Student Skills in Critical Appraisal for Health Research

Researchers: Prof. Sandra C. Jones, Prof Patrick Crookes

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PROJECT OVERVIEW:

This research aimed to identify supervisors and students’ perceptions of their (students) competence across ten areas relating to skills in critical appraisal; and rate how important they thought critical appraisal skills in each of these areas. A survey was sent via email to higher degree research (HDR) student supervisors from six different schools/faculties at the University of Wollongong, and a similar survey was sent to HDR students from the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences. Three specific skills were identified as particularly lacking by both supervisors and students (evaluating cohort and case control studies, cross-sectional surveys, and meta-analysis). The two skills identified as most lacking by supervisors (‘evaluating qualitative research methodologies and results’, and ‘evaluating quantitative research methodologies and results’) were not identified by students. Conversely, HDR students, but not supervisors, identified ‘appraising statistical validity’ as a current knowledge gap. These results were then used to develop an innovative and quality driven subject in Critical Appraisal for the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health at the University of Wollongong.