



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Medical Student Aspirations and Support Strategy 2021-2023



Introduction

The UQ Medical Student Aspirations and Support Strategy (2021-2023) aims to strengthen the culture, pathways, and processes of support for medical students. It outlines the services and approach provided by the Medical Student Support Team (MSST), Academic Guidance Leads, Personal Advisor Network (PAN), Academic Lead for Medical Careers and MD program academic and professional staff.

Our ultimate aim is to enable all students to reach their full potential.

It builds on our Medical Student Support Strategy (2018-2020). Over the last three years, we have been working hard to facilitate a culture of sustainable proactive and reactive student support through all levels of the medical program. Learning from the experiences gained through the implementation of the Medical Student Support Strategy (2018-2020), we present the following key focus areas for 2021-2023:

Key focus areas

1. Faculty organisation, planning and policy

Our students are part of a community of collegiate support. Student support and guidance is embedded as core business throughout the medical program. Excellence in student support is central to our culture and curriculum.

Individualised learning and career advice, mentoring, reactive support, academic guidance and remediation, and specific targeted proactive support at key transition points, such as upon entry to the Medicine Program, commencement of full-time clinical placements, assessment periods and in preparation for internship, is provided. We provide specific support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students, and students with disabilities.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

Student support and academic guidance has been successfully embedded within the program with increased engagement in support activities since the introduction of the Medical Student Support Strategy in 2018. This work will continue with key areas being to:



- Refine and strengthen regular communication with students through the community blackboard sites, improving newsletters and introducing face to face webinars which have proved successful during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Improve clarity for students and staff about the role of student support and guidance services and emphasise the separate and confidential nature of the medical student support team service from academic guidance, career advice and mentoring services.
- Continue to develop and implement professional development opportunities for staff, especially those in clinical schools/units, to enhance the culture, structures, and processes of providing support to students.
- Exploring in collaboration with students' ways to improve support for LGBTQI+ students.

2. Supporting student wellbeing

To support the mental health and wellbeing of medical students, the Faculty of Medicine engage Student Services to provide targeted support services through the Medical Student Support Team (MSST). This team was established in 2018 as part of the Medical Student Support Strategy. The MSST plays no role in the provision of academic advice or academic progression decision making and safeguards student confidentiality. This is key to removing any perceived barriers to students seeking support. As aligned with the [Every Doctor, Every Setting: A National Framework for coordinated action on the mental health of doctors and medical students](#) the MSST has strategies in place to respond to the needs of individuals and provide education and resources on preventative mental health strategies to the cohort.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

The MSST will:

- Normalise help seeking behaviours and assist students to develop skills and resources to manage stress and improve wellbeing.
 - Support students during the identified key transition periods: commencement of the program, commencement of full-time clinical placement and in preparation for internship upon graduation.
 - Raise awareness in the student cohort about the services and resources available through Student Services including the Disability, Diversity and Inclusion team who assist with the provisions of student access plans, the UQ Learning Advisors who assist students to build key skills to support their learning and the UQ Crisis and Counselling Team.
 - Develop and provide a range of tailored, proactive activities and resources designed to improve the mental health of students and to assist students to develop skills in identifying and responding to peers who may be experiencing a mental health challenge.
 - Continue to improve and develop strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of medical students including self-care and wellbeing resources focussing on preventative mental health strategies and signposting where to access support.
 - Collect and report de-identified appointment data on presenting conditions of students seeking support to assist in informing quality reviews and planning proactive education programs.
- Support individual students through appropriate triage and referral to relevant services in response to the student's individual needs, e.g. students returning to study after a period of ill-health, interruption to studies, personal crisis etc.
 - Provide targeted information and support to assist medical students who may be exposed to bullying, harassment and/or discrimination.
 - Respond to critical events and crises, e.g. provide support to the medical student community following critical incidents, perform welfare checks on students as referred by the community, and support students impacted by COVID-19.



3. Academic Guidance

Our aspiration is to enable all our medical students to reach their full potential. Academic guidance and remediation are offered to students experiencing difficulties with their medical studies. Guidance and advice on enrichment opportunities are also provided to high achieving students.

We use a collaborative and embedded stepped-care model of academic guidance and support. Evidence-informed strategies, matched to the level of need, are utilised. This stepped-care model ensures that:

- Leadership and culture underpin support for our students.
- Consistent advice and resources are provided to students.
- Student support is embedded in the curriculum.
- Students have access to personal advising and mentoring.
- There is proactive academic guidance for students identified as requiring extra assistance and for high achieving students.
- Students may be referred by a staff member, be identified through their performance in their studies or may self-refer for academic guidance and remediation.

In keeping with the principles of a stepped-care model, academic guidance is best provided within the clinical unit where the student is placed. Specific guidance is provided, as needed, by the relevant Course Coordinator and clinical educator. The Academic Guidance Leads provide case management support for staff and students in situations where there are complex needs.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

- Increased involvement of clinical unit staff in the proactive approach to identification of academically at-risk students and the provision of academic guidance and remediation.
- Continue a proactive approach to provision of academic enrichment opportunities and career guidance.
- Promote involvement of clinical unit staff in provision of appropriate extension activities for students who are able and keen to pursue these.
- Academic Guidance Leads will work in partnership with our clinical units, to develop





and enhance clinical site-based academic guidance and remediation initiatives and develop a triage and referral pathway for support, guidance and remediation.

- Academic Guidance Leads will support clinical unit academic staff, Course Coordinators, clinical teachers and Academic Leads to support individual students.
- Academic Guidance Leads will provide case management in cases where there are complex needs.

4. Medical Careers

Our students are provided with career advice and guidance. Initiatives have been implemented by our Academic Lead for Medical Careers. These include:

- The 'Building Your Medical Career' website was developed in 2019 as a platform to disseminate career information and resources and promote career opportunities to students.
- Careers information is provided in orientation and preparation programs.
- An inaugural medical careers conference ran in March 2019, and we engaged with medical

student groups regarding careers events initiated by our students.

- Individual careers advice is provided to medical students, in person and online.
- Formalised careers information is provided for our international students.
- A careers curriculum has been piloted with UQ employability.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

We will:

- Continue to support student-led initiatives such as careers events.
- Continue to develop, maintain, and update online careers resources.
- Work in partnership with the UQ Student Employability Centre.
- Work in partnership with our Heads of Mayne Academies in providing careers advice and recruiting career mentors.
- Embed a careers curriculum within the new medical program.

5. Diversity, Disability and Inclusion

Our program values diversity and inclusion. Students with disability are valued and supported. We are keen to explore effective ways of enabling more students from low socio-economic backgrounds to join our MD program.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

- Students with disabilities will continue to be valued and supported.
- We will continue to support all our students to participate in learning activities. Reasonable adjustments for students will be facilitated with student access plans.
- Review and improve the processes of communication of student access plans to relevant Faculty of Medicine stakeholders.
- Explore ways to support an increased number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to join and thrive in the MD program.

6. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

As set out in the UQ Reconciliation Action Plan (2019-2022), *“Our vision is to build a strong sense of belonging in an inclusive UQ that works respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, and communities in teaching, learning, research and collaboration – embracing and enhancing the best of our nation’s and the world’s diversity.”* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are linked with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the time of admission into our program to enable provision of integrated and transformative support.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

We will:

- Continue to work with the UQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit to provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the time of admission.



- Continue to provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students including the additional pre-orientation program, tutoring in Years 1 and 2 through the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance and Retention (ITAR) program and OSCE preparation activities.
- Work with the Associate Dean (Indigenous Engagement) and their team to foster an environment of cultural safety.
- Facilitate participation of students in the annual Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) conference.

7. Personal Advisor Network and Personal Advisor Rural Network

The Personal Advisor Network (PAN) provides individualised support for our students and fosters a spirit of community and connectedness. It includes the Personal Advisor Rural Network (PARN) which supports students from a rural background and students interested in pursuing a career in rural and remote medicine.

Each student entering our MD program is invited to join the PAN or PARN and be assigned an appropriate personal advisor.

Personal advisors are members of UQ staff or have a formal UQ affiliation and have experience in medicine or in working with medical students.

As of 4 September 2020, 923 medical students from Years 1 to 3 and 422 personal advisors were involved in the PAN. Feedback shows that both students and advisors support this optional initiative continuing although there are some refinements needed to improve maintaining connectivity.

Focus and objectives 2021-2023

We will:

- Continue to offer all students a personal advisor.
- Conduct formal evaluation of the PAN and PARN schemes.
- Continue to recruit and train personal advisors.
- Review provision of support for staff including increasing clinical unit involvement.

Conclusion

The focus areas and objectives described in this Medical Student Aspirations and Support Strategy 2021-2023 outline our philosophical approach to student support and clarify the ways in which we commit to providing our students with support and guidance to enable them to achieve their full potential. Our goal is excellence in all-round student support and we will embed evaluation and ongoing improvements to maintain high standards.



For more information

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