

Mentor, coach, personal tutor, advisor? You Decide!

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The Bond University Learning Coaches initiative resulted from the COVID-19 crisis when clinical student placements were disrupted. The goal was to help ensure that, despite disruptions, each student gained the required clinical exposure during the final two years of practical training to meet the professional outcomes and expectations required to be successful in the workplace as an intern in Australia and New Zealand.

Learning Coaches were university-affiliated clinicians who supported a small group of students, individually reviewing their clinical exposure longitudinally across the final year of the medical program. Learning coaches had the significant role of alerting faculty to any student at risk of not progressing clinically so that personalised support processes and remediation could be put in place in a timely manner.

Learning Coaches supplemented clinical supervision of learning activities on placement. Medical students logged their clinical learning activity in the digital e-Portfolio and reflected on their learning achievements and goals through submission of a learning plan. The assigned Learning Coach reviewed the plan and met (virtually) with the student once a fortnight to discuss their progress against the requirements of the program, taking steps to ensure students were on track to achieve the expected competencies.

Evaluation has been undertaken with a view to retaining this COVID-19 innovation for 2021 and beyond.

Going forward we want to capitalise on the strengths of the Learning Coaches initiative to tailor our student support across the medical program. We will share our evaluation and utilise the PeARL format to hear from other colleagues across all disciplines as to how they support students. Do they use a mentorship, coaching or personal tutoring program or a combination? Are they mandatory, opt in or utilised for support/remediation only? Do they commence from day one of the program or only in the clinical years?