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Preparing graduates for current and future practice is the responsibility of both the profession and universities. This paper reports on an evaluation of project oriented professional practice placements that are embedded in a health promotion module for graduate entry masters students at La Trobe University.

The study sought to evaluate a health promotion module to identify opportunities for quality improvement, particularly in preparing and supporting students undertaking health promotion project management placements. The study also aimed to establish evidence to support these placements, demonstrating the need and benefits to the wider profession.

The study used a mixed methods approach. Two cohorts of occupational therapy students were surveyed at the completion of their projects using a tool developed by the researchers. This survey used both open ended qualitative questions and closed questions to rate satisfaction and perceptions. Project sponsors from selected organisations were interviewed to explore perceptions of student learning and the benefits to the organisation. Qualitative data was thematically analysed, while descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data.

Students reported an increase in their confidence and skills to meet time-lines, communicate with relevant stakeholders and plan and deliver the required outcomes of the project. Project sponsors reported that students gained a surprising array of skills in addition to advancing important strategic priorities for the organisation. Some of the occupational therapy supervisors expressed concern that students were gaining generic skills at the expense of clinical skills. They did however recognise the value of project management skills for today's occupational therapists.

Project management placements are becoming more common in occupational therapy education. They reflect the need for graduates to obtain advanced practice skills to prepare them for current and future workplace requirements. Students require exposure to learning opportunities that are not readily available in traditional practice oriented placements.

Generic skills in areas such as project management, consultancy and the ability to work with communities and populations to enhance well-being are essential for our future occupational therapists. Increasingly therapists must possess skills such as project management to enable participation in occupation at the wider community level and influence policy to achieve this.