Building capacity in professional placement of Australian diagnostic radiographers

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BACKGROUND
Increased student intake in recent years due to workforce demand has necessitated use of placement sites at great distances from the University site. This has resulted in reduced opportunity for students to obtain individually preferred placements and may possibly have affected student clinical performance.

INITIATIVE
The aim of this research is to evaluate an alternative method of professional placement targeting increased flexibility in delivery.

METHOD
Cyclical implementation and evaluation of changes has influenced the undergraduate program at the University of Newcastle. With universities utilising clinical sites throughout Australia any improvements are advantageous to the profession of radiography through the training of its future members.

Questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews have been designed, implemented and evaluated to obtain input from students and supervising radiographers involved in the professional placement element of the program.

RESULTS
The implementation of part-time placements has resulted in benefits to both students and supervising radiographers.

Increased choices for students have resulted in placement performance unimpeded by factors such as financial and personal limitations.

Creation of placement formats suitable to a variety of workplace designs has assisted in maintaining the involvement of sites, their feedback central to the continuation of part time placement formats.

CONCLUSION
By increasing flexibility for placement sites and reducing inhibitors to student performance high standards of professional placement have been maintained during a time period in which substantial increases in student numbers have occurred.