

2024 Student Placement Survey Report



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

going
rural health

Introduction

Going Rural Health (GRH) supports nursing and allied health students to complete a clinical placement in a rural setting in regions of Victoria. The GRH team supported 1132 students to undertake a rural placement in 2024, including 169 students that were supported more than once. At the completion of their placement, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire to provide feedback on their placement. A total of 449 students completed the survey (40%), an increase from 2023 (approx. 25%).

The 2024 survey uses an updated version with additional questions. This survey also introduced a new scoring system for many questions using a rating scale of 0-100. A summary of results is presented here.

Student Demographics

GRH supported students from 13 different universities as well as one TAFE. Of these students, 83% identified as female and 2% as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The average age was 24 years. Just over a half (57%) of the students had grown up in a rural, regional or remote area. Further, 52% were studying nursing and midwifery and 48% were studying an allied health discipline. For more than half of the students (56%) this was not their first rural placement.

Overall Placement Satisfaction

The average score of participant rural placement satisfaction was 87 (scale 0-100)

Most students reported they were very satisfied with their rural placement, as 4 out of 5 respondents rated their experience at 80 or over (out of 100), with the average being 87.

Of those surveyed, 95% indicated that as a student they were 'received positively by staff on placement' and 92% indicated that they felt 'included in the team'. Further, 88% said they had 'opportunity to learn with other students', and 88% said they had access to adequate resources.

Student Learning During Placement

The average score of participant rural placement supervision satisfaction was 89 (scale 1- 100)

Overall, student education during rural placement was reported favourably by the students.

Most students were positive about their rural placement supervision; half of the participants rated their rural placement supervision above 94, and they also rated highly how well they were supported to work independently, with 50% rating this over 90. The majority of the students (93%) reported they felt their supervisor supported them to work within their scope of practice, 93% indicated their supervisor helped them develop their problem-solving skills, and 95% said they had the opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice. Most students reported that supervisors facilitated reflective practice (85%), and the majority (89%) reported that they learnt from their supervisor's experiences.

There were a few students who commented less favourably about their supervision. There were reports of difficulty with access to supervision given supervisors were working part time, or having multiple part time supervisors, a common situation in rural practice. One student commented: *I had 3 supervisors during my placement, which allowed me to observe how they all complete things both clinically and non-clinically differently. However sometimes this resulted in conflicting advice.*

A few nursing students reported that the clinical educator did not spend enough time with them and that supervisors were 'too busy for students'. *As a student I felt very unsupported by the clinical educators; I found they were hard to approach and made me feel very uncomfortable and intimidated. I very rarely saw them on the ward and when I did I felt like their interactions with me were passive aggressive and not supportive.*

Impact of their Placement

Student reports were positive about the impact of activities during their rural placement.

Students said they felt their work during the placement was valued. Overall, 90% of those that responded said that they felt they contributed to the health service and 94% reported that they felt they contributed to the patients and the community. Students were also asked to rate the impact of participating in community activities on improving their placement experience. Half of the respondents reported a score of 80 or above, out of a possible score of 100.

Students were also asked to rate how well participating in community activities improved their placement experience. More than half (55%) of respondents reported a score of 80 or greater (out of 100).

Rural Practice

Half of students (50%) indicated that prior to their placement they would consider living and working in a rural, regional or remote area, and 20% of students were undecided. When asked if *'this placement has encouraged me to consider living and working in a rural, regional or remote area'*, half the respondents rated the question above 73 out of 100.

Going Rural Health Support

Of the students who responded, 63% had direct contact with GRH staff. Of these, 75% reported they agreed that GRH staff positively contributed to their placement experience through good communication, being supportive, providing financial assistance and accessible accommodation, providing education and workshops, resolving issues and answering questions, and providing mentoring support. A number of students mentioned how the financial support provided by the GRH programme reduced their financial burden and stress on placement. However, there were many comments that rural placements were costly, and the bursary did not cover all expenses. Some students reported that they had not heard of the GRH support until their clinical educator let them know, or other students told them, or they found out at the end of their placement.

'Going Rural team were amazing throughout my whole placement. Made continued contact throughout the placement. Offered support. Made up for my university lack of support.'

Students were asked about their accommodation during placement. Of those who utilised health service or University of Melbourne accommodation, 78% reported that they were satisfied with their accommodation. The most common reasons reported for dissatisfaction were cost and availability.

Service Learning

Of all GRH students who completed the survey, 16% reported that they had undertaken a service learning placement and a further 32% were unsure if their placement was service learning.

On service learning placements, students use their skills to provide a health service that would otherwise not be provided. During these placements, students provided:

- Allied Health therapy for primary & secondary students with a disability
- Speech pathology in primary schools and kindergartens
- Social skills & emotional regulation groups for schools
- Projects and therapy for schools & community groups
- Transitional care & rehabilitation after surgery or injury
- Allied health and music therapy in aged care.

Of the 69 survey participants who indicated they completed a service learning placement, the reported ratings of placement satisfaction were high, with 50% of respondents rating it 90 or above (out of 100). When asked how supported they felt to work independently, 4 out of 5 of respondents rated this 80 or greater (out of 100).

In terms of the impact of the placement, a summary of responses is listed in Table 1 below. Supervision was rated very highly, with 50% rating it over 95 (out of 100), with an average of 87.

Table 1: Placement impact – opinions of participants

Impact	Response rate
Contributed to patients or community	95%
Supervision sessions facilitated reflective practice	91%
Developed problem solving skills	90%
Had influence over their learning	90%
Received useful supervisor feedback	84%
Had opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice	84%

Improvements for Placements

Participants were asked what could have improved their placement experience. Most of the respondents indicated that *'nothing was needed.'* However, some suggestions for improvements included additional financial assistance and accommodation, more support or communication from their home university, and having peer support (i.e. a paired placement) to assist with learning and mitigate loneliness were reported.

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