

Relationships and Sexual Health Promotion Project for QUT International Students

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Abstract

International students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experience a variety of sexual health problems which include unplanned pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases. These are often because of limited knowledge of sexual health matters and lack of sexual health education and/or access to health services in their home country. This can often be exacerbated in Australia by language and cultural barriers. A study was undertaken to identify the concerns of international students and how to provide culturally appropriate promotion of sexual health for international students at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The project involved five stages which included consultation with key stakeholders, interviews with key informants, 'sexual health promotion' professional development workshops for International Student Advisors and other QUT staff and data collection using online survey and focus group discussions with international students.

The project found that sexual health was a concern for QUT International students, particularly concerning developing relationships, becoming sexually active in Australia, and not having adequate access to health services and sex education information. The main concerns were that international students didn't have sufficient knowledge and awareness about unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and use of contraceptives and accessing health services such as STI clinics. Having readily available information on sexual health, health checks, sex education and STD information for international students were highlighted and concerns about privacy in the delivery of education interventions were stated. Preferred methods of dissemination of sexual health information included use of student mentors particularly from the same gender and similar cultural and religious backgrounds; web-based online resources; brochures and a confidential on-line advice and counselling services. A number of recommendations were made to address the issue of sexual health awareness at QUT.

Key Word: Sexual Health; International Students, a culturally appropriate approach