Design and evaluation of a pharmacist tutor training programme for enhanced links with practice

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Introduction

• Sessional staff - a diverse group \(^1,^2\)
  - Part-time/casual tutors, demonstrators, lecturers
  - External people from industries or professions
  - Teacher-practitioners

• Roles and responsibilities of sessional staff vary both across and within universities \(^1,^2\)

For optimal success, a sessional staff training program should be institutionally supported but also tailored to suit the needs of the particular department or institution. \(^3,^4,^5\)
Introduction

Why train tutors?

• Increasing number of sessional staff
  Between 2008-2017 the number of sessional academics in Australian Universities (full-time equivalents) has risen by 53%.

• High sessional staff teaching loads
  Between 40 - 50% of teaching in Australian Universities is currently being performed by sessional staff (RED Report 2008).

• Increased demand for quality and consistency of teaching
  Universities, professional bodies, government and students

The increased casualization of the workforce and the lack of appropriate training for sessional staff may be a risk to educational quality in Australian universities.
Introduction

Benefits of training?

• Enhanced quality of teaching \(^9\)
• More consistency in assessment and marking \(^{10}\)
• Improved tutor confidence and job satisfaction \(^{3,11,12}\)
• Bridging the theory-practice gap \(^{13,14,15}\)
• Improved student learning \(^{16}\)
Pharmacist tutors at JCU

- Tutors involved since 1999
- All tutors are practising pharmacists
- 2013 - 20 pharmacists tutoring across the 4 year degree
- *Areas of involvement include:*
  - Extemporaneous dispensing
  - Clinical dispensing and counselling
  - Marking of placement workbooks
- Since 2005, all new sessional staff at James Cook University (JCU) are required to attend a 4 hr general induction session
Methodology

• **Pre-training – needs analysis**

  Tutor Questionnaire  (past, present and future tutors)  
  3 x Focus Groups  (Students, Academic Staff, Tutors)

  *(Analysis via descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis)*

• **Program design, development and delivery**

• **Post-training**

  Evaluation 1 - Immediately post training  
  Evaluation 2 - After one full semester
Results: Pre-training

Questionnaire

• 68% response rate (n = 27)
  o 81% female, 52% current tutors
  o Experience - 93% community, 44% hospital
  o 26% with Postgraduate qualifications

• Discipline specific training is preferred
  Discipline based only (66%), University and discipline based (30%)

  Definitely discipline based…. With the very specific skill set required to tutor these groups effectively ......I remember doing the required induction to tutoring and it was completely unrelated to what we were going to be doing here .... [Tutor M1]

• 85% preferred combination on-line + face-to-face training
Results: Pre-training

Figure 1– Tutor rating of potential benefits of training (n=27)
Results: Pre-training

Questionnaire & focus groups - Role of the tutor

Pharmacist tutors add value to the pharmacy program

• Support - academic staff and students

• Different ways of teaching – diversity and flexibility

• Linking theory to practice

  ‘It’s like a link between what we’re learning and actual pharmacy practice’

  (Student  F2)

  o Ensures that the curriculum remains current and relevant
  o Aids in development of professionalism
Results: Post-training

Evaluation 1 - Immediately after training

• 86% response rate (12 tutor participants)

• Program length
  o 11 of 12 tutors - program length was adequate
    ‘Time was well managed, no section was too long’ (tutor 2)

• Program relevance
  o 10 of 12 tutors - information was relevant to their current needs
    ‘The session provided a good platform for standardized teaching and learning at JCU’ (tutor 4 - new tutor)
Results: Post-training – Evaluation 1

Figure 2 - Tutor rating of usefulness of training areas (n=12)
Table 1 - Tutor training program: Participant average self-rate competencies (n=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TUTOR COMPETENCE</th>
<th>Prior to training</th>
<th>Immediately after training</th>
<th>After one full semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General confidence level</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2 (no change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in marking and assessment</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching consistency</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching knowledge and skills</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0 (no change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work effectively in a team</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4 (no change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to enhance student learning</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to deal with problem students</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement of career opportunities</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Unsure; 2. Poor; 3. Average; 4. Good; 5. Very good
Conclusions

For the tutor

• Training improves both tutor confidence and competence

• Training increases tutor and staff interaction and provides for enhanced networking opportunities
  
  o Improved career opportunities/job satisfaction
  
  o Acknowledgement of the tutor role in the teaching team (addresses marginalization) \(^{8,17}\)
  
  o Stronger links between academia and practice
Conclusions

For the student

• Tutor training improves teaching skills and teaching consistency, leading to......
  o Improved educational quality
  o Enhanced student learning

• By improving links between theory and practice, tutor training will ..........
  o Maintain currency and relevance of the pharmacy curriculum
  o Support a seamless transition from the university to the workplace
Questions
References

1. Australian Universities Teaching Committee. Training, Support and Management of Sessional Teaching Staff - Final Report Brisbane Teaching and Educational Development Institute, University of Queensland 2003.


Tutor training program—February 2013

TRAINING PROGRAM

• Discipline based

• 4.5 hour face to face session plus ....
  o Tutor manual
  o Online support Website

• Content
  o Introduction to JCU and Pharmacy
  o Teaching and supporting students - (TLD)
  o Marking & assessment training + activity
  o Opportunities for interaction/networking