Small Capital and Equipment Program

health

Final report

Prosthetics and orthotics student laboratory

Date completed: 1 March 2013

Background and context

As Australia's population ages, there will be an increased demand for prosthetic and orthotic students to enter the workforce. The increased student numbers required to fill these shortages are currently being restricted by the lack of facilities with the required space to take an increased student cohort.

La Trobe University's agreement with Melbourne Health (MH) has seen an increase intake of La Trobe student numbers from two placements (eighty days) in 2011 to seventeen placements (two hundred and forty days) in 2012. This number of students is unable to be accommodated in existing clinical and technical workspace available at the Royal Park Campus (RPC) and will require additional space and equipment to carry technical learning without impacting adversely on the productivity of the Prosthetics and Orthotics Department at RPC. The students will also require access to IT equipment and furniture for onsite unsupervised study. Prosthetics and orthotics is not a targeted discipline for growth funding.

Project objectives and expected impacts

• Increase number of prosthetics and orthotics student placements at MH from two (eight days) to nineteen (two hundred and thirty-two days).

Project activities

Additional activities included:

- Develop Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) transfemoral amputee volunteer patient database and recruit process (not funded);
- Professional development of RMH staff for student supervision skills (separate funding).



Department of Health

Project performance against stated deliverables

Project activity	Project deliverable/target	Due date	Status
Clean-up and disposal	Prepare rooms for redevelopment and dispose of unwanted items	7 July 2012*	Complete
Incidentals	Asbestos check	30 April 2013*	Complete
Building phase			
Carpentry	Internal wall infill with door between CAD room and casting room	31 March 2013*	Complete
Data and electrical	Data points and power outlets to plaster room, office and clinical room	30 April 2013	Completed
Repairs and painting	Repair minor wall damage, paint walls, doors and window frames	30 April 2013*	Complete
Plumbing	Return water to plaster room and install plaster trap	31 March 2013*	Complete
Cooling/heating	Install four reverse cycle units	31 March 2013*	
Furniture and equipment	Installation of office equipment and furniture, clinical equipment and curtains, work bench and jig	30 April 2013*	Complete
Laptop and PC	Install laptop and PC		Complete

*Amended dates

Three dedicated rooms including; plaster room, student office and clinical space, covering 82 m² at the RPC, has been refurbished and equipped to accommodate groups of four to five student prosthetists/orthotists for transfemoral prosthetics practicum (unit PORTFA, La Trobe University). Students commenced occupancy 5 March 2013. All deliverables stated above have been achieved. One amendment was made to the original proposal to accommodate a twelve-month extended timeline.

Project outcomes

The completion of this project will facilitate a sustainable increase in prosthetic/orthotic student placement numbers at RMH:

- Increase the number of La Trobe University prosthetic/orthotic student placements available from two in 2011 to twenty in 2013;
- Increase the maximum number of La Trobe University prosthetic/orthotic students onsite at any one time from one in 2011 to seven in 2013;
- Increase number of La Trobe University prosthetic/orthotic student days available from eighty in 2011 to two hundred and thirty-two in 2013.

This project will enhance the experience of prosthetic/orthotic students at RMH by providing a dedicated student space, in which students will not have to give priority to clinicians for access to facilities and equipment.

The first cohort of students to use this facility commenced on 5 of March and is expected to complete their practicum on 23 April 2013. Three more cohorts are planned for 2013. By providing a dedicated space for students to undertake transfemoral practicum the RMH Prosthetics and Orthotics Department has been also able to extend the number of clinical placements on offer from two to four per year, an increase of eighty student days.

Evaluation

Not all allied health disciplines were targeted for Health Workforce Australia (HWA) growth. This small capital and equipment grant has assisted non-targeted disciplines to contribute to growth in clinical placements. This is particularly applicable to prosthetics/orthotics, as this discipline has very high-space, materials and equipment needs. Prosthetics and orthotics education in Australia is only provided by La Trobe University and as a result a disproportionate burden for student placements occurs in Victorian public hospitals.

This grant has made possible the only dedicated student prosthetics and orthotics laboratory in a public hospital in Victoria.

Informal feedback from the current cohort of prosthetics and orthotics students and their student supervisor is that this project has provided a workable facility that meets the needs of students to undertake transfermoral practicum with volunteer patients.

The timeframe for expressions of interest and development of a project proposal was quite short, given the amount of consultation from stakeholders and planning required developing a realistic proposal that would effectively address the barriers for growth in student placements. As a result, minor adjustments to the project costing and scope needed to occur as it progressed, leading to delays.

Though the project has run to budget, the original timeframes were unrealistic and were consequently revised. The need to change project manager also contributed to an extension of the original timeframes. Progress reports were not delivered on time but progress visits by Jan Roney and liaising with Department of Health contacts assisted with meeting reporting requirements.

Conclusion

This project has made possible a functional student space to facilitate increase placement numbers for a small discipline with high-space and equipment needs that was not included in HWA targets for growth. This project is has been particularly important for prosthetics and orthotics education in Australia as Victorian hospitals take all of the transfemoral prosthetics practicum placements.