural and Regional Ultrasound Training Program

## An innovative initiative to enhance the role of Ultrasound in rural and regional Queensland

### Aim

This program aims to

- support local medical imaging services, that require sonography skills, to provide a training pathway and ongoing support to staff undertaking an ultrasound training program.
- increase the number of sonographers in rural and regional services

### Background

Rural and regional Queensland does not always have access to provide adequate ultrasound services in their hospitals and health facilities. Geographical isolation, low population density, and difficulties in recruitment and retention of sonographers including training of student sonographers can create a gap in patients being able to access ultrasound examinations. Patients can be required to travel long distances to undertake these procedures.

A report commissioned by the Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland (AHPOQ) indicated that remotely and regionally based ultrasound students struggle to achieve the necessary course requirements to attain an ultrasound qualification. This is due to inadequate training opportunities such as supervision requirements due to their remote locations. Recognition of these difficulties has led to the establishment of the Queensland Health "Rural and Regional Ultrasound Training Program".

### Overview of the Rural and Regional Ultrasound Training Program:

The training program uses an innovative blended learning model including the use of telehealth technology via videoconferencing units. It includes:

- Intensive on-site training
- Remote supervision via videoconferencing
- 'Buddy Placement' model
- Monthly Webex presentation

The training models are described in Table 1 below.

Other resources to support the model include:

- Acceptance letter template
- Rural student sonographer work contract
- Supervision and reporting arrangement guideline
- Remote supervision booking procedure and workflow

**Table 1: Training models used in the Rural and Regional Ultrasound Training Program**

<b>Training models</b>	
<b>Intensive on-site training</b>	<b>Remote supervision via videoconferencing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students receive on-site intensive clinical training with direct supervision from the Advanced Sonographer Clinical Educator.</li> <li>• Students receive approx. 4-5 intensive 2 week supervision blocks per year.</li> <li>• Once students achieve an agreed level of competency, returns to remote location to undertake remote supervision.</li> <li>• Offered to beginners and more advanced student sonographers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students receive remote supervision via videoconference with the Sonographer Educator.</li> <li>• Students continue to scan with remote supervision at an agreed competency level with the educator.</li> <li>• Offered to advanced student sonographers who have achieved sufficient competency to perform ultrasound at local hospitals, based on the assessment of the Clinical Educator.</li> </ul>
<b>“Buddy Placement” model</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two remotely located student sonographers attend intensive on-site clinical training in Brisbane simultaneously.</li> <li>• By pairing up students in the “Buddy Placement” model, the students participate in peer learning and a support network amongst students is created.</li> <li>• This strategy is necessary to effectively train the increasing number of students enrolled in the program.</li> <li>• The program has currently exceeded capacity by training 10 rural and regional student sonographers due to strong levels of interest and participation from regional healthcare centres.</li> </ul>	
<b>Monthly Webex presentation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational PowerPoint presentations conducted by the Clinical Educator using webcasts and teleconference.</li> <li>• The aim of the presentation is to aid remotely located students who traditionally have limited access to educational resources.</li> </ul>	

More information is available by contacting [Allied Health Advisory@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Allied_Health_Advisory@health.qld.gov.au)