

Strengthening delivery of mental health education in NSW – Update on progress



The Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) and the NSW Institute of Psychiatry (NSWIOP) are pleased to announce that January 2017 will mark a new era for mental health education and training in NSW, and beyond. This change will support system-wide improvements in delivering health education and training.

In regard to mental health, this would mean enhanced delivery of mental health education and training that is dedicated to ultimately improve the journey or recovery of people with lived experience of mental health issues. It is anticipated that consumers, their families and carers will benefit both in terms of engaging the services of the health sector and in talking with mental health workers to determine the best way to improve their well-being.

What will HETI-NSWIOP mental health education and training look like in 2017?

By the beginning of 2017, HETI will have a Mental Health Education Portfolio, with the NSWIOP identifiable within this portfolio. The Mental Health Education portfolio will provide higher education, training and community education. Whilst the main focus is on the needs of the population of NSW, many of the portfolio offerings will remain open to students across Australia, using a mix of face to face, online and blended delivery methods. The NSWIOP will continue to be based at the Cumberland Hospital Campus in North Parramatta.

Why is this happening?

These changes will mark the fulfilment of the announcement made by the then Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Kevin Humphries MP in late 2013 that there would be a staged transition of the NSWIOP into the structure of HETI.

This exciting strategy has a clear focus on improving the quality of higher education and training for both the mental health staff and the overall health workforce. Therefore along with targeted training for mental health clinicians, there can be opportunities for capabilities development for other health staff that are interested in further developing skills in mental health to enhance the recognition of mental health needs amongst their patients, and for training an emerging workforce such as peer workers. The change will enhance the impact of mental health training for the Health sector and will achieve an enhanced holistic approach to health education for the state. It supports integration of the strengths of the NSWIOP's 50 years of experience in mental health education and training and HETI's training and education for NSW Health.

What will this mean for current students?

The higher education and training of the NSWIOP will be provided as usual during the transition to HETI. The experience of students and addressing student needs before, during and after the transition will be the main consideration in all the decisions made by HETI and NSWIOP.

Through the Academic Staff, particularly the Directors and Coordinators, NSWIOP makes a commitment to work one to one with any student to clarify the impact of the transition and the development of the Master's Program frameworks on their course progression and completion. Flexibility will be exercised to ensure that any possibility of disruption or disadvantage is minimised, if not completely eliminated.

What will this mean for future students?

NSWIOP will be consolidating all the existing courses within two new Master's Program Frameworks, one in Psychiatry and

the other in Applied Practice in Mental Health. The aim of the new Master's Program Framework is to even more effectively educate future leading practitioners in mental health and equip them with the knowledge and skills they require in the coming decades.

HETI will ensure that quality of the academic offerings will be supported by an academic governance structure that will transition across from the NSWIOP.

What is the process to achieve this change?

As part of the transition process, HETI and NSWIOP are collaborating to build on the best of both organisations and learn from each other to further improve the use of technology; ensure ongoing sharing of subject matter expertise; and use innovative methods to review and implement the most contemporary teaching methodologies to deliver training and education.

The final step in achieving the transition of the NSWIOP to HETI continues to be dependent on the management of the critical educational resources held by the NSWIOP, its accreditation as a Higher Education Provider by the Commonwealth regulatory agency Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

In the last few months, the NSWIOP and TEQSA have established a way forward for the accreditation of both the Higher Education Provider registration and NSWIOP associated courses. From August 2015, NSWIOP and HETI senior staff members will be working together to submit an application for HETI to be accredited as a Higher Education Provider against the NSWIOP courses.

This work will be jointly led by HETI Chief Executive Annette Solman and NSWIOP Executive Director Rhonda Loftus. The combined HETI-NSWIOP project team is currently developing and strengthening all the required systems for the TEQSA review that will be concluded by late 2016. This work reflects the absolute partnership between the organisations as HETI will apply to hold the Higher Education Provider status on behalf of the NSW Health system and the NSWIOP courses will be submitted as the first courses for this new Higher Education Provider.

In putting forward its Higher Education Provider application, HETI is committed to NSWIOP maintaining its identity within the HETI organisation as a Mental Health Portfolio.

Another milestone for NSWIOP in the next few months will be the transition of the Academic Staff to HETI employees. This will be achieved by October 2015 and will complete the transfer of all NSWIOP employees which commenced with administrative staff in January 2014. This milestone reflects the successful approach to transition that has achieved a gradual integration of corporate and educational systems and provides for the successful development of a platform for the mental health portfolio within HETI.

By applying for HETI to be recognised as a Higher Education Provider and facilitating the full transition of NSWIOP staff to become HETI employees, HETI upholds the NSW Government's commitment to providing education that enables the delivery of high quality mental health services and demonstrates its support for the Government's implementation of the Mental Health Commission's Strategic Plan for NSW, 2014-2024.

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