

Evaluation of a Higher Diploma in Mental Health Nursing Using Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Effects on Student Behavior, Attitude and Perception

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Abstract : The UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems Higher Diploma in Mental Health (HDMH) nursing programme commenced in January 2017. Forty students successfully completed the programme. Programme evaluation was conducted from the outset. Research ethics approval was granted by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee - Sciences in November 2016 (LS-E-16-163). Plan for Sustainability: Each iteration of the programme continues to be evaluated and adjusted accordingly. Aims: The ultimate purpose of the HDMH programme is to prepare registered nurses (registered children's nurse (RCN), registered nurse in intellectual disability (RNID) and registered general nurse (RGN)) to function as effective registered psychiatric nurses in all settings which provide care and treatment for people experiencing mental health difficulties. Curriculum evaluation is essential to ensure that the programme achieves its purpose, that aims and expected outcomes are met and that required changes are highlighted for the programme's continuing positive development. Methods: Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the evaluation. A series of questionnaires were used (the majority pre and post programme) to determine student perceptions of the programme, behaviour and attitudinal change from commencement to completion. These included the student assessment of learning gains (SALG); mental health knowledge schedule (MAKS); mental health clinician attitudes scale (MICA); reported and intended behaviour scale (RIBS); and community attitudes towards the mentally ill (CAMI). In addition, student and staff focus groups were conducted. Evaluation methods also incorporated module feedback. Outcome/Results: The evaluation highlighted a very positive response in relation to the achievement of programme outcomes and preparation for future work as registered psychiatric nursing. Some areas were highlighted for further development, which have been taken cognisance of in the 2019 iteration of the programme.

Keywords : learning gains, mental health, nursing, stigma

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