

Stepping outside the university clinic

PREPARING STUDENTS TO PRACTICE

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CQUniversity's Bachelor of Oral Health (BOraHlth) is the only program of its kind in Queensland. It is based at the Rockhampton campus on Darumbal Country, and commenced in 2012. The course emphasizes work-integrated learning (WIL) to prepare students for their future careers, advocate for the oral health profession, and address community needs.

The curriculum seamlessly integrates Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences, allowing students to progressively enhance their practical exposure in pre-clinical, clinical and non-traditional settings. The CQUniversity campus boasts an excellent oral health simulation facility and private dental clinic, and off-campus placements across Queensland offer abundant opportunities for students to develop crucial skills in the public sector and specialist dental clinics.

The acquisition of portable dental equipment by the CQUniversity health clinic has significantly expanded students' opportunities to provide dental care to underserved populations who face transportation, financial, or access barriers. Venturing beyond the confines of traditional clinical bays also exposes students to the potential expansion of their roles as dental clinicians. They can participate in WIL experiences in diverse settings, including over 55 communities, residential care facilities, drug rehabilitation centres, and schools and childcare centres, where they conduct dental examinations and treatment, and deliver oral health education.

Additional off-campus WIL experiences encompass community engagement activities such as Regional City Council Staff Wellness Expos, Bunning's staff wellness programs, high school career expos, Homeless Connect initiatives, parent groups, young mums and bubs groups, disengaged youth centres, community events with allied health partners such as The Beach Day for Disability Awareness and Little Deadlies Day, special schools visits, and collaborations with radio and TV networks.



Public dental clinic



Childcare visits



Rehabilitation in-patient facility



Screening at Indigenous kindergarten



Mouthguard clinic



Mount Isa public dental clinic placement



Mount Isa hospital ward visit



Screening at a childcare centre



Pop up event with School Based Health Nurse



Homeless Connect



Residential care visit



Hand hygiene at a kindy



Radio interview



Dietary advice with school children at Mount Isa.



Council Wellness Day



REFLECTIONS

Students reflect on the opportunity to provide dental services beyond traditional setups, utilising skills acquired in the classroom with the guidance of clinical educators. The experience nurtures a deeper understanding of community needs and enhances students' capacity to serve effectively upon graduation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To enrich dental education further, programs should seek broader WIL opportunities. By exploring alternative settings and engaging with the community, institutions can foster meaningful learning experiences and better prepare future oral health professionals to tackle real-world challenges.