



Case Study: Student Services

Partnering to support students with disabilities

As we start to shift some existing power relationships of 'expert culture' to that of 'person as expert', it is important to harness the experience and set of knowledges that students with a lived experience of disability and or mental illness have gained through their lives and at university to share and guide other students to reach their academic aspirations. In 2017 we piloted a project that engages students with disabilities as mentors for first year students with a disability or lived experience of mental illness. From the beginning of the project we have engaged with the University of Queensland Union (UQU) Abilities Collective and other students with disabilities to help us shape the program, evaluate the pilot, and recommend enhancements as we move from pilot to program.

Some of the key partnership points have been:

1. The initial scoping survey sent to all students registered with Student Services; Disability was designed in conjunction with the UQU Abilities Collective.
2. Based on the survey feedback we developed a framework for the pilot which supports the key needs the UQ students with disabilities identified through the survey.
3. During the mentoring applications we provided opportunities for the students to feedback on the selection process and provide recommendations to improve the experience. This was both in person during one on one consultation and through survey and email.
4. Ten pilot mentors and mentees have been involved in the design aspects of the forms and applications and have provided guidance on the questions included and importantly how best to ask them.

The partnership pilot approach has indicated several enhancements: provide further opportunities for mentors to access professional development; and use a mentoring software that allows for self-matching. The online platform, ZOOM, will be available semester 2, 2017 for virtual mentoring and the program will continue to be shaped, implemented, and reviewed *for and by* UQ students with disabilities.

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