

Additional file 3

To be read alongside article “Study supports for rural mature-aged university health students: a Stakian multicase study” published in BMC Medical Education.

Authors: Quilliam, C., Crawford, N., McKinstry, C., Buccheri, A., & Brito, S.

Additional file 3 provides supplementary information regarding potential supports identified by participants.

Potential supports identified by participants

Table 1. Potential supports for mature-aged nursing and allied health students studying at rural campuses.

| Categories | Case one | | | Case two | | | Case three | | | Exemplar quotes |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Acknowledge the rural, mature-aged student cohort | Enrol more mature-aged students | Acknowledge mature-aged students juggle responsibilities in course planning | Increase mature-aged student committee representation | Draw on mature-aged student knowledge to improve student supports | Provide childcare | | Support mature-aged students by increasing staff awareness of their circumstances | Offer information or events for their family/children to feel a part of university life | Raise awareness for lifelong learning opportunities/professional development | <p><i>Maybe having a specific seat or couple of seats for someone who is mature-aged [on the student board] or even having a separate mature-aged student [working group], whatever, would work. ... Because then you're getting that that voice from different... someone who's mature-aged, along with someone who's just younger and coming out of high school... (case one, student, participant 8)</i></p> <p><i>Maybe childcare for some of the students 'cause I know a few, they have kids and sometimes if there's no-one to look after the kids at home they cannot come to school... or the clinic. So I think that's a very good idea. Like on campus childcare. (case two, student, participant 21)</i></p> <p><i>I think if the students' families feel like they're part of it or feel supported in some way then the students are gonna be able to achieve much more, you know, able to be successful. (case three, student, participant 9)</i></p> |
| | Ensure mature-aged students understand course workload | Develop university employee module on mature-aged student study experiences | Recognise mature-aged student intent | | | | Re-introduce face-to-face supports that existed prior to COVID-19 restrictions, but have since moved online | Employ staff based on the Campus who work specifically with the Campus students | Ensure supports are regionally centred, rather than designed for metropolitan students and contexts | |
| | Re-market part time study | | | | | | Ask students what supports they need | | | |
| Foster connections between mature-aged students | Develop mature-aged student social networks | Establish mature-aged study support technology networks | Foster parent study group development | Offer mature-aged student social events | Provide interdisciplinary and cross-year social events | Establish peer mentoring | Tailor social events for rural, mature-aged students (as opposed to duplicating events designed for | Facilitate connections between mature-aged students in different courses | Provide extracurricular events that foster learning and connecting with peers | <p><i>They could even start kind of like... study groups... You know how you like there's the mum and kid fitness classes; but if they had mum and kid study class... Something like that would be awesome, where the kids could</i></p> |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| | | | | | | | school-leaver students in metropolitan areas) | | | socialise and go and play, you know, over here and we could like study over here. (case one, student, participant 19) |
| | Establish local rural allied health networks | | | | | | | | | Some like peer mentoring sort of opportunities... would be nice. I know it's hard... but... whether we could schedule a time to meet together, um, and... meet up with other students, have a chat about their experience, share our experience. And, yeah, especially getting, you know, the older students' perspective on placement and stuff like that. (case two, student participant 13) |
| Make university more affordable for mature-aged students | Provide adequate financial supports | Local health services financially supporting students | Pay students to join the health workforce | Provide fit-for-purpose scholarship funding (flexible spending) | Offer merit-based scholarships | Provide placement childcare payments | Raise local financial support for mature-aged students | Offer subsidies in the local community (e.g., subsidised gym membership) | Provide on campus financial support staff | <i>I think, some mature-aged grants and scholarships would be absolutely fantastic... There are ... options for scholarships and things like that, [but] they're generalist kind of ones. They're not um, specifically directed at um, mature-aged students (case one, student participant 8)</i> <i>1,000 hours of unpaid placement is absolutely brutal. ...The financial strain on myself, it's really difficult. And I have a very supportive partner who is covering my part of the rent and everything like that. So I'm really struggling, and I'm in a really privileged position. And I'm providing my free labour to the hospital, I'm holding a caseload. I'm there full-time. And I'm getting nothing. It doesn't have to be a full-time wage, but just something would be a massive help. (case two, student, focus group)</i> |
| | Develop mature-aged student grant criteria | | Create cadetships/ traineeships for rural mature-aged people | Offer paid placements | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| | | | | | | <p><i>[Need to] have ... the financial support person, who would be on campus, be able to assist us with those type of scholarship supports because a lot of the time students do need [support]. ... I haven't applied for scholarships yet because I just don't know how to (case three, student, focus group)</i></p> |
| Prepare mature-aged students for university and workforce entry | Offer pre-semester general technology seminars | Develop a rural-specific job website | Offer pre-enrolment education (what to expect at university) | Provide more opportunities to work in healthcare before graduation | Facilitate health professionals mentoring mature-aged students | <p><i>Probably looking at opportunities for traineeships for... perhaps your allied health assistant who wants to retrain as an OT, or your enrolled nurse who wants to retrain as an RN, and perhaps is someone who's either in the workplace or in the community... And ... that's probably... a bit of a symbiotic approach between the health service who absolutely has a vested interest and then the...education provider as well. (case one, placement supervisor, participant 4)</i></p> <p><i>I think we need to look at some way [of]... making [that information] available to commencing students. ... So, you know, they do get their head around... how to connect to [the university internet], making sure their email's set up, making sure they understand how to print on campus. (case two, staff, participant 26)</i></p> |
| | Use suitable support technology | | Provide orientation to university logistics | Promote supports more directly | Host career exhibitions | |
| Adapt course content | Deliver content suited to mature-aged career development | Provide additional resources (including utilizing existing university resources) to | Recognise prior learning/life experience by providing exemptions for relevant core subjects or an entry point for | | | <p><i>I would like a little bit more input from staff about directions that the career could take you. ... I want to actually see that... career planning and I think that probably is a mature-aged</i></p> |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| | supplement online learning | mature-aged students | | | | | | | | way to think. (case one, student, participant 14) |
| | Offer learning tool demonstration s | | | | | | | | | I just wonder whether the uni could maybe do a bit more promotion of some of these things [supports] ...It might be nice if, you know, [support] people popped in and introduced themselves and, asked if you have questions. (case two, student, participant 13) |
| Develop inclusive teaching and learning practices (delivery) | Maintain blended subject delivery to suit mature-aged students | Hold classes at times that suit parents | Allow students to choose group work colleagues | Provide course flexibility | Offer micro- credentials | Develop online options for mature-aged students | Offer inclusive assessment deadlines for mature-aged students | Provide flexibility in course offerings | Provide flexibility in scheduling/ timetabling | I guess just as a mother, having classes that don't go too late [would help]. (case one, student, participant 20) We have a cohort of people who are off working in the field ... but the commitment of they have to sign up for four years full-time or, or whatever – this traditional degree pathway – it's, it's too much for them. But if they could do some micro- credentialling along the way, but in a way that it can be additive and that that'll count towards the next bit, and they can pop in and do a bit, do that, pop out and go back to the workforce, come in again. (case two, staff, participant 28) It would be really helpful if, you know, for future quizzes if they could stay open like on a weekend, um, just because I know that I'm not the only person in that situation [being a parent and working]. (case three, student, participant 30) |
| | Offer more one-on-one supports | Reduce focus on group work | Organise classes to support mature-aged students to continue health workforce employment | Provide student led extra classes for catching up on content | Offer more flexibility with extensions | Use a collaborative approach to staff supporting students (case management) | | | | |
| | Reach out further into the region | Provide face-to- face lectures and labs for rural (distance) students | | Provide tutors for mature- aged students | Hold specific classes for mature-aged students | | | | | |
| Enhance placement success | Plan for mature-aged student placements | Support part- time placements | Create shorter placements | Foster a culture shift around placement flexibility | Conduct earlier preparation for flexible placements | Restructure placements | Preparation prior to placement commencemen | Offer additional support during placement | Advocate for student study leave from employment | Well, give us jobs in the local area, placements in the local area for where we're going to work. In the long-term... help us to get to make |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| | | | | | | t/offer clear expectations | | | <i>connections in our local community, so that when we're getting to graduation, we can go to such and such clinic down the road and go, 'I've done my placement here. I know this community.'</i> (case one, student, participant 12) |
| Keep placements close to home | Use placements to create local work opportunities for mature-aged local people | Couple mature-aged students on placement | Formalise conjoint nursing appointments | Approach placement stakeholders beyond the university | Establish connections with rural GPs to implement placement vaccination program | Ensure placement supervisors are supported | Provide on campus placement liaison officer | Improve communication between university and health services regarding placement responsibilities | <i>I suppose we could formalise that process a bit better in ... sending out a survey before they start [placement] about what supports do you need. We could get a little bit better at identifying things earlier rather than on the first day.</i> (case two, placement supervisor, participant 23) |
| Facilitate students bringing families on placement | Create flexible placements hours | Improve university-host organisation communication prior to placement | Keep placement work at the placement site | Fully fund external placements for mature-aged students | | Offer financial support for student placements | Implement an internship model | | <i>One of the supports you can give a mature-aged student is study leave in their current place of employment, but not many, some of the agencies don't have very clear policies around that.</i> (case three, placement supervisor, participant 24) |