A process for peer audits and internal reviews of the support service response to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment

Tracey Todd, University of Wollongong & Dr Jacqueline Olley, University of Newcastle

Universities are increasingly focused on improved processes and service models for responding to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment. In 2017, a national survey was conducted to measure the prevalence and nature of sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities. One of the recommendations of the subsequent report was that all Universities conduct an audit of university Counselling Services.

The University of Wollongong and the University of Newcastle formed a successful partnership to undertake an independent peer audit. The aim of the audit was to assess the capacity of each University to provide an adequate support and treatment response to students who disclose incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The method was developed using an evidence based model published by an international university, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The audit reported findings from qualitative and quantitative data and were presented in a comprehensive report to relevant stakeholders. Recommendations have been used to advocate for training and resources to ensure best practice.

Tracey and Jacqueline will provide an overview of the audit process, learnings, organisational benefits of the peer review process, and outline suggestions for future service reviews. The presentation is timely in light of plans to repeat the national survey, and highlights the value and impact of collaborating to improve services and effect change culture.

Learning outcomes
- An overview of peer audit and internal review processes including clearly defining scope, stakeholders, schedule and resources
- Designing quantitative and qualitative audit tools such as desktop checklists, staff surveys, student forums, and structured interviews
- An understanding of trauma informed principles and how to identify evidence of these in service delivery
- Developing an action plan for service improvements and implementing recommendations

Presenters
Tracey Todd, University of Wollongong

Tracey Todd is the Senior Manager, Student Success at University of Wollongong (UOW) which includes managing the Counselling Service and a Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment Service. She has conducted a peer audit of University of Newcastle’s Counselling Service. She has trained over 800 UOW frontline staff and student leaders in First Level Response to disclosures of sexual assault & harassment on campus. Tracey is a member of UOW’s Safe & Respectful Communities Advisory Group to the Vice Chancellor. In 2018 Tracey was awarded the VC’s Outstanding Professional Services award for leading the development of UOW’s Support First trauma-informed model.

Dr Jacqueline Olley, University of Newcastle

Jacqueline Olley is Clinical Lead, Counselling at University of Newcastle (UON) and a clinical psychologist. She is committed to ensuring UON Counselling provides client-centred treatment and support for students who have been impacted by sexual assault and sexual harassment. Jacqueline is a member of UON Sexual Misconduct Working Group and other relevant advisory committees, and in 2018 received a Vice-Chancellors award for Collaboration Excellence as a member of the Sexual Misconduct Project Team. In 2017 Jacqueline conducted a peer audit of the University of Wollongong Counselling Service.