

THE VALUE OF EXTENDED CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

Perspectives from a unique Optometry program



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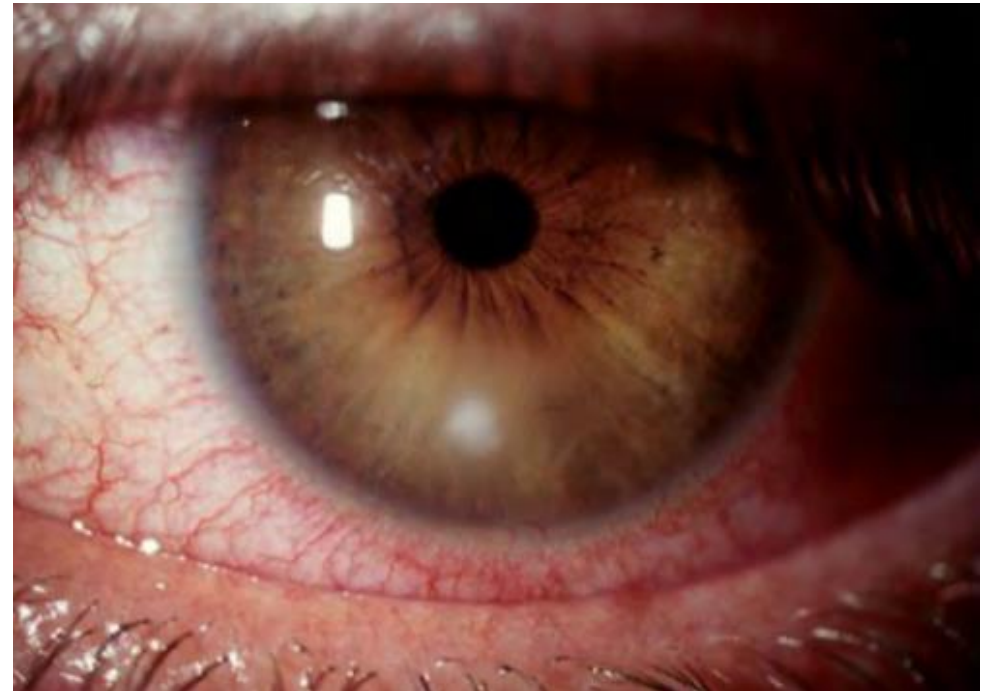
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BACKGROUND



- Optometrists manage ocular health conditions
- Preventative care is crucial



Khuu & Denial, 2011

BACKGROUND



- Access to eye care is an issue for some
- Rural communities face greater barriers to eye care
- Maldistribution of practitioners is one such barrier



How do we improve access to eye care for rural Australians?

CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL
OPTOMETRY

REVIEW

Could adoption of the rural pipeline concept redress Australian optometry workforce issues?

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People living in rural and remote areas have poorer ocular health outcomes compared with those living in metropolitan areas. Reasons for this are multiple and complex but access to care is consistently reported as a defining factor. The geographic maldistribution of eye-care professionals is a major obstacle for regional, rural and remote Australians seeking care. Research from the medical profession suggests adopting the 'rural pipeline' concept to address the issue of maldistribution. This approach appears to have had some success in medicine, and involves recruiting students from a rural background, exposing students to rural practice through placements and offering graduates incentives and support to practice

BACKGROUND



Clinical placements
= authentic, real world experiences

Short-block rotations
= Difficult learning environment?

Extended clinical placements
= greater immersion?
= more likely to stay rural?

METHODS



- Occurs in final 6 months of degree
- 26 week community placement
- Students attend 'full-time' 4 days a week
- 1 student in each practice
- 13 weeks must be completed in a 'region experiencing an optometrist shortage'

METHODS



Data were collected on experiences of students and supervisors. Following the 26 week placement;

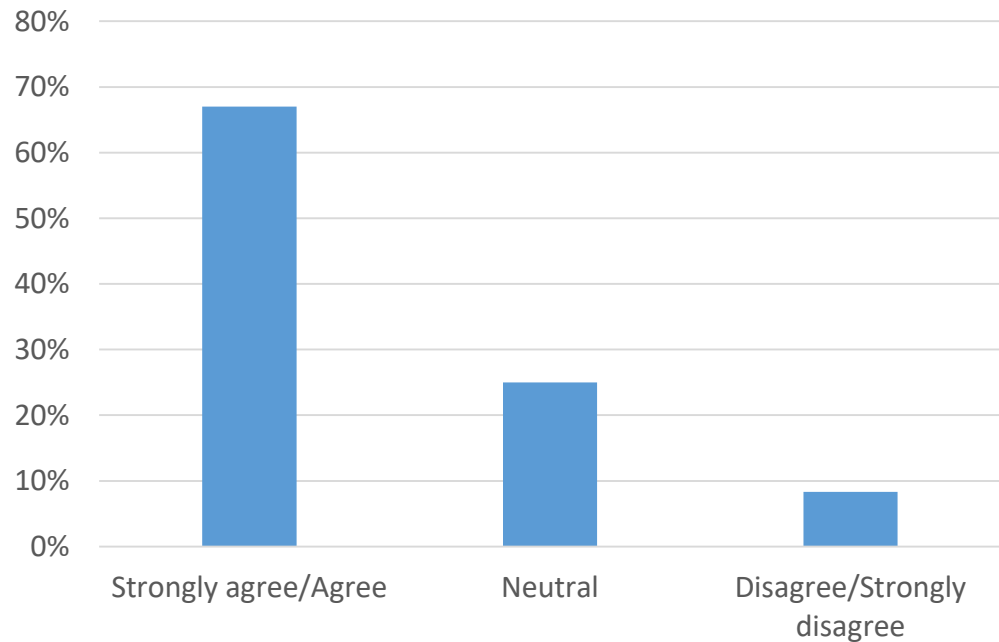
- n = 36 students completed survey, n = 24 students participated in 5 focus groups
- n = 40 supervisors completed survey, n = 9 supervisors participated in interviews
- Descriptive statistics used to summarise quantitative data
- Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using Braun and Clarke's¹ 6 steps to thematic analysis in NVivo.

1, Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 2006;3(2):77-101.

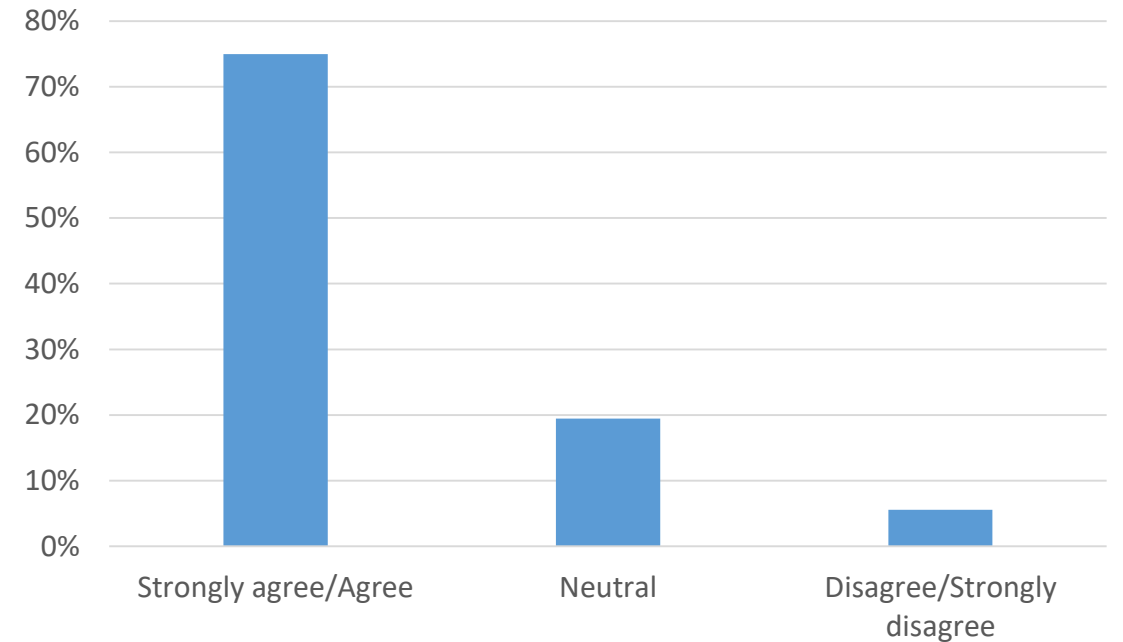
FINDINGS: Students



Completing a rural placement gave me a greater understanding of rural life.



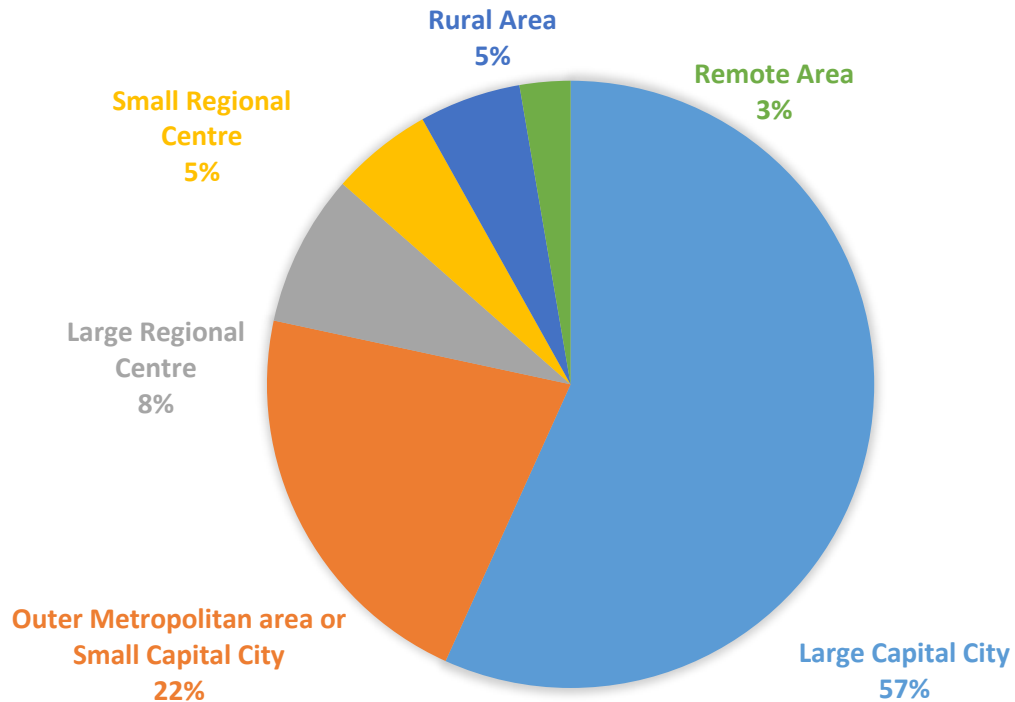
Completing a rural placement gave me a greater understanding of rural practice.



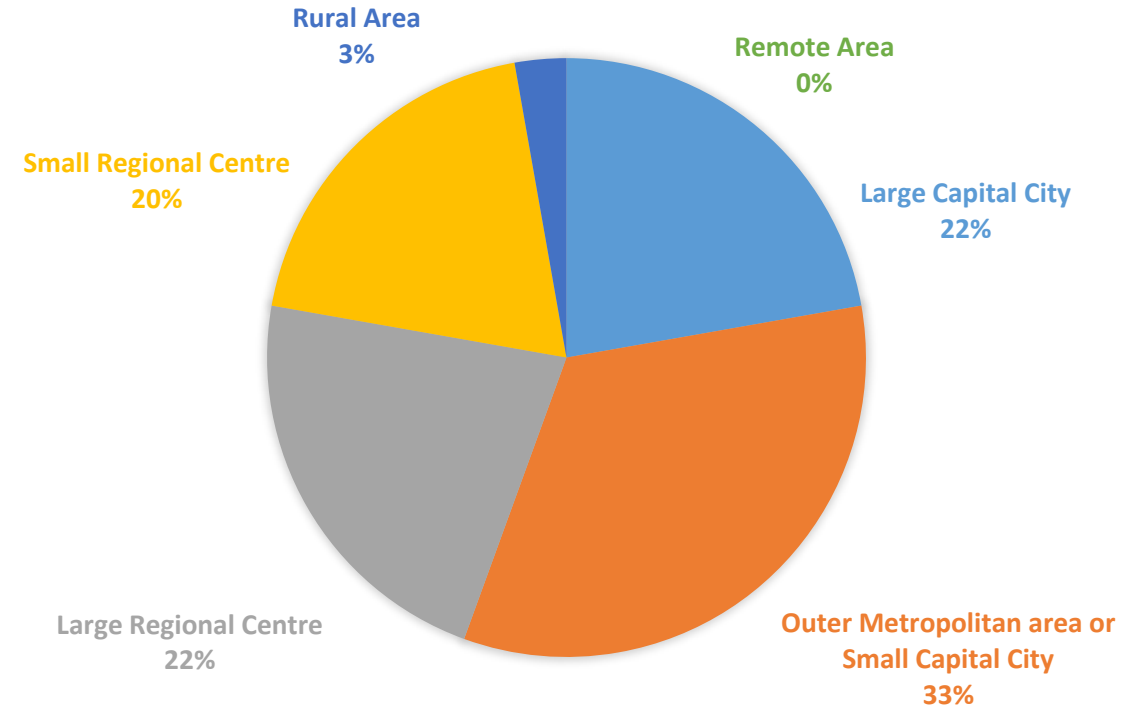
FINDINGS: Students



LOCATION LIVED THE LONGEST.



DESIRED PRACTICE LOCATION



FINDINGS: Students



Theme 1: *Changing identity, becoming an optometrist*

Theme 2: *Practicing resilience*

Theme 2: *Planning the future*

FINDINGS: Students



Theme 1: Changing identity, becoming an optometrist

- Moving from student to clinician, Personal development and growth
- Complete immersion, Trial without commitment, Supervisors driving empowered learning

Theme 2: Practicing resilience

Theme 3: Planning the future

“We’re ready to work pretty much....we’ve had that experience in practice already”

FINDINGS: Students



Theme 1: Changing identity, becoming an optometrist

Theme 2: Practicing resilience

- Punitive experiences: Creating a culture of fear, Lacking an advocate, Power dynamics and managing relationships
- Expectations not met, Burdens experienced, Lack of situational control: Burn out

Theme 3: Planning the future

“It’s scary to contact the uni. The reason I didn’t is because I don’t want any complaints associated with my name. I didn’t want them to think ‘Oh P52 can’t handle placement.’ So I was just like I’ll deal with this myself.”

FINDINGS: Students



Theme 1: Changing identity, becoming an optometrist

Theme 2: Practicing resilience

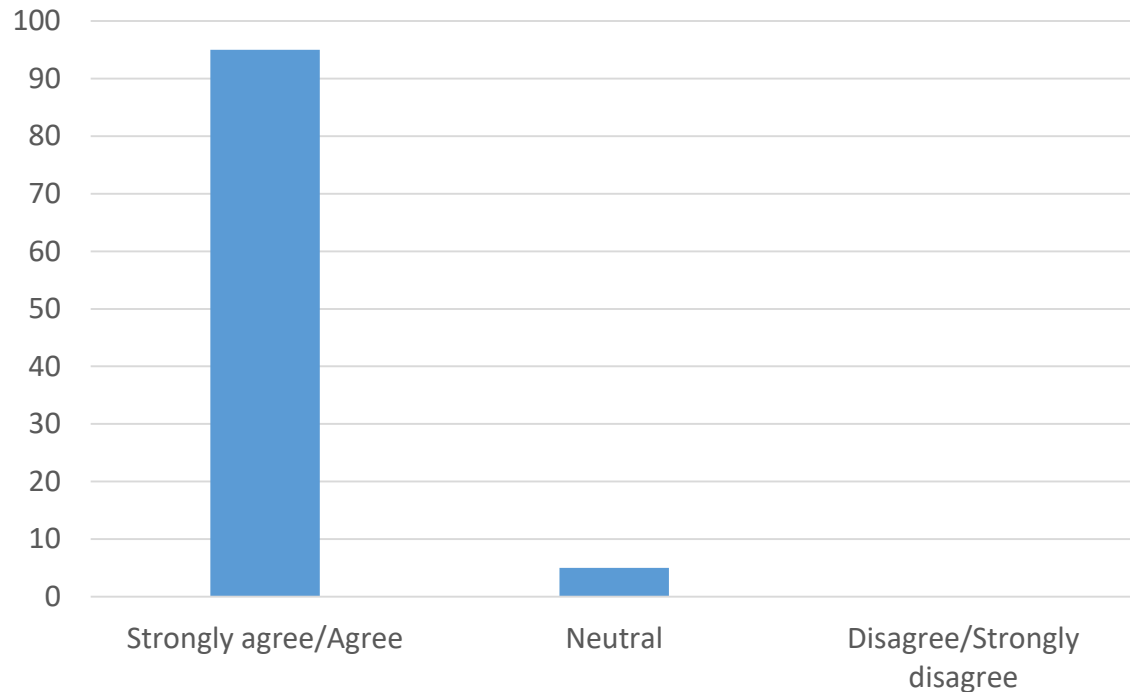
Theme 3: Planning the future

- Needing a mentor, Finding the right 'fit', Fear and uncertainty
- The drive to return home
- Rural practice more rewarding

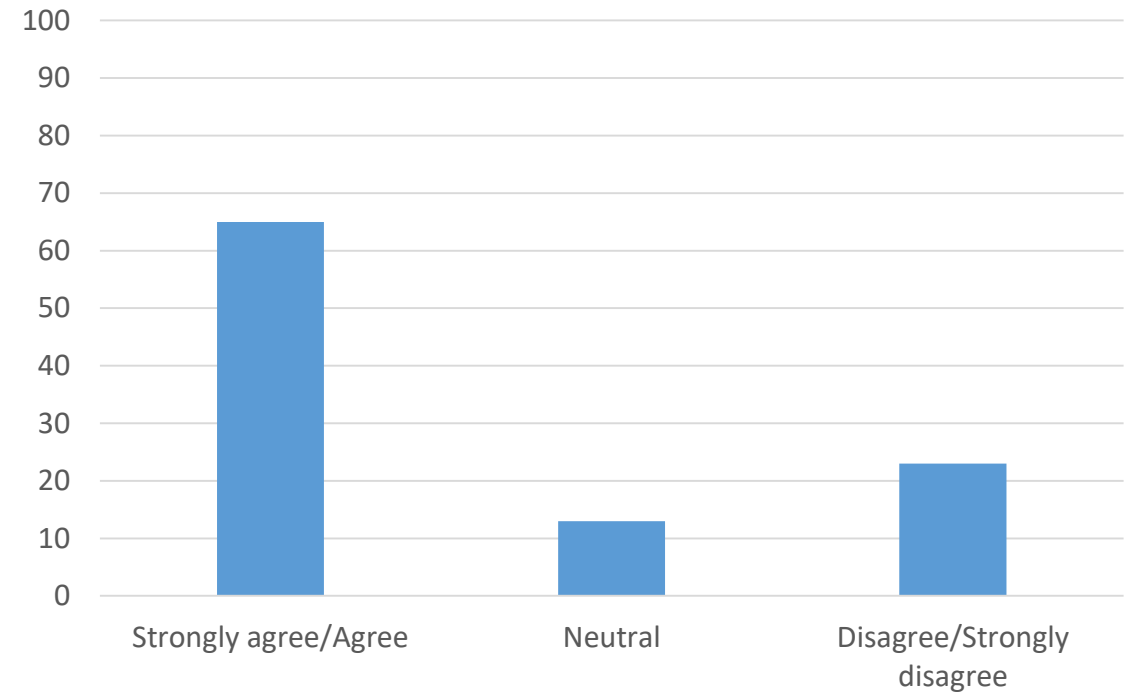
"I don't like big cities because I'm not from one. I did do a placement in a big city. But I didn't like it. I'd rather stay in the county"

FINDINGS: Supervisors

The placement prepared the student for future clinical practice.



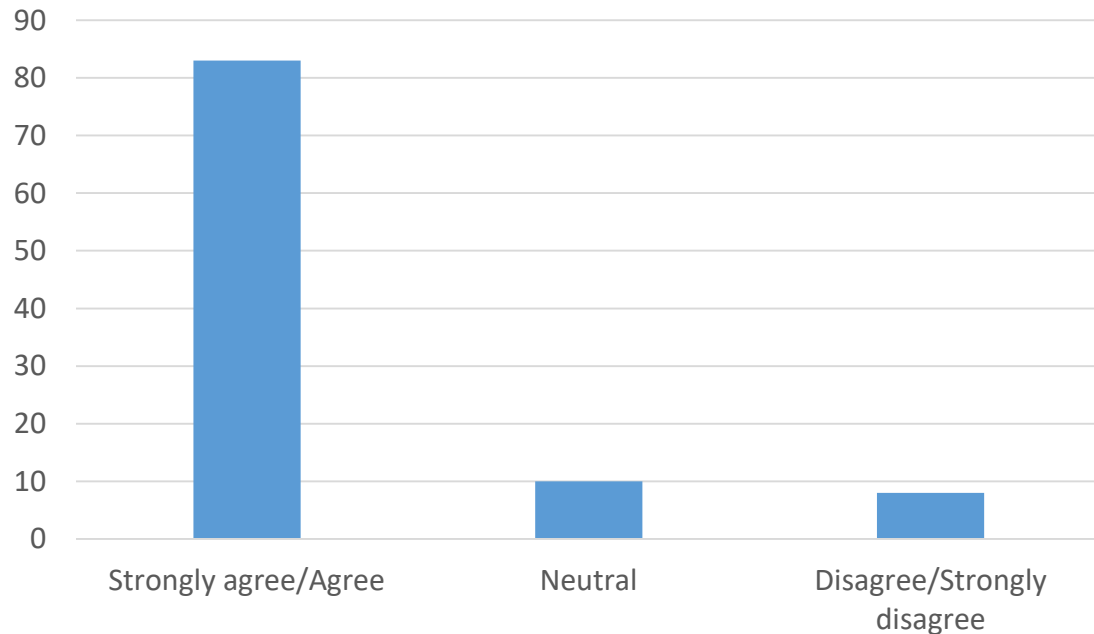
The length of the extended clinical placement was reasonable.



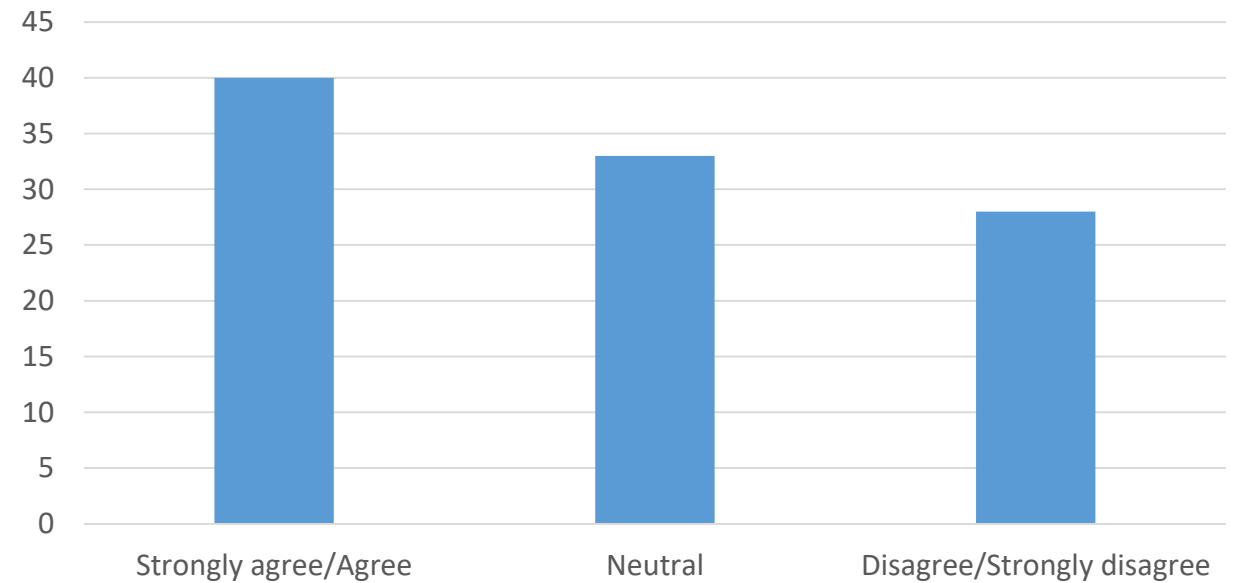
FINDINGS: Supervisors



Supervising the student kept my skills and/or knowledge current



Supervising the student had a greater burden on time than benefit.



FINDINGS: Supervisors



Theme 1: Supervision encourages reflection

Theme 2: Continuity is key

Theme 3: The sizeable commitment of supervision

Theme 4: Mentoring through leadership

FINDINGS: Supervisors



Theme 1: Supervision encourages reflection

- Greater accountability. Improves confirmation bias. Thoughtful practice, stops complacency.

“I am a better optometrist because I supervise students.”

Theme 2: Continuity is key

Theme 3: The sizeable commitment of supervision

Theme 4: Mentoring through leadership

FINDINGS: Supervisors

Theme 1: Supervision encourages reflection

Theme 2: Continuity is key

- Immersion in the practice. Stronger relationships, comfort, rapport & trust development. Initial burden of student but later benefit
- Ability to mould the student. A chance to provide feedback & witness improvement. Assess suitability for recruitment

Theme 3: The sizeable commitment of supervision

Theme 4: Mentoring through leadership

“Part of trusting the student is getting to know them.”

FINDINGS: Supervisors



Theme 1: Supervision encourages reflection

Theme 2: Continuity is key

Theme 3: The sizeable commitment of supervision

- Time demanding, fatiguing experience. Apprehension prior to placements.
- Student preparedness.

Theme 4: Mentoring through leadership

“It was quite tiring and stressful, more so than what I thought it would be.....I was constantly being pushed for time.”

FINDINGS: Supervisors



Theme 1: Supervision encourages reflection

Theme 2: Continuity is key

Theme 3: The sizeable commitment of supervision

Theme 4: Mentoring through leadership

- Allowing the student space for autonomy. The feel good factor in supervision
- Ensuring the status of the profession is maintained

“You get that – feel good factor – as you’re giving back to the profession and optometry.”

SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNT



- Extended placements foster;
 - meaningful mentor connections
 - rural connectedness
 - work-ready graduates
- Issues;
 - Mutually respectful supervisor-student relationships are key
 - Students need to feel connected to the university
 - A 'neutral' person is needed as a point of contact, particularly for students
 - Greater support needed for rural working graduates

THANK YOU!



Questions?

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