

Getting Personal with Work Readiness in the Darling Downs



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Background

- We noticed that Allied Health (AH) students graduate with varied degrees of readiness to take on their chosen role
- Work readiness has been studied in nurses, medical students and generic “college graduates”, but little has been done to explore AH work readiness
- Students/graduates themselves have been the source of most data captured to date



What Were We Thinking?

- We hoped to identify which characteristics were considered most important, in the hope we may be able to foster these in our students and help them prepare to tackle their new roles
- We also wondered if experienced clinical supervisors, management, and clinical educators may add some useful insights



Method

- Using the Nominal Group Technique, we asked participants what they believed to be “the most important personal characteristics signalling work readiness in Allied Health students”
 - Group 1 - Allied Health Directors, ($n = 7$)
 - Group 2 - Experienced Clinical Supervisors, ($n = 5$)
 - Group 3 - Clinical Educators ($n = 4$)
+ experienced Supervisors ($n = 2$)



The Nominal Group Technique*

1. Silent, independent generation of ideas in writing (5 mins)
2. Round-robin listing of ideas, immediately listed on wall charts for everyone to see (20-30 mins)
3. Discussion of each idea for clarification and evaluation (Audiotaped; 30-40 mins)
4. Identify & rate priorities – silent, independent (5 mins)
5. Presentation of group consensus and final discussion (Audiotaped; 10-15 mins)

Results

- 102 characteristics were generated overall, 37 of which were voted as among the “most important” by at least one group member
- Six characteristics were identified and rated among the most important by all three groups
 - These may be of particular interest



Top 10: AH Directors

Count	Mean Rating	Characteristic	Ranking
7	9.1	Resilience	1
5	9.8	Insight & self awareness	2
4	9.75	Emotional stability & regulation	3
4	9.7	Ability to communicate with all people	4
4	8.75	Adaptable to circumstances - flexible	5
4	8.5	Business minded	6
2	9.5	Balanced confidence	7*
2	9.5	Growth mindset	7*
2	9	Professionalism	8*
2	9	Understanding contexts	8*
		Note *indicates equal ranking with another factor	

Top 10: Clinical Supervisors

Count	Mean Rating	Characteristics	Rank
4	9.25	Ability to self reflect & self awareness	1
3	9.7	Communication skills & adapting communication to others (verbal and written)	2
3	8.3	Enthusiasm	3
3	8	Self-management skills: prioritised workload & work day organisation	4
3	7.7	Clinical reasoning	5
2	9	Adaptability / flexibility	6
2	8.5	Active lifelong learning / intellectual curiosity	7*
2	8.5	Resilience	7*
2	7.5	Core knowledge approp. To level of training	8
1	10	Openness to seeking & responding to feedback	9*

Top 10: CE's/Supervisors

Count	Mean Rating	Characteristic	Ranking
5	8.9	Insight & the ability to self reflect on actions & behaviours	1
5	8.8	Resilience – personal & work life	2
4	8	Sense of humour	3
3	9	Active, self-directed learner / willingness to learn	4
3	8.6	Emotional maturity – to cope & to respond to patients	4
2	10	Professionalism – integrity; accountability; time management; respect	5*
2	10	Ability to connect with patients – empathy / boundaries	5*
2	9.5	Reliability – managing caseloads / tasks	6*
2	9.5	Excellent communication skills – verbal & written	6*
2	9	Recognise stress & strategies to manage (self care)	7*

Combined Group Results

- Results were then ranked according to:
 1. The **number of groups** who had identified that characteristic as among the most important
 2. The **number of individual group members** who had voted for the characteristic as most important
 3. The **mean rating** assigned by participants



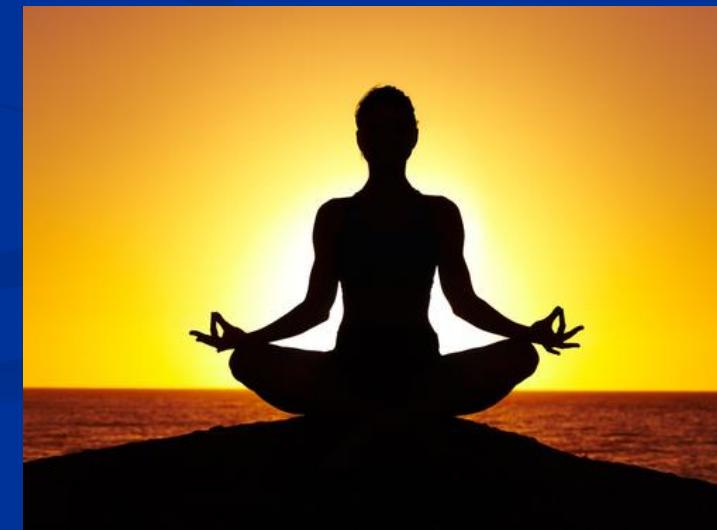
Characteristics Chosen By All Three Groups

Rank	Groups Included	Count / Mean	Characteristic
1	1,2,3	16 / 9.3	Insight & self awareness
2	1,2,3	14 / 8.8	Resilience
3	1,2,3	9 / 9.6	Communication skills & adapting communication to others (verbal & written)
4	1,2,3	7 / 7.3	Basic organisational skills – prioritising workload & work day organisation
5	1,2,3	6 / 8.5	Commitment to lifelong learning
6	1,2,3	5 / 8.7	Professionalism

No. 1: Insight & Self-Awareness

The capacity for “insight”, “self-awareness” and the “ability to self reflect” was considered the number one characteristic for success as an allied health professional

“I’m not surprised it’s at the top... that’s what a person needs to survive in this environment”



No. 2: Resilience

“And that ability to bounce back is the big thing about resilience, that you can get bad feedback, or something you’re not expecting, or something can go wrong, but that doesn’t crush you, that you can bounce back and learn from it and grow”



No. 3: Communication Skills (Verbal & Written)

“That ability to have a relationship with your patients, your team members. You have to be able to adapt your communication so much between so many different environments. If you can’t do that then you’re not going to be able to form those professional relationships”



No. 4: Basic Organisational Skills

- Time management, setting priorities
- Reliably completing basic day to day tasks, e.g. entering activity statistics and writing client notes in timely manner

“Self management skills and prioritising workload and work day organisation”

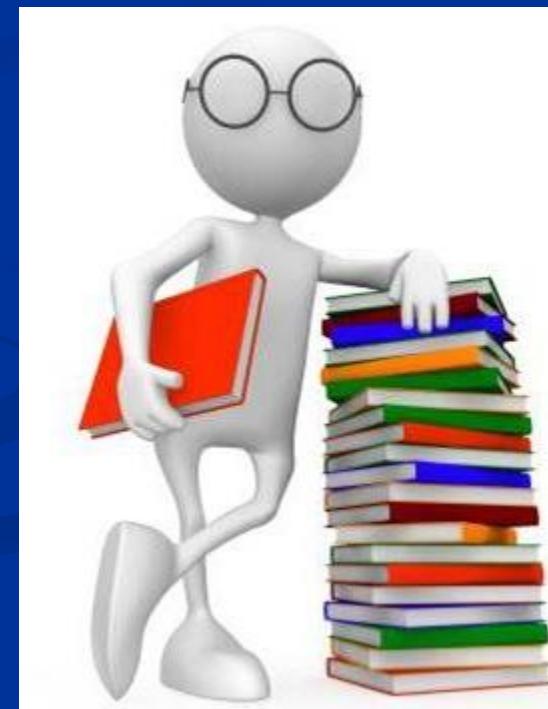
“Managing case-load/tasks; owning your day/time/products”



No. 5: Lifelong Learning

Actively seeking to build and maintain knowledge, prompted not by external pressure, but from a genuine curiosity and desire to improve your knowledge and skills

“...it’s a given that the knowledge base in AH will move forward, and ... we need the workforce to move forward with it.”



No. 6: Professionalism

“You represent an organisation and you act accordingly”

*‘Hair, nails, shoes,
clothes
Interaction s
Confidentiality
Being ethical
Code of conduct
All those little things just
bundled up’*



But Wait, There's More:

Rank	Groups Included	Count / Mean	Characteristic
7	1,3	7 / 9.2	Emotional stability / maturity & emotional regulation
8	1,2	6 / 8.9	Adaptability / flexibility
9	2,3	3 / 10	Empathy
10	2,3	3 / 8	Recognise stress & have strategies to manage (self care)
11	1,2	3 / 7.8	Sound technical & clinical knowledge appropriate to level of training
12	1,2	3 / 7.8	“Balanced” confidence
13	2,3	2 / 9.5	Seeking & responding to feedback – and admitting when you don’t know
14	2,3	2 / 8.5	Intrigue & interest / curiosity
15	1,2	2 / 7	Ability to work inter-professionally

This is Getting VERY Personal

- Personality-based and/or emotion-focused characteristics were prevalent in the data from all three groups
- Examples include: personal insight; emotional stability; emotional regulation; adaptability; empathy; stress management; curiosity; enthusiasm and; “sound, stable personality constructs”





‘A lot of this stuff isn’t really around curriculum, a lot of this stuff is personal...and prior to curriculum and curriculum learning ... I think the workplace becomes a really important role model for it, ... it isn’t something that comes out of a book or out of the university course ...so it’s very interesting in that way’

Possible Consequences

aka “Does it Really Matter?”

- Participants acknowledged the sometimes extreme outcomes for those lacking these characteristics
 - Cessation of placement
 - Organisational implications once recruited
- The student/staff member and the organisation can be impacted by the need to foster and increase these characteristics.



Lingering Questions

- How readily can these characteristics be measured &/or observed?
- Are we considering these characteristics at recruitment?
- To what extent are these characteristics included in university curriculum?
- What supports can be implemented to further develop students in these key areas?

What Does the Data Say?

- Participants looked to Clinical Educators and Supervisors to assist in developing characteristics like insight and self awareness
 - It was acknowledged this may be difficult in short placements
- Modelling of key characteristics in the workplace by AH staff was also considered important
- Participants thought development opportunities should be extended to new graduates also

Next Steps in the Darling Downs

- Discussing findings and their implications with Clinical Educators, AH Directors, Supervisors and Universities
- The DDH Clinical Education team plan to embark on projects aiming to:
 - enhance the key characteristics identified
 - support student's personal and professional development, and their transition to the workplace
 - enhance the smooth working of clinical teams

Want the Full Story? Watch This Space:

O'Brien, M., Troy, K. & Kirkpatrick, J., [in press], *The Allied Health Work Readiness Study: Identifying personal characteristics signalling work readiness in allied health students*, The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences & Practice.

Questions? Comments?

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