Slide 1

Supporting tertiary students with disabilities, mental illness and long term health conditions: Student and staff perspectives of what works

A program of research funded by NCVER

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March 10 2016

# Slide 2

# Current thinking about supporting students

Slide 3

# Our Research

## 2 Arrows: left pointing arrow states "Unfinished Business" and right pointing arrow states "Supporting Students".

##  Mental Illness Disability

## Slide 4

# Unfinished business: student perspectives on disclosure of mental illness and success in VET

## Research Aim and Method

To improve understanding of the factors influencing successful course completion for VET students with a mental illness from the perspectives of the students themselves.

# Cone shape with three circles inside and an arrow pointing down to the bottom of the cone: top left hand circle states 20 students; right hand circle states 4 sites; and bottom circle states: 20 staff.Slide 5

# Factors for course success- student and staff perspectives6 small hexagons form a circle around 1 large hexagon in centre: the first top centre hexagon states "the right course"; moving in a clockwise direction the second hexagon shape states "clear goals"; the third hexagon shape states "external supports"; the fourth hexagon shape states "regular attendance"; the fifth hexagon shape states "study support" and the sixth hexagon states "timely submission and feedback".  The large hexagon shape in the centre states "self reliance".

# Slide 6

# Disclosure of Mental Illness as the Start Button

* Support mechanisms are predicated on disclosure
* Previous research has focused on ways to increase rates of disclosure
* But…...

students have different understandings of disclosure than do staff and organisations

# Slide 7

# The Disclosure Dilemma

# Two arrows with a bar on an angle between the arrows: the top arrow facing down states "weighing up the benefits" and the bottom arrow facing upwards states "risk regret recovery".Slide 8

# The presentation of a better self:

# student perspectives

*Well if I, ah… say talk openly with my teachers about depression, or anything like that, you know, because they are in the industry I just fear that you know they...if one day they are to interview me for a job and you know… or to take part in a project, they will think, ‘Oh A, that’s the guy who was depressed… you know, he didn’t cope with his previous job, so he quit’... I just fear that kind of information, you know might escape, I know that this depression I’m going through is just a phase and not something that is going to last forever so, umm, I just want to keep it to myself … I just don’t want to be perceived as depressed, as a depressed person, a sad person, you know (Alain Site 1)*

# Slide 9

# “The right thing to do”: staff perspectives

* Student disclosure was seen as a means of opening the way for access to support services.
	+ Despite staff participants expecting students to disclose, they expressed an unwillingness to risk the social stigma potentially created by disclosure of mental illness for themselves.
* Moll, Eakin, Franche, and Strike (2013) hypothesise that staff disclosure decisions are unconsciously embedded in and “shaped by an institutional discourse on what it means to be a ‘good worker’” (p. 175) and so conceal signs of illness.
	+ Student disclosure decisions reflect a parallel process

# Slide 10

# VET Context & disclosure

# A large circle shape with a smaller circle in the centre and four oval shapes on the outside of the larger circle.  The small circle in the centre states "student and staff value and beliefs"; the first oval shape at the top of the circle states "legislative compliance"; the second oval shape on the right of the circle states "risk management"; the third oval shape at the bottom of the circle states "lack of resources" and the fourth oval shape on the left hand side of the circle states "unclear processes".

# Slide 11

# Supporting tertiary students experiencing disability and/or ongoing health conditions

## Research aims

To better understand the range of supports offered to students experiencing disability or health conditions disabilities, how these supports are implemented, and their usefulness to students’ learning from three viewpoints:

* Tertiary students experiencing disability or health conditions enrolled in a VET or university course
* Staff providing disability support to VET and university students
* Curriculum / course leaders

## Methods

* Guided by a reference group with expertise in VET and university student support and disability services
* Qualitative interviewing

# Slide 12

# Tertiary students, teaching and disability support staff interviews - differing but interconnecting issues & viewpoints on:

# Three cogs (small, medium and large); the first small cog on the left with an arrow turning around the left hand side of the cog states "7 disability support staff"; the top cog interconnecting with the small cog states "3 curriculum leaders" with an arrow turning around and the large cog also interconnecting along with an arrow turning around the cog states "25 student experiencing disability".

# 1) Provision of

# individualised

# reasonable

# adjustments

# 2) Use of

# institution-level

# learning

# supports

#

# 2 Sites

# Slide 13

# Student Learning Supports

# Two boxes one on the left and one on the right.  The box on the left with heading of "Reasonable adjustments individualised" states "Available to eligible students experiencing disability/health condition who register with VET providers disability service.  An individualised modification to the learning environment, certification requirements, training delivery or assessment method.  Put in place to reduce the impacts of registered student's disability/health condition of studying.  Purpose: To enable the student experiencing disability or ongoing health condition to access and participate in education or training on an equal footing with other students, in accordance with Australia's Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and Disability Standards for Education (2005).  NOT to advantage students with disabilities above other students to guarantee success, to alter course standards, outcomes or integrity.  The box on the right hand side with heading of "Institution-level learning supoprts" states "Available to all students enrolled at a VET institution to make use of: Learning supports provided by a VET provider, such as study skills, library and technical support; put in place to support student skills development and enhance their learning experience; and may be accessed without necessitating disclosure of disability or a health condition".Slide 14

# Main findings

Supporting tertiary students with disabilities is complex in practice:

* It involves not only identifying their learning support needs, but also negotiating and implementing learning supports
* Multiple people need to be engaged in these processes: students, teachers & disability staff.

Many types of individualised reasonable adjustments are used by students, reflecting:

* Diversity in students’ learning support needs
* Specific learning tasks, assessments and learning environments, for which the adjustments are intended.

Institution-level learning supports identified as useful for supporting these students’ learning were particularly those involving the use of information and communication technologies, and inclusive teaching practices

Learning supports for students with disabilities could be enhanced through more active use of institution-level learning supports, as well as individualised reasonable adjustments.

##

# Slide 15

# Provision of disability supports: 4 processes

Slide 16

# Good practice - WHAT kind of supports

# To offer my students?

Decisions about what supports/adjustments to offer should focus on the individual student’ needs

* Consult with the student, teachers/instructors, support people and/or technical experts to:
	+ identify learning and/or assessment tasks for which supports/adjustments are needed
	+ consider available options - students’ own strategies, learning supports available to all students, and reasonable adjustments
* Collaboration is key in selecting what supports / adjustments are appropriate, how best to implement them, and whether they are working

# Slide 17

# Reasonable adjustments – some examples

Flexibility in assessments

* Extended assessment due dates and/or changed assessment formats (eg, oral instead of written presentation) and submission methods (eg electronic instead of in person)

Changed assessment conditions

* Provision of a computer / recorder rather than hand writing / use of scribe
* Allowance of food and beverages, extended exam time and/or location in a quiet room

Provision of appropriate adaptive equipment (eg screen reader, audio recorder, adjustable seating, specialist software)

In-class support

* Making study materials and recordings of classes available online for more flexible access & review
* Note takers (who may sit with the student or separately depending on student’s preference)
* Participation support
* Re-formatting of course materials to accommodate specific impairments (e.g., large print, audio-recording)

Other academic support

* Course information provided in varied formats (e.g., printed, online, audio-books)
* Individual tutoring or study skills development
* Regular monitoring, encouragement and seeking feedback

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# Other learning supports to consider –

# some examples

# Slide 19

## Institution-level learning supports, eg

**Flexibility in learning activities or assessment formats**

**In-class support, eg**

* Teaching stress management & coping strategies in class
* Making class materials available online
* Providing ’revision’ classes to supplement regular teaching sessions

**Other academic support, eg**

* Course information in varied formats (e.g., print & online)
* Teachers being accessible (e.g., ‘open-door policy’, strategies to address accessibility when many staff are part-time/casual)

## Student initiated strategies, eg

* Using non-specialist equipment (eg, wheeled bags for carrying books)
* Using mobile devices to organise their schedules, develop study skills, or record, watch and listen to lessons
* Searching online for information resources/tools to assist with their studies
* Listening to audiobooks instead of printed books, where available
* Reducing study loads by studying part-time
* Using stress management strategies

# Enhancing inclusive learning supports

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# Further resources

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# Acknowledgments

* NCVER funding
* Participating TAFEs and universities in New South Wales and Victoria
* Student and staff participants
* Expert reference group – members from student services, curriculum development, student advocacy, and disability support services at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) & La Trobe University
* Research teams
	+ Annie Venville, Annette Street & Ellie Fossey
	+ Ellie Fossey, Lisa Chaffey, Priscilla Ennals, Annie Venville, Jacinta Douglas, Chris Bigby & Magnus Tideman