

Flinders University Department of Health Management

Statement of Graduate Attributes

Purpose and Context

This statement outlines the desired outcomes of the Flinders Health Management Program for graduates. Its purpose is to serve as a set of criteria against which our educational programs, the curriculum on which they're based and the teaching methods by which they're delivered, can be planned and evaluated.

Our goal is to prepare health and aged care managers for leadership success. Through helping our students to rise to the leadership and management challenges that face health and aged care organisations, we contribute to improving the effectiveness of health and aged care services.

We use the term 'attributes' to signify the knowledge, skills, leadership abilities and ethical base that are needed by successful managers in health and aged care.

Our program focuses on management as a professional and personal practice, as well as on its theoretical foundations and technical systems. Accordingly, our educational programs have the following characteristics:

- *Targeted to managers and professionals:* we do not accept students who lack practical experience in the health/aged care sectors.
- *Emphasis on practical skills:* all topics focus on the application of theories, systems, methods and skills to the challenges managers face.
- *Strong theoretical underpinnings:* theory provides a framework or 'language' for understanding, analysing and discussing management practice, the causes of problems and the logic of systems and strategies. A strong theoretical base enables managers to think rationally, exercise good judgement and apply knowledge, evidence and logic to problems and solutions.
- *Grounded in the sector and its culture:* the health and aged care systems are unique, and managers need a combination of general management and system-specific education.
- *Informed by action learning theory:* the really difficult issues faced by managers are not resolvable with textbook knowledge alone. Questioning insight into personal practice (the ability to 'see oneself' in the midst of the action) and versatility (the ability to steer the course of the action through different ways of playing leadership roles) are needed, along with deep knowledge of the way organisations really work.

We therefore use an adult learning approach in which:

- students can relate the subject matter to their own experience and work setting
- active contribution to small group discussions and tasks is expected
- students recognise and respect the value of their classmates' contributions
- each student embarks on a pathway of personal growth and development
- students will be encouraged to think critically and challenge points of view with intellectual rigour
- students will acquire a set of core practical health management skills as well as strong conceptual and analytical skills
- respect for other people's cultures and needs will be fostered.

The Attributes

We have drawn on data from workshops we conducted with employers and past and present students, and a survey of students; research conducted with the College of Healthcare Executives in the USA and the NHS in the UK; and statements developed by the Australasian College of Health Service Management and La Trobe University. The attributes we seek for our graduates are presented in five main domains, containing 27 attributes, described below. All listed domains are important and are not ranked in priority order. They have been written to be adaptable to the appropriate level of competence for each qualification.

1 Healthcare Operations Management

Graduates use theoretical and practical knowledge and skills to improve performance in health and aged care.

Graduates should be able to:

- 1.1 Make decisions based on evidence and sound judgement, drawing constructively on available theory and models of practice, as well as full appraisal of circumstances;
- 1.2 Interpret and use information and data to support good decision-making;
- 1.3 Manage people for good performance, and practice in accordance with human resource management principles;
- 1.4 Ensure safe practice in their areas of responsibility, for staff, clients, the community, and themselves;
- 1.5 Develop organisational plans and strategic directions;
- 1.6 Articulate organisational performance goals, align systems and strategies to achieve them, and analyse and measure outcomes;
- 1.7 Lead and manage change and innovation;
- 1.8 Identify, design, plan and manage projects.

2 Interpersonal, communication and team work skills

Graduates work effectively in a multidisciplinary team environment, and apply sound interpersonal skills.

Graduates should be able to:

- 2.1 Communicate effectively with colleagues, clients and the public, through the use of various communication strategies and supporting media;
- 2.2 Work independently and as part of a team, with appreciation of the roles and skills of health professionals and all staff;
- 2.3 Work to elicit the best from team members and hold them to account
- 2.4 Negotiate and resolve conflict;
- 2.5 Relate effectively with others using insight into their own behaviours and motivations.

3 Patient or client and community focus

Graduates apply their knowledge and skills to ensure that services and programs meet patient or client and community needs.

Graduates should be able to:

- 3.1 Acquire and use information about health status, the burden of disease, socioeconomic determinants of health and of access to care and local and regional community issues and priorities;
- 3.2 Optimise the organisation and management of health care services to achieve the best possible outcomes for patients, clients and communities;
- 3.3 Manage services so that individual components contribute as much as possible to an effective continuum of care for patients and clients;

- 3.4 Identify and implement the necessary principles and practices to provide care to culturally and socially diverse communities;
- 3.5 Apply an appreciation of the rights of patients and clients to the operation of their services.

4 Leadership, politics and ethics

Graduates have the ability to lead within their work environment, and accept their ethical responsibilities.

Graduates should have:

- 4.1 Confidence, strength and the ability to inspire others;
- 4.2 Ability to communicate desired organisational visions, to facilitate action and implement change;
- 4.3 Resilience to manage their own workloads and the stresses of leadership;
- 4.4 Act with personal integrity, consistent with ethical professional practice in health care and a strong commitment to their work;
- 4.5 Advanced judgement, integrating knowledge, experience, rational ability, creativity and intuition;
- 4.6 Ability to practice in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements;
- 4.7 Ability to identify the implications of political, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors for their organisations, staff and communities, and respond to policy and practice developments.

5 Financial management

Graduates are able to manage organisational resources and infrastructure.

Graduates should be able to:

- 5.1 Interpret and use financial information for operational management, for decision-making and for planning;
 - 5.2 Plan, acquire, manage and evaluate organisational resources and infrastructure.
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