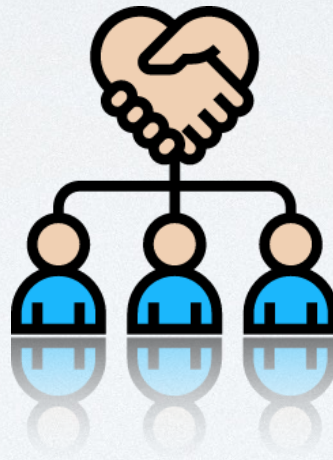


Assessment Case Study

Reflection Through Collaboration



Dr Abraham Francis - Provoking Social Work students to develop clinical and critical perspectives via a collaborative process of reflection and engagement.

Overview

In this JCU snapshot, assessment tasks are designed to provoke Social Work students to challenge their thinking and assumptions about mental health.

In this subject, learners are encouraged to articulate their views and perspectives on the evolution of mental health care and contemporary matters related to mental health practice and research.

Continuous, authentic assessment tasks are designed to promote a sense of curiosity about the subject topics and to demonstrate learners' professional growth and skill development. Students personally reflect on selected topics from critical and clinical perspectives. They post their reflections to the discussion boards to engage fellow students with their new understandings.

At the end of this collaborative process, students create a reflective statement of learning to showcase their journey of personal growth, understanding of the subject content and implications for their future practice. In this way, assessment is explicitly linked to students' future professional self, competence and future employability.

Valid. Fair. Authentic. Continuous. Transparent. Varied Methods.

About this subject

WS4503 Social Work & Mental Health

External Study Mode

Townsville Campus

Co-ordinator Dr Abraham Francis

Bachelor of Social Work

This subject aims to introduce students to critical, theoretical and applied issues in mental health practice. A particular focus of the subject is on social welfare practice, social justice and human rights approaches to mental health. An inter-sectoral analysis of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status are interwoven through the subject.

In this JCU snapshot, assessment is designed to help promote critical and reflective thinking and integrate students' personal experiences to formulate a sound

understanding of mental experiences to formulate a sound understanding of mental health and mental illness and the role of Social Work practitioners in the sector.

Students first assessment task is an essay on mental health care in Australia with a particular focus on human rights and social justice and the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Next, while students engage in weekly discussion boards, they post three critical blog-style reflections on any of the topics discussed. Students are encouraged to respond to other students' posts with formative feedback as part of a collaborative, peer learning process.

Finally, they develop a summative statement of learning that captures their individual journey and professional understanding. Formative feedback is provided in tutorials and via the peer review process to guide their thinking, writing and understanding of their role as a Social Worker in the mental health sector.



Learning outcomes

- ✦ Critically examine the ideas that inform the questions 'What is health?' 'What is mental health?' (including historical themes, medical models, sociological models, the social construction of madness, and the spectrum of interventions for mental health practice).
- ✦ Be conversant with the knowledge base and values of professional disciplines involved in the delivery of mental health services in Australia (ICD 11, DMS-5, multi-disciplinary teams, organisation of mental health services, alternative options for naming and responding to mental health issues).
- ✦ Understand conceptualisations of mental health and mental illness in relation to human rights and social justice.
- ✦ Gain an overview of mental health legislation and the shaping of social policy in relation to mental health in Australia.
- ✦ Integrate knowledge of mental health and mental illness with social work theories, skills and values.
- ✦ Explore the application of social work practice frameworks with diverse social and cultural contexts.

Assessment tasks

These next three tasks comprise 60% of total assessment weighting

Essay (40%)

- ✦ Students write a 2000 word essay on mental health care in Australia.
- ✦ Students need to discuss mental health care in Australia and focus on the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who are living with a mental illness.
- ✦ In doing so, they deliberate current policy directions and recent developments and their impact on those living with a mental illness. This helps them identify some of the gaps as well as potential solutions from a Social Work practitioner perspective.

Critically reflective blog-style entries x3 (50%) [Discussion Board]

- ✦ Students use the blog to demonstrate their understanding of the topics in the subject and to respond to them on a personal and professional level.
- ✦ They choose 3 topics from those offered across the 13-week subject.
- ✦ All students post a 300-500 word critical reflection on each of the three topics to the discussion board with appropriate references.
- ✦ Their posts need to demonstrate their engagement with their chosen topics and how they have critically reflected in response to the topic stimuli.

Comments on blogs (Hurdle) [Discussion Board]

- ✦ Students are required to read and peer review at least three critical reflections of three different peers in the subject and leave constructive feedback.
- ✦ They need to note the names of the students they have reviewed in the appendix of their statement of learning.

Statement of learning (50%)

- ✦ In addition to their three reflective posts, students provide a 1500 word summary of their learning experience across the whole subject.
- ✦ The statement of learning needs to articulate how they have achieved a deeper understanding of mental illness and mental health in social work in response to the subject content, their personal experiences and their critical reflections.

Challenges

- ◆ It is essential to get students thinking more about the *role* of a social worker in the sector
- ◆ Social work students need to better understand the tension between critical and clinical perspectives and consider the real human needs and social contexts of clients with mental health issues (e.g. from social justice, human rights perspectives) rather than a purely clinical understanding. In this way, they are better placed to work with clients, families, carers and multi-disciplinary teams in their future professional practices.
- ◆ Students need to be able to articulate what they stand for as a Social Worker, in terms of the knowledge, skill-base, and perspective they bring to their role.

Technologies

- ◆ The discussion board is used as a reflective blog as it essentially has similar functions (i.e. students can post their reflections, others can comment on these reflections, teachers can search, collate and mark student reflections).
- ◆ Safe Assign is used for all assessment tasks.

Tips

- ◆ Participation is important so think about why students should come to class (e.g. bring their own personal experiences, personal stories of practice, reflection on latest research and implications for practice, guest speakers – including past students).
- ◆ Be clear about your expectations of student performance.
- ◆ Talk about mistakes other students have made.
- ◆ Use peer input to help students see their own blind spots.
- ◆ Create a safe environment for students to express their views and perspectives.
- ◆ Provide timely and nurturing feedback to positively influence learner performance.
- ◆ Discuss high-level, global feedback on student work to unpack the meanings behind their assumptions as part of the learning process.
- ◆ Provide clear direction on how students establish and understand professional boundaries associated with sensitivities around subject content and self-disclosure.
- ◆ Highlight the relevance of the subject to the profession, drawing on experiences of graduates who have completed it.
- ◆ Clearly link assessment to employability and future careers.