

# **Work Integrated Learning for Psychology: Pre-professional skill development or fostering the illusion of competence**



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# Approximate Plan

- Briefly describe the SCU Psychology context
- Briefly describe the Community-based clinical services context in the Coffs Harbour region
- Stated student goals, training needs and wishes
- Reported employer needs from various sources
- Student reports of their experiences with employers hiring 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year grads
- A possible Work-Integrated Learning solution
- Current Conclusions
  - \* positives
  - \* negatives/ethical concerns
  - \* fostering illusions of competence
- Your questions and comments



# Psychology Discipline at SCU

## School of Health and Human Sciences

- All but one **Psychology staff** member is based at **Coffs Harbour Campus**
- **Lismore and Gold Coast campuses** very active with other Allied Health training programs that include various degrees of clinical placements. Nursing and Midwifery also based at Coffs Harbour but no overlap with Psychology.
- **Clinical Placement office** based in CH but currently no placements or experiential learning options for Psychology. Experienced at setting up contracts.

# Psychology at SCU

## Staff and Programs

- 1.5/10 staff members with clinical training (cognitive neuroscience, social, neuropsychology, emotion, learning, linguistics, Psych Educ, research)
- **APAC Accredited 3-year Undergraduate Degree**
- **4<sup>th</sup> Year Honours (Internal Only)**; currently 70% research thesis; coursework in Stats, Ethics, History & Philosophy, and psychology colloquium)
- **All undergrad core units available via “converged delivery”**, including online labs and limited psych test demos.
- **No clinical psych training** at SCU but most students want it.

# The Community Services Context

- **Area Mental Health and Private Hospitals** (psychiatry, psychologists, mental health nurses)
- **ACAT** (no neuropsychologist, some psychology, limited gerontology, no geropsychiatry)
- **Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program** (adults with moderate to severe injuries)
- **ADHC Services** for those with mental and physical disabilities (Behaviour Support staff, limited psychology and clinical psychology and supervision)
- **Centrelink** (Job Capacity Assessors, limited psychological services and supervision)
- **NGOs** (e.g., Mission Australia, some psychology, limited psychology supervision)
- **Private psychologists** (diverse levels of training but a wide range of services offered; no formally trained neuropsychologists)
- Other care providers: Numerous counsellors (with highly diverse levels of training), naturopaths, life coaches, alternative therapies, etc...
- **Lifeline training and experience**
- **Headspace Program**
- **Indigenous health and mental health services**



# Some history re: Other disciplines

- Area Health and other agencies are hiring generic mental health workers to provide psychological services (Cranney; UNSW Psych Education Summit)
- For example, at Sydney Children's Hospital, OTs, Physios, Dieticians, registrars in various medical specialties were offering "CBT" to paediatric cases with highly complex presentations . See Centrelink below.
- Meanwhile resources for training psychology interns or undergrads from across the road at UNSW were non-existent.

# Soooo....

- How do we prepare students so that psychologist skills are *distinguishable, cost-effective and marketed well* to non-psychologist Area Health managers?
- Should we focus more on employer needs regarding practical skills or our own values regarding scientific and psychological literacy?
- Can Work-Integrated Learning or experiential activities outside uni help with personal development and workplace competitiveness?

# Goals based on Destinations of Honours Grads

- Some have been successful at finding Clinical Masters training.
- Some stay and do a PhD
- Some find work (e.g., Indigenous liaison for Alzheimer's AU; juvenile justice)
- However, most are seeking opportunities for 4+2 supervision but they are extremely rare so students go elsewhere...usually more rural or they move to urban centres.



# Student reports as an index of goals

- 95% of students surveyed in my Year 2-3 units in Psychological Assessment and Abnormal Psychology report that they, “Don’t know if they will do research or clinical...it depends on whether I can get into clinical training or find a good supervisor who doesn’t charge a fortune”.
- “I prefer to stay local or even work in a rural community but I hear the supervision gets worse as you move West”.
- “I’ve already been counselling patients for years, I just need the Psych degree so I can bill Medicare. I’ll just find someone who will get me through the required rego requirements”. **Our wish is that wise, ethical supervisors will address this thinking.**

# What key employers want

- The University and Disability Sector Psychology Reference Group Statement (ADHC, Dr David Manchester et al, 2012)
- Identify the skills required of new graduates to inform universities and enable students to be **more work ready for the disability sector** and the professional development needs of psychologists once employed.
- **New graduates rely heavily on their student experiences to make decisions on their employment.**

# ADHC wishes for skills in new grads

- Uses an ***evidence based practice framework***
- Demonstrates an application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) as it relates to disability.
- Uses ***outcome measurement tools*** for example psychology specific measures or more general measures such as Goal Attainment Scaling and Canadian Occupational Performance Measure
- Understands ***interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and multidisciplinary models of practice***



# More ADHC wishes

- **Demonstrates** an awareness of the principles and strategies of positive behaviour support for people with a disability, and the quality of life issues for people with disabilities across the lifespan
- **Utilises** a combination of direct, indirect and consultative (expert and collaborative) models of practice/service delivery , in home, school, community and centre based interventions
- **Demonstrates an understanding** of major aspects of the Disability Services Act (1993) and Disability Service Standards and their implications

\* Given the reported move to a “competence model” as opposed to regulating the course content in Psych training, how might all these skills be quantified/assessed?

# Specific Testing/Assessment Skills

Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System (ABAS-II)

**Bayley Scales of Infant Development - Third Ed**

**Developmental Behaviour Checklist**

**Griffiths Mental Development Scales - Extended Revised (2-8 years)**

**Griffiths Mental Development Scales – Ext Revision Pack (2-8 years)**

**Griffiths Mental Development Scales Revision Pack (0-2 years)**

Peabody Picture Vocabulary - Fourth edition

Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales - Fifth edition

Test of Nonverbal Intelligence - Third edition 2003

**Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales Survey Form- Second edition**

**Vineland II - Expanded Interview form**

Ways of Coping Questionnaire- Sample Kit 1998

**Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children - Fourth edition**

**Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence – 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed**

WAIS IV and Wechsler Non Verbal

# About Centrelink as Employer (Grant, J. personal communication)

3 main job roles for Psychology Grads

- Rural psychologists
- Job Capacity Assessors
- Organisational psychs in policy, planning and administrative jobs

*and*, ad hoc, crisis response, eg Victorian bushfires, Qld floods, 2005 tsunami, Bali bombing



# Rural psychologists

- largely a capacity building job, with some casework
- Duties (from recent job ad)
  - provide services to residents of rural communities, **including individual, couple and group counseling**
  - **develop and deliver a range of mental health training to meet the needs of the local community.** Provide psychosocial education to affected individuals and groups
  - work with small rural communities to **identify their needs and build their capacity**
  - liaise with community mental health services and professional health services providers within designated areas

# Centrelink employs as “Job Capacity Assessors”

- 460 Allied Health professionals including
- 280 with psychology training
- and 158 interns (all disciplines)

(there's a small number of psychologists in other psychology roles)

# Job Capacity Assessors

## Allied Health Professional - AHP 2010/0401

Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Exercise Physiologists, Registered Nurses, Psychologists and Social Workers

**3-Year trained psychology students are enticed by suggestions that future supervision could be available.**

APS 5 and 6 (Professional 1)

\$59,337 - \$73,351 \*\*Huge incentive



# Job Capacity Assessments - who's doing them?

- Registered psychologist 28%
- Non-registered “psychologists” 32%;
- Other allied health professionals – 40%
  - Registered Occupational Therapist 9%;
  - Accredited Rehabilitation Counsellor 8%;
  - Social Worker 12%
  - Registered Physiotherapist 3%;
  - Accredited Exercise Physiologist 3%;
  - Speech Pathologist <1%;
  - Registered Nurse 5%
  - Registered Medical Practitioner <1%

# Job Description

- *With a focus on achieving organizational outcomes, you will assess customer's capacity for work and recommend appropriate intervention and referral options to assist people into employment. Leadership and support will be provided by a senior Allied Health Professional (not necessarily a psychologist).*
- **The conflict between organisational goals tied to financial matters and ideals regarding helping others in ways defined by the client can create stress.**
- **\* SCU 4<sup>th</sup> year student working as a JCA was concerned that she was probably not qualified to provide services to those with schizophrenia or dual dx.**

## Job Capacity Account – Brief Interventions

| PHYSICAL SUPPORT                | SOCIAL SUPPORT                | PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT                |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Pain management                 | Social casework and support   | Cognitive Behaviour Therapy          |
| Physical work conditioning      | Counselling programs          | Behaviour management & modification  |
| Other physical support programs | Other social support programs | Other psychological support programs |

***All interventions***

***must have a***

***clear work focus.***

## Do it all FAST!!!!

You're allowed one 50 minute interview with each client before and whilst writing your assessment report. **You have to write 5 reports each day.**

*How do you reconcile need to do reports “within short deadlines” and “professional” standards regarding best practice?*



# CENTRELINK PSYCHOLOGISTS PROFESSIONAL ISSUES - SUMMARY

- **Role conflict** between you as the psychologist and you as the bureaucrat
- **Competing priorities** for limited resources – money, time and expertise
- **Conflict of interest** between the customer's needs and your professional interests (keeping your job)
- **Generic role expectations** – all allied health professionals are the same (integrity of the professions)
- **Performing within the limits of your expertise**
- **Ideological conflicts** (withholding payments from disadvantaged or mentally ill clients)
- **Multidisciplinary teamwork**

*Would it be different in any other workplace?*

# Review of Employer Advertisements re: desired Graduate Attributes

Trevor Carlyon & Jacquelyn Cranney (UNSW)

Based on a review of both PUBLIC SECTOR AND NGO ADVERTISEMENTS FOR NEW GRADUATES included the following language in POSITION DESCRIPTIONS:

**Are these all part of Psychology Literacy??**

- UNDERSTANDING **COMPLEXITY**
- MANAGING **CHANGE**
- **EVIDENCE-BASED** POLICY AND PRACTICE
- **RESILIENCE**
- **COLLABORATIVE** APPROACHES
- **CLIENT-CENTRED** METHODOLOGY
- **SUCCESS MEASUREMENT**
- UNDERSTANDING **MOTIVATION**

# Employer Survey

(Trevor Carlyon & Jacquelyn Cranney (UNSW))

**What do you consider to be the strengths/weaknesses of 3<sup>rd</sup> yr psych major?**

## Strengths

- *good general psychology knowledge, willingness to learn*
- *basic research skills, statistics knowledge, numeracy skills*
- *strong SPSS statistical analysis skills i.e. using the software*
- *Psych background gives another perspective to how we approach research and with it they can more readily think of biases that we should account for*
- *a basic understanding of some of the dynamics of human behaviour; more importantly a clear interest in understanding it better*
- *Ability to think like a researcher/academic/intellectual*
- *Ability to identify a path from identifying to responding to problems/hypotheses*
- *Communication skills, analytical skills*
- *They have developed a particular way of considering problems*
- *Interest in psychology, computer skills, interpersonal skills, attention to detail*
- *meticulous work method, attention to detail*
- *desire to work in sector; personal qualities; thoughtful*

# Employer Survey

(Trevor Carlyon & Jacquelyn Cranney (UNSW))

## Weaknesses

- *Lack of commercial experience, **lack of understanding of how to leverage...theory into practical (marketing) application.***
- ***lack of practical experience; unrealistic work / income expectations***
- ***lack of clinical experience, but very high / insurmountable expectations of self***
- *Limited exposure to software other than SPSS*
- *relatively less rigour in report writing and practice of Masters graduates*
- *insufficient research experience, **exposure to applied psychology***
- *can't write properly, need supervision in basic **questionnaire design***
- *They are **not aware that they have developed a particular way of considering problems.***
- ***Don't know what they don't know***
- ***Little applied knowledge and few qualitative skills***
- ***Lack of real world commercial experience, general admin skills***
- *3 year (degree) is now **Pop Psychology** or little use in the **Psychology field***



# Employer Survey

Would you like to make any comment on the standard of **3- and 4-year undergraduate Psychology Graduates compared with graduates from other disciplines/professions?**

- *Generally **very bright** but **limited skills for professional services***
- *They lack exposure or experience at an **applied level** and most students would benefit from **placements** throughout there course, particularly in 3rd year*

# Feedback at the SCU Psychology Community Consultative Group

(graduates, employers, psych professionals, Indigenous elders)

- More practical experience with clinical psych populations and people with disabilities
- Grant writing training and experience
- Training in case management
- Inclusion of Indigenous mental health/wellness programs

# A small sample of concerning Feedback from Graduates in 4+2 NGO sites

- “My second day I was asked by the admin staff to see a woman who had been gang raped two days ago”
- “Even though I told them I had no clinical training or experience, they told me it’s **better than nothing** and made me feel bad by telling me, **if you don’t help them who will**. I had no onsite supervision and had only been there a week”.
- “My remote supervisor told me I was doing a great job but she had never heard or saw what I was trying to do in therapy with very upset clients”.
- “When I complained to my supervisor that my client who had recently been released from prison was threatening me sexually, she told me to tell him to find a prostitute to help him with that problem. I was terrified about going to work but I figured I just wasn’t a good therapist”
- “Some patients just refuse to do what I tell them to so I don’t understand why they complain about not having more than 6 sessions”.

## **Development for the Workplace unit (PDW). SCU-wide**

**Develops professional skills necessary for gaining employment in tourism and hospitality. Includes goal setting, job search skills, résumé writing, interview skills, insights into organisational behaviour and practical approaches to dealing with common workplace issues. A key component of this unit is the development of a personalised Professional Development Plan.**

### Content:

#### **Professional development and preparation for the workforce**

Topic 1: Managing your career – the science of success

Topic 2: The roles of personality and values in the job search process

Topic 3: Exploring the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as a career development tool

Topic 4: Understanding the application process

Topic 5: Interview and selection techniques

Topic 6: Experiential learning for internship and/or graduate positions.

#### **Organisational behaviour and workplace issues**

Topic 7: Goal setting and work–life balance

Topic 8: The role of emotions in the workplace

Topic 9: Problem solving and decision making

Topic 10: Contemporary issues in leadership

Topic 11: Power, politics and influence.

# SCU Work-Integrated/Experiential Learning Unit

- **Residential school for pre-professional skill development** (ethics, workplace prep, reflective exercises, job interview rehearsal and other career info, exploring expectations and finding job facts)
- Supplemental **Motivational Interviewing** trng (fee)
- Supplemental **Red Dust Healing Program** (fee)
- Choose 2 **experiential opportunities** (ACAT, observing ADHC behaviour support and psychology staff, interview healthy older adults, shadow mental nurses, or home nursing staff, etc...) from a suite of offerings. Arranged via Clin Placement Unit.
- **Reflective assignment and site staff feedback** (grading of feedback? Can it be used to affect letters of recommendation for clinical programs?)
- What if you find that a student demonstrates personality features that are “inconsistent with a career in clinical psychology”?



# **Psych Board description of “Practice” for purposes of deciding whether a provisional psych’s work outside a placement counts**

- Section 4.2 of the Guidelines specifies that psychological practice involves the **application of psychological knowledge, methodology, principles, techniques and ethical standards to individual clients, groups or organisations.**
- **Does a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Psych student offering CBT workshops in a substance abuse program as a “cadet” count?**

# Based on the Psych Board Recency of Practice Guidelines

- **Practice** means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a psychologist in their profession. For the purposes of this registration standard, **practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct nonclinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.**

**\*The NSW Psychology Tribunal and the HCCC use these terms to restrict activities of registered and previously registered individuals.**

# Current Conclusions

- **Experiential activities may increase student knowledge** re: workplace conditions, their fit with the profession as defined in different ways and **increase likelihood of employment or clinical training**, but this has not been tested. How do we market them?
- **Preparatory units have been effective in other disciplines** in terms of reflective work and generic workplace skills and knowledge but not tested for psychology-specific content.
- **Contrasts between idealised views of practice and level of support may not match reality**, especially in over-taxed agencies in rural and remote communities. **Expert supervision is key.**

# Regarding Fostering the Illusion of Competence

- I believe **extreme caution is warranted re: WIL for psychology.**
- **Significant individual differences in students** insight, knowing what they don't know, capacity to defend their right to good supervision and reactions to stressful placements.
- **Employers may be happy to allow a wide range of experiences.**
- **Vetting placement contacts and experiences, and screening students during pre-placement** has been recommended in other disciplines (e.g., engineering, teaching) and may guard against behaviours that may result in negative experiences for students and those with whom they have contact. Serial monitoring.
- **How complaints regarding undergrad involvement at various levels in the community will be managed remains a mystery** and what constitutes acceptable placement activities remains unclear.