

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE STUDENTS

Emma Richards^a, Kay Colthorpe^a, Louise Ainscough^a, and Lisa Akison^a

Presenting Author: Emma Richards (emma.richards1@uqconnect.edu.au)

^aSchool of Biomedical Sciences, University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072, Australia

KEYWORDS: professional identity, biomedical science, undergraduates, student perspective, generalist degrees

SUBTHEME: Belonging

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Professional identity is the alignment of individuals with a profession (Matthew et al., 2019), with undergraduate studies contributing to its development. Professional programs, such as nursing or pharmacy, are structured to support this development by exposing students to the expectations and culture of that profession (Noble et al., 2014). However, this can be harder to achieve within generalist degrees such as biomedical science, where students have a diversity of desired careers (Panaretos et al., 2019), making it more difficult to align the program to these various professions. The lack of exposure to students' desired career can lead to contradictions between identities, making it challenging for students to develop a professional identity. This study aims to answer the question, "How do biomedical science undergraduates perceive and construct their professional identities, considering the unique experiences of their discipline?". It also aims to determine curricular and extra-curricular activities that can be used or improved to assist students' professional identity development.

METHODS

Second- and third-year biomedical science students will be asked to describe their desired career, how prepared they are to enter the field, how they perceive their professional identity development, and how they think their university experience has contributed. Consenting students' responses will be subjected to thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Students studying Bachelor of Biomedical Science are expected to have varying levels of professional identity across their second and third years of study, with some students struggling to development it. It is anticipated that students planning to pursue research-oriented professions will express more satisfaction with how their university experiences prepared them for their future careers than students pursuing non-research careers. Students' professional identity is also expected to be more robust in second year than third year as their career certainty decreases.

REFERENCES

- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), 77-101.
- Matthew J., Bialocerkowski A., & Molineux M. (2019). Professional identity measures for student health professionals – a systematic review of psychometric properties. *BMC Medical Education*, 19, 1-10.
- Noble, C., O'Brien, M., Coombes, I., Shaw, P. N., Nissen, L., & Clavarino, A. (2014). Becoming a pharmacist: students' perceptions of their curricular experience and professional identity formation. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 6(3), 327-339.
- Panaretos, C., Colthorpe, K., Kibedi, J. and Ainscough, L., (2019). Biomedical science students' intended graduate destinations. *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education*, 27(9); 1-16.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Canberra, 18 – 20 September 2024, page 84, ISSN 2652-0481.