

An interactive approach to preparing final year veterinary students for work-integrated learning

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For veterinary students at the University of Queensland, there is a distinct transition between the didactic, lecture and tutorial-based learning of the pre-clinical years and the work integrated learning (WIL) of final year. Unfamiliarity with WIL can make the transition to clinical rotations challenging and stressful. An interactive workshop was designed, implemented and evaluated for fourth year students about to embark on their final, clinical year. Focusing on the sociocultural aspects of learning in clinical workplaces, this workshop aimed to assist participants to understand how WIL works, raise awareness of the facilitators and barriers to learning, and provide practical strategies. Integrating into the clinical team, managing peer group dynamics, asking and answering questions, fatigue/stress management and recognizing learning opportunities are among the topics covered. The relevance and usefulness of the workshop was evaluated by a focus group, as well as written feedback, from students who had completed their clinical training and who had either observed or participated in one of the workshops. Field observations also identified instances where learning practices evolved as a result of participation in the workshops. Equipping students with an understanding of the educational theory behind WIL, contextualised to the veterinary clinical environment, along with practical strategies derived from data collected from staff and students, has been shown to have a positive effect on the veterinary student experience of WIL.