



Monash Matters

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Monash University revised fieldwork schedule for 2007

Our fieldwork schedule has changed significantly since the beginning of this year. As most educators are aware we ran a number of focus groups during the first half of 2006 to seek feedback from the field in respect to fieldwork. Our fieldwork schedule was tabled at each focus group and comment was requested from participants. In addition, feedback has been sourced from fieldwork educators supervising our students either at the educator workshop or via survey. A number of important recommendations were provided that have now been incorporated into a revised schedule.

The strong recommendations yielding a consensus across the groups included:

- Consider the option of a full week block for first-year instead of four days at one-day per week.
- Consider using the semester breaks more. Current practice creates congestion of fieldwork demand during semesters while semester break time is often under-utilised by universities
- Consider increasing the length of the third year placement
- Avoid any overlap of placements across year levels

Our fieldwork schedule has been re-designed accordingly. First-year has two options either as a week block in the semester break or as four Mondays in April/ May. The third-year block has been placed in the semester break and extended to a five-day per week placement increasing the fieldwork placement by five days duration. There is now no overlap of placements other than third-year project placements overlapping with the final fourth-year placement. We thank you for your feedback and hope the revised schedule is not only more acceptable to agencies but also provides a clear indication that feedback from the field is taken seriously and acted upon.

We will be forwarding to you our 2007 fieldwork needs during the month of September, timed to coincide with other universities. Next year we will be looking

Rawson jigsaw

All first-year physiotherapy, occupational therapy and health science/social work students enjoyed the "Rawson jigsaw: our Monash University Rural Interprofessional Educational Experience". This three-day camp held from Monday, 7 August until Wednesday, 9 August aimed to educate our students both in rural health issues and interprofessional practice. Students worked in interprofessional teams over the three days to increase their knowledge of rural health, Indigenous issues and interprofessional practice.

Monash University embraces the WHO definition of Interprofessional practice (IPE): "the process by which a group of students from health-related occupations with different educational backgrounds, learn together during certain periods of their education, with interaction an important goal, to collaborate in providing services", and believes that although workplaces and primary healthcare have changed significantly over recent years, most education of medical and allied health professionals is still quite mono-disciplinary. The Rawson jigsaw is designed to address this, whilst assisting the students in their appreciation of rural health issues and service provision to isolated areas. It was pleasing to hear so many students speak positively about working in a rural location in the future.

The program included a visit to Powerworks and visits to healthcare agencies and support groups in the Gippsland area. The students attended a lecture at the Churchill campus of



Students prepare to visit Powerworks.



OT students Maria Gordon (left) and Jane Hair speak with Mr Burt Taylor, a member of the Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support Group.

Monash University and benefited from many visiting lecturers to Rawson in the evenings. It was an intensive experience that will hopefully cement some positive attitudes amongst our first-year students.

to place 64 first year students in either May or July for four days; 62 second-year students for three weeks in both May and October, and 10 third-year students for both a five-week placement in July and a project placement commencing in August. We do hope you will be able to assist us with fieldwork in 2007. Professional development vouchers will continue through 2007 together with library access. Site support visits are planned for all second- and third-year students on placement.

Kim Scanlon is currently collecting student placement information that can be placed on our fieldwork website for students to download prior to placement. Details will include information about the agency, travel and car parking, uniform requirements and so forth. Kim will electronically forward you a form asking you to check and provide the relevant information.

Victorian Koori Student Support Strategy

The under-representation of Indigenous Australians in all health professions, including our own, is well-established. This is despite the fact that Aboriginal health services are best controlled and delivered by these very individuals. In light of the high prevalence of illness, disability and injury within Indigenous Australia, this should be of particular concern to occupational therapists. Admittedly, even within our professional and academic body there is a lack of awareness and understanding regarding the occupational needs of Indigenous Australians.

These concerns have led a group of Victorian OTs to establish the Victorian Occupational Therapy Koori Student Support Strategy. The group's role will be to actively encourage and advocate for increased Indigenous representation in the occupational therapy profession. The motivation to create this support strategy is borne of a deep commitment to the knowledge that Indigenous health professionals are best-positioned to deliver meaningful and accessible services to Indigenous populations.

It is planned that the Victorian OT Koori Student Support Strategy will provide:

1. Encouragement to secondary school Koori students to consider occupational therapy as a career choice through:

- Participating in CrocFest, Koori Job Fairs and other appropriate career awareness initiatives.
- Developing culturally appropriate promotional materials.
- Identifying opportunities to build awareness of the OT profession/job role within Aboriginal community controlled health organisations.
- Facilitating work experience in OT departments, services or practices.
- Offering coaching in bioscience and behavioural science secondary school subjects for Koori students considering occupational therapy.
- Liaising with OT course coordinators at Charles Sturt, Deakin, Latrobe and Monash Universities.

2. Encouragement to Koori students accepted into an OT course at any of these universities through:

- Grants to meet some of the student's expenses: textbooks, travel cost to fieldwork placements, living expenses.
- Supportive fieldwork experience in OT departments, services or practices.
- Coaching and mentoring throughout the course.

3. Mentoring of new Koori OT graduates.

4. Cross-cultural awareness training addressing cultural respect and cultural safety issues.

5. Educational opportunities for Victorian occupational therapists to understand the social, economic, cultural and political context of health in the Aboriginal community.

It is hoped the strategy will further strengthen linkages with both the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services for cross-cultural awareness, other initiatives.

The Victorian OT Koori Student Support Strategy is managed by the Victorian Occupational Therapy Koori Student Support Group (VOTKSSG) in partnership with the Anna Wearne Trust (AWT). There are informal links with VACCHO and OT AUSTRALIA Victoria is supportive of VOTKSSG.

The Anna Wearne Trust (AWT) aims to create opportunities for young people to reach their potential, where such potential is hampered due to disadvantage or inequality. The AWT is a sub-fund of the Melbourne Community Foundation.

VACCHO is the peak body that represents the membership of 26 Aboriginal community controlled health services in Victoria.

We are keen to hear from occupational therapists who would like to offer coaching, mentoring, or supportive clinical placements once we have Koori OT students in Victoria. We are also looking for occupational therapists who would assist us in promoting OT as a career option to secondary school students in their region. VOTKSSG will also be fund raising for the grants, so we'd appreciate your involvement in fundraising activities. Donations are tax deductible.

Any occupational therapists interested in supporting VOTKSSG are encouraged to contact the group via Rebecca Allen at Rebecca.Allen@med.monash.edu.au, Pamela Kirke at Pamela.Kirke@med.monash.edu.au or Lin Oke at linoke@iprimus.com.au.

Library access

It is pleasing to hear from so many of our occupational therapy educators how much they are appreciating the opportunity to download full text journal articles from occupational therapy journals at their desk. If you need any help with this just let us know and we will arrange for a Monash staff member to talk you through the process. Our fieldwork website has a library link attached for you.

Peninsula campus Open Day

Just over 3000 visitors made their way to the Peninsula campus of Monash University on Saturday, 5 August to explore course options and discover more about career choices. Building B (occupational therapy, physiotherapy and health science/social work) was busy all day and it was great to have some of our students on-hand to talk about their experiences to potential future students. We were impressed that many students had travelled down from Gippsland for the Open Day and clearly from the school students who attended, most lived in the Bayside, Peninsula and eastern region of Melbourne. Many of these school students were keen to find out about occupational therapy now it is on offer nearer home. We do have some updated course guides and handouts available. Please email Kim.Scanlon@med.monash.edu.au if you would like a few copies forwarded to your OT service for any enquiries that may come your way.



Pamela Kirke on behalf of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Monash University.