Midwifery Graduate Attributes: A model for curriculum development and education

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Background

Models of midwifery education need to evolve to meet changing needs of the profession. This requires a constant process of review and re-evaluation of curricula. Courses that lead to midwifery registration must not only meet national and international standards, but many also commit to producing graduates who meet course-specific graduate attributes. These attributes differ between models of education and courses and are pivotal in providing clear direction for the development of higher level abilities in graduates. Visionary graduate attributes provide the opportunity to prepare graduates to function and flourish in a fast changing social and professional environment and to prepare them for a future that is largely unknown (Bowden et al., 2000).

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has embraced the concept of graduate attributes and all graduates are expected to demonstrate capability in both University and course-specific attributes. The UTS model of learning provides a framework for practice oriented learning that aligns graduate attributes and curriculum design. The model is focussed on three distinctive areas, *practice oriented* education situated in a *global workplace* through learning that is *research inspired and integrated* (UTS 2017). Each course offered by UTS has embedded graduate attributes that reflect the overall aim of the course. These provide important information for students, the public and future employers as to what personal, professional and intellectual attributes to expect from a graduate of that course.

Commencing in 2012, the midwifery team undertook a project to develop visionary attributes for midwifery graduates and this paper describes and discusses the development and implementation process of the graduate attributes model.

Development and implementation of Graduate Attributes for Midwifery Education

The initial phase of the development of midwifery graduate attributes focussed on an in-depth review of relevant literature; National Competency Standards for the Midwife (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2006); the International Definition of the Midwife and Midwifery Education Standards (International Confederation of Midwives, 2011) (ICM); and, current curricula documents. As a result of this initial review, widely recognised central tenets of midwifery such as woman centred care, competence, collaboration and professionalism were clearly identified as vital attributes.

To further develop these and additional relevant attributes, a process of iterative consultation with industry partners was undertaken. Midwifery at UTS values a reciprocal relationship with 23 partner hospitals in both private and public health sectors and also with consumers of maternity care. These groups were invited to several meetings and forums to consult on and discuss vital attributes of a midwife. Following this extensive consultation the team was able to develop and refine what have become the UTS midwifery graduate attributes (see Fig. 1.) This collaborative process was a key step in the development of the graduate attributes model as it ensured that we aligned with industry expectations and were informed by women's voices. In recognition of the Faculty's commitment to Indigenous cultural respect, a distinct attribute was developed using a parallel process and this was embedded as a graduate attribute to inform every discipline in the Faculty (Virdun et al. 2013).

The development of the graduate attributes model was informed by the work of Biggs and Tang (2011) who argue that learning should be

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Midwifery Graduate Attributes Faculty of Health		
		Woman centred care Practice woman centred care
		Professional Competence Are professionally competent midwives who provide safe and effective midwifery care using intelligent kindness
		Collaboration Work collaboratively in order to provide excellence in maternity care
		Resilience Are resilient, emotionally competent midwives who foster human flourishing
		Diversity Are socially responsible citizens who value the diversity of people
		Professional engagement Are professionally engaged critical thinkers who take a lively and questioning approach and embrace lifelong learning
		Indigenous cultural competency Demonstrate professional cultural competency which contributes to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians inclusive of physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellness

Fig. 1. UTS Midwifery Graduate Attributes.

Fig. 2. Integration of the graduate attributes into the teaching and learning framework.

constructed around intended outcomes and teaching and assessment then aligned to determine what the learner is required to do to achieve these outcomes (Biggs and Tang, 2011). The graduate attributes model identified the attributes (outcomes) for midwifery students and the 'course intended learning outcomes' and subject learning objectives

were then developed to align with the attributes (see Fig. 2). The overall intent of this model is to enable students to engage in learning with identified outcomes so they can demonstrate what they know (assessment) (see Fig. 3) and what they can do (midwifery practice).

As with the introduction of any new framework or model an implementation plan was required to ensure all stakeholders of the course had a clear idea of the expectations of supporting the students to develop the identified attributes.

The implementation plan involved a formal launch. UTS academics visited the partnering hospitals and provided in-service education to the midwives and distribution of flyers of the attributes, icons and course intended learning outcomes. The attributes, their icons and course intended learning outcomes were included in the subject outlines and displayed where students would be able to refer to them (ie clinical laboratories). A short audio-visual resource was also made available to assist with communicating the attributes and the reasons for the attributes. This multi-pronged approach allowed for wide dissemination of the attributes and ensured a high level of awareness among key stakeholders.

How well does the model work?

The graduate attributes as a model for midwifery education focuses on shaping our future midwifery workforce as competent professionals.