

Private Sector Pathways (PSP) Program

Challenge Statement Form

Challenge Title

Improving Student Retention for Mater Education's Diploma of Nursing.

Challenge Statement

In this challenge, Mater Education is seeking to improve course retention for students enrolled in the Diploma of Nursing, an 18-month program of study.

Mater Education is keen to identify potential technologies, products or services in Queensland that may help increase student retention.

Student retention is the measure of students that enrol, continue, and finish their academic studies in the same school or institution.

Courses greater than 12 months generally have a higher attrition rate. Pre-COVID, Mater Education's attrition rate was 20% over the duration of the program of study. However, this has increased to 35%. Most students opt out of study in the first semester.

Currently there are a range of individual and overlapping reasons why students leave study however the relationship between student stressors, their decision to withdraw from studies, and potential interventions is not clear.

Mater Education has a strategic imperative to develop the future healthcare workforce, and as part of that imperative is licenced to train up to 500 Diploma of Nursing students each year. This is a significant contribution to addressing the emerging national health care workforce challenge.

Challenge Owner

Since 1906, Mater has established itself as a core provider of exceptional healthcare services. The organisation has continued to grow, by bringing together its collective expertise and resources across health, education and research.



In 1998, Mater Education was established as a nationally accredited, independent, hospital-based Registered Training Organisation (RTO)—the only one of its kind in Queensland. Whether you want to enter the healthcare workforce, build on your existing skillset as a trained healthcare professional or lead professional development for your workforce, you can do so through our world-class programs, facilities and faculty.

Mater's Commitment

Mater Education is committed to building an exceptional healthcare workforce through excellence and expertise in education. Best-practice health and community care is at the heart of everything Mater does, and it's through their hands-on and immersive education that they deliver real-world impacts in healthcare.

Mater's Locations

Mater Education operates from a range of Mater healthcare hubs located across Queensland. Their specialised healthcare courses are hosted within a range of facilities and teaching spaces of various sizes, designed to comfortably facilitate lectures, tutorials, workshops and seminars. Their healthcare hub locations are:

- Newstead
- Redland
- South Brisbane
- Springfield
- Townsville
- Rockhampton.

Why Mater Education?

Hospital Based campus'

- Purposefully integrated and delivered onsite across Mater's range of Queensland campuses, to give you a more comprehensive and immersive study experience.

Expert guidance

- Highly qualified educators, clinical facilitators, and student services team to support you every step of the way.

World-class facilities

- Mater Education is a leading provider of interprofessional healthcare education, training and simulation, with world-class clinical simulation programs, facilities and faculty.

Practical learning

- Combined theoretical and simulation-based learning provides a balanced approach, to strengthen your understanding, capability and confidence in delivering contemporary best-practice care.

Hands-on experience

- Workplace experience placement to give you real clinical experience across Mater's exceptional hospitals and healthcare services, and Mater's carefully chosen partners.

Exceptional network

- Connect with other like-minded healthcare professionals, and access incredible support and networking opportunities to help you achieve your goals and build a rewarding and enriching professional career.

Challenge Imperative

Like many training organisations, Mater Education has seen a downturn in the number of students graduating vocational education programs since COVID. This is primarily impacting programs that take over a year to complete such as their Diploma of Nursing program.

Student attrition from courses is complex and could be the result of several factors. The impact as a result is:

- Risk of losing up to \$2m of annual revenue
- 35% reduction in the supply of enrolled nurses each year
- Adverse brand impact to Mater Education as a Hospital based registered training organisation.

Mater Education would like to identify innovative offerings in Queensland that may help increase student retention. The potential solutions could help with student engagement, onboarding, delivery, or student support.

Through the Private Sector Pathways Program, Mater Education wishes to better understand specific factors that impact student's expectations and experiences, and trial potential solutions that address this challenge. Where a solution is implemented and is proven to improve student retention, opportunities may exist to apply this to the wider education sector.

Challenge Context

The Stakeholders Involved

Vocational education students

- 500 Diploma of Nursing Students in Brisbane and Townsville.

Mater Education

Stakeholders from Mater Education will consist of their management layer, the VET training team, and the student support team, consisting of:

- 5 staff in the management layer
- 50 educators delivering education across all Mater Education accredited programs
- 10 supporting roles within student services.

Education and Training Regulators

- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC).
- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

The Current Situation

Detailed information on the Diploma of Nursing can be found on the Mater Education Website. This includes eligibility criteria, application process, costs, duration, and financial scholarships that are available.

A link to the relevant information is provided [here](#).

The full-time course consists of 20 core units and 5 elective units. Each unit is delivered via 2 days of face-to-face delivery, and 1 day of virtual delivery. This is complemented with 400 hours of vocational placement. Vocational placements are scheduled as full 5-day week placements for the final 3 weeks of each semester.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Mater to re-organise its priorities. Health and safety became top of mind and is likely to stay there for students and families for some time. Mater wants to continue to successfully manage its student cohorts, knowing it needs to demonstrate that the campus experience is still intact while having learned lessons from the crisis.

Mater Education has a commitment to meeting the changing health and wellbeing needs of the community. This means contributing to the development of a skilled workforce that can meet these. Student expectations of a world leading organisation and how it manages, delivers and supports careers in the health sector are higher than ever.

To grow the student engagement and experience in Mater Education, education and training activities must stay up to date and appealing. There are various factors that may impact a student's decision to leave a course:

- Was the course marketed correctly, did they have enough information at the time of application to fully understand the commitment required, timeframes, costs etc?
- Onboarding, did it meet their expectations?
- Diversity of the students (the course can be a mixture of mature and young students)
- Course material, literature and teaching methods - do they accommodate multiple delivery modes?
- Are the courses using innovative delivery technology to maximise engagement? For example:
 - Virtual simulation e.g. training simulators
 - Engagement in metaverse environments
 - Real time experience feedback
 - Gamification
 - Augmented reality simulation for specific scenarios.
- Are there appropriate supports in place for all delivery modes? There may be a disconnect between the support students use and the support that students need.

Recent changes Mater Education has made in the last 12 months

Mater Education has recently implemented:

- An increase of physical simulation facilities for students – e.g. mock ward
- Mater Simulation Sessions where scenarios are practiced – multidisciplinary training
- Physical tracking of professional training information retention – e.g. handwashing tracking
- Surveys of student experiences
- Standard learning material documentation including a curriculum and educator framework
- Delivery of a Diploma program to a regional or remote audience.

Outcomes Desired

Any solution will achieve one or more of the desired outcomes:

- Clarity on what new students in healthcare expect in terms of their education experience
- Improved education and training experience at Mater
- Full compliance with regulatory requirements (see below)
- Improvement in the 35% attrition rate.

Project Duration

The duration of the project is estimated to be 6 months in line with the academic semester.

If a suitable solution to the challenge is found, project commencement is most likely to start in January 2023.

As part of the assessment process, shortlisted applicants will be notified and invited to a Solution Presentation Day. This will be an opportunity for you to present your proposed solution (either in person or remotely) to the Challenge assessment panel. Presentations are expected to be up to 20 minutes long, with time afterwards for Q&A. Full details will be provided in due course.

Technical and/or Regulatory Considerations

- Constraints set through the VET Quality Framework which includes Standards for Registered Training Organisations (2015)
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) requirements.
- Australian Qualifications Framework
- Data provision and protection laws (personal data).

Design Benefits

- Potential to integrate with existing IT infrastructure
- Be cost effective in terms of implementation, operation and maintenance.
- Ability to offer affordable education to a wider audience.

Commercial Opportunities

The PSP program aims to provide commercial opportunities for applicants, while at the same time, solving Queensland corporates' challenges via an innovative funded process.

Successful applicants will receive funding to develop and test their idea. At the end of the process, applicants have the potential to secure a contract with Mater Education. Additionally, intellectual property developed within the PSP program is retained by the applicant, allowing the potential to access broader commercial opportunities.

In addition to immediate opportunities for the selected applicant, the solution may have applications across other Mater Education courses. Additionally, a solution may be able to assist in providing other educational providers a solution to a student retention challenge.

How to apply

Applications can be submitted through the application form - <https://dsiti.smartygrants.com.au/PSP-MaterEducation-Nursing2022>