Students in research placements as part of professional degrees: a systematic review

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Abstract

The current emphasis of Governments is on research that shows engagement and impact. At the same time, there is a focus on Work Integrated Learning [WIL] in tertiary education, however, in an increasing neoliberal climate of resource constraints, it can be difficult to provide sufficient quality placement opportunities. Student research placements are an opportunity to support the engagement and impact agenda and fill the scarcity of placements. In order to explore the viability of, challenges of and insights about research placements a systematic literature review covering the years 2008-2017 was undertaken. Findings highlight beneficial learning outcomes for students but reporting in the identified

studies scarcely considers the outcomes for organisations, supervisors and academics or the impact of the research. The discussion highlights the need to establish student research placements systematically and to report on the outcomes.

Implication Statement

- Research placements provide beneficial learning opportunities to students
- Research placements require established relationships and collaboration and need to be organised systematically
- Very few studies reported on the outcomes of the research and more detailed reporting of the research impact is needed

Keywords

Research; engagement; impact; work-integrated learning [WIL]; placement; field education

Introduction

The current emphasis of Governments is on research that shows impact and engagement, hence, social work academics need to engage in research that delivers outcomes and shows impact (Hughes, 2016). At the same time, there is a push to increase opportunities for Work Integrated Learning [WIL] (Universities Australia, 2018). Johnston (2011) argues that WIL is part of a neoliberal agenda to meet the demand for workforce-ready graduates within a globalised market economy (Johnston, 2011). The impetus for WIL across degrees contributes to difficulties in meeting the demand for placements, particularly impacting professional degrees who have placement as a core part of the degree. Factors contributing to placement shortages include human service organisations being less able to provide placement while under strain in current neoliberal contexts (Kalliath, Hughes, & Newcombe, 2012), competition between universities (Hanlen, 2011) and increasing numbers of other degrees implementing WIL for students (Noble & Sullivan, 2009).

The placements of professional degrees, such as Social Work and Nursing, fall under the umbrella of WIL, however, have particular guidelines and requirements set by the professional bodies as they are core components of the degree. For example, the Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW] (2012) specifies that field education is structured so that students can incorporate social work knowledge, skill and values into their practice. Australian undergraduate nursing students require no less than 800 hours of placement during their pre-registration degree (Connor, 2016). Social work students need to undertake a total of 1000 hours of field education, over a minimum of two placements (AASW, 2012) and field education units struggle to locate enough placements (Zuchowski, Cleak, Nickson & Spencer, 2018).

Students in their final placement subject of the social work degree are to meet the attributes of Australian social work graduates, one of which is the 'ability to apply research knowledge and skills to understand, evaluate and use research to inform practice and to develop, execute and disseminate research informed by practice' (AASW, 2012, p.12). Thus, research placements could be viable opportunities for 'service development and [student] research competence' (Appleton, Rankine, & Hare, 2016, p. 107). Research placements can be set up as collaborations between community-based organisations and/or industry, academics and students to examine areas of practice, service delivery or other identified areas of interest (Appleton et al., 2016). However, research placements need to be designed in such a way that all graduate attributes are considered in student learning, not just research skills. For example, communication and interpersonal skills and ability to work with diversity, as well as their ability to review, critically analyse and synthesise knowledge have to be considered in the learning plan (AASW, 2012).

To date, little is known about the viability and outcomes of research placements. The aim of our review was to provide an overview of current literature on student research placements and to examine the extent, viability, and outcomes of such placements. In addition to reporting on the characteristics and methodological quality of the studies, we were interested in the features of individual placements, the insights reported from a student, university and organisation viewpoint with a particular focus on the enablers and challenges of research placements.

Field Education

For the purpose of this review, field education is defined as placements or internships or work experiences of at least 6 weeks duration that are undertaken off campus within industry/an organisation as part of a professional degree. This systematic literature review is not examining research subjects that have service-learning components attached to them, or WIL opportunities that are not a compulsory part of the degree, rather placement subjects in which students undertake research.

Research Placements

Students can be apprehensive about undertaking research placements (Appleton et al., 2016), however, research is important for practice as recognised by the professional associations. The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) for example, outlines that 'Social workers utilise research and create knowledge in their work in diverse settings, engaged in a range of activities including casework and case management, community work, group work, organisational development, social policy and educational roles' (AASW, 2015, p. 1). Professional standards for nurses highlight that to fulfil registration requirements a registered nurse "accesses, analyses, and uses the best available evidence, that includes research findings for safe quality practice" and contributes to research (Nurses and Midwifery

Board Australia, 2016, p. 3). Thus, undertaking research as part of field education would be good preparation for practice. Through engagement in research that is relevant to practice, students engage in "…research learning by doing" (Appleton et al., 2016, p. 107).

Research placements could be organised as individual or group placements, distinct pieces of research or could be sequential, involving a number of students in the same research project over various placement periods (Appleton et al., 2016). Students could also undertake research as part of service-learning as distinct to placement, where research is undertaken as part of a research subject with a practical research component (Smith, McCaslin, Chang, Martinez, & McGrew, 2010).

Blakemore and Howard (2015) found that managing student anxiety in research placements was a significant aspect of the educator's work, but that these facilitated meaningful learning and increased interest and self-efficacy in research. Similarly, Harder (2010) highlighted the skills gained from hands-on learning in research projects benefitted student learning and agency outcomes. Research partnerships can focus on improving outcomes for service users, developing practitioners' skills in research design and implementation, and developing a research culture in the practice setting (Joubert & Hocking, 2015). However, practitioner engagement in research requires support. Fouché (2015) highlights that practitioners need to be research literate in order to participate in research, but also operate in an organisation that provides opportunities, resources, support and time for research and that values a learning culture. A valuable part of practice research collaborations can be nested mentoring, in order to facilitate ongoing research activity and to impact practice (Fouché, 2015).

In summary, research placements could offer valuable opportunities for learning and research for students and organisations and offer a response to tertiary educators challenged by widespread placement shortages. While research placements in field education have the

potential to advance industry/academic engagement in research, upskill students and organisations in research and address a gap in finding sufficient field education places, they have not been investigated systematically through research. Further information is required about the outcomes and outputs that are achieved through research placements in order to understand the required processes and assess the viability of research placements.

The Cochrane Data Base of Systematic Literature reviews (http://cochranelibrary-wiley.com/cochranelibrary/search) and the Campbell Collaboration online library (https://campbellcollaboration.org/library.html) were searched to check whether any reviews on student research placements were already undertaken. No systematic literature reviews have been done on students undertaking research placements and the outcomes of these placements.

Methodology

Research questions

To assess the characteristics and quality of included studies and the extent, viability, and outcomes of student research placements, we posed the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of included studies?

2. What are the characteristics of the research placements?

3. What are the challenges and enablers of the research placements?

4. What are the research placement outcomes reported?

5. What are the research project outcomes reported?

6. What is the quality of the included studies?

Protocol

A study protocol based on the Prisma-P statement by Moher et al. (2015) and a full-text screening tool (see Appendix A) were developed. The protocol and tool were circulated among co-authors to incorporate all feedback and achieve agreement. The appendices for this study are available from

https://research.jcu.edu.au/researchdata/published/search?query=ines.zuchowski.

Eligibility criteria

Eligible research was defined as literature that explored research undertaken by students as part of an academic placement with industry partners, supported by an academic affiliated with a university department. Australian and international English language peer-reviewed literature was included. A time period of 10 years, between 2008 and 2017 was considered adequate to access the most recent information and knowledge on this topic.

Excluded from this review were papers that were not peer-reviewed, in a language other than English, and outside the date range. Other exclusion criteria included: not a placement subject, placement subject was not a core subject of the degree (i.e. extracurricular activities, electives), placement was physically not located at external organisation, placement students were not involved in the research, research was part of the placement but not directly connected to the external organisation's needs, the paper was only a theoretical discussion or a service learning approach where only data from an agency were provided as a learning opportunity to undertake research.

Information sources

A research librarian was consulted to refine the search strategy, the adapted concepts and databases most useful to be searched (Moher et al., 2015). The following databases were identified as most appropriate for the search: Informit, Scopus, Web of Science, AcademicOnefile, Eric, CINAHL, and Medline (Ovid). Moreover, a search was undertaken

in the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), Prospero, and Google Scholar.

Database searches

The title and abstract of articles were searched with a combination of the following terms.

Concept 1	Concept 2
Work integrated learning	research
WIL	Practice research
Placement	Community research project
Field Education	Research practice partnerships
Practicum, Practicums	evaluation
Service learning	Research engagement
Experience-based learning	Research pods
Field work	Research-based service learning
	Data collection

The following search string was applied, with varying modifications according to database-specific requirements ("field education" OR "Work Integrated Learning" OR Practicum* OR Practica OR "Service Learning" OR "experience based learning") AND ((student NEAR research) OR "research engagement" OR "research-based service learning" OR "research Pods" OR "practice Research" OR "community research project" OR evaluation OR "research practice partnership"). In some cases, a separate search of "research placement*" was combined with the above search string. The citation and related article functions of the databases were utilised to search for further related results. The reference lists of relevant papers were hand-searched.

Data screening, extraction and analysis

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) statement guided the screening and extraction of data for this review (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Prisma Group., 2009). Author one extracted the data with the support of

a pre-determined extraction form. Included papers were categorised by First Author; Year; Country of origin; Discipline; Purpose of study; Study design; Data sources; Participants; Student level of education; Industry partners in the research collaboration; Placement (duration, description, research activities); Challenges of research placements; Enablers of research placements; Outcomes of research placements to students, organisations, university; and Research project (completed, outcomes reported). Author two cross-checked the results and discussed any discrepancies or questions that arose with author one until consensus was reached on the relevance and completeness of the data. Results of both, the characteristics of original studies and the research placements, were described and presented in tabular form. Data on outcomes of the research placements and outcomes from the research projects were analysed and resulting themes presented in narrative form.

The search returned a total of 3,742 results. These papers were screened using a pre-defined screening tool (Appendix A). One author conducted the first screening and removed duplicates and studies that were either in the wrong date range, not in the English language, not a journal article, not accessible, or the wrong topic. One study was located through hand searching. Full texts were retrieved for a total of 185 papers, which were screened for eligibility by two authors (93/92 papers per author). A third author independently screened 10 percent of the 185 papers. During this process, the authors discussed any disagreements until consensus was reached. Eleven papers fulfilled the criteria to be included in the review.

Study quality appraisal

To aid the systematic assessment of the trustworthiness, relevance and results of included research papers, methodological quality was assessed with the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist for qualitative research (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [CASP], 2018). The CASP checklist consists of ten questions pertaining to the aims of the research, whether the qualitative method chosen was appropriate for the research, the

research design and recruitment strategy were appropriate to address the aims of the research, the data were collected in a way that addressed the research issue, the relationship between researcher and participants had been adequately considered, ethical issues had been taken into consideration, the data analysis was sufficiently rigorous, a clear statement of findings was provided, and the value of the research was discussed (Appendix C).

Results

The PRISMA flowchart in Figure 1 (Moher et al., 2009) provides an overview of the records identified, included and excluded and the reasons for exclusions.

Insert figure 1 here

Characteristics of the studies (See Appendix B)

Quantity, Country of origin. The search yielded 3,742 citations. Of these, 185 were considered potentially relevant and eleven (n=11) studies met the inclusion criteria (Figure 1). Seven (n=7) studies originated from the US, two (n=2) from Australia, and one (n=1) each from Finland and New Zealand.

Discipline. The disciplinary field of Social Work accounted for five (n=5) studies, followed by Nursing with four (n=4), one (n=1) in a combination of Nursing, Social Work and Human Services, and one (n=1) in a combination of Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Study aims. The aim of most studies (n=7) was to describe either an intervention, a program, course module or an overall approach to teaching. For example, one study each (n=1) described the process of establishing and supporting research placements; a manualised coping support intervention to support participants in their continued resilience; the implementation of the Healthy Living Project, or the Environmental Leadership Program.

Other descriptions centred on the integration of holistic care, scholarship, and community engagement (n=1); the participation of students on fieldwork placements (n=1); different ways to teach a "practice research module" (n=1); or a course-based approach to a practice project (n=1). Other studies were concerned with varying topics of program evaluation (n=3).

Study design. Study designs ranged from intervention, project, or program descriptions (n=6); program or project evaluations (n=3); and case study analysis (n=2).

Data sources. Six studies were descriptive and did not provide information about data sources. Of the five studies that analysed data, data sources included interviews, reflective student papers, notes from staff meetings, individual staff reflections, student observational field notes and narrative reflections, student practice research reports and reflective essays, faculty conference calls, community feedback, and student progress based on course objectives.

Participants. Students, field educators, key informants, and university staff participated in varying original studies (n=9), and their numbers ranged from as little as 8 participants to 76. Two of the studies (n=2) indicated a total number of participants of 40 and 76 respectively over a 3-year period of the project. Two studies (n=2) did not provide information on the number of participants.

Characteristics of research placements (See Appendix C)

The characteristics of research placements pertain to the student level of education, industry partners involved, length, structure, and research activities.

Student level of education. The students involved were completing postgraduate courses in four studies (n=4), undergraduate courses in three studies (n=3), both undergraduate and

postgraduate courses in three studies (n=3), while one study (n=1) did not provide detailed information.

Industry partners in the research collaboration. While the majority (n=7) of industry partners in the research placement collaborations had an organisational health focus, there were some variations including a veterans administration network (n=1), low income faith-based schools (n=1), a tribal community (n=1), and non for profit organisations, governmental agencies and businesses (n=1).

Length. The shortest placement was 7 weeks long (n=1), followed by studies with placements of 10-13 weeks (n=4) in duration, or 500 hours of contact time over 12 weeks (n=1). Other studies described placements being spread over 3 semesters with 120h each semester (n=1) or spread over 2 years (n=1) without further details regarding community or organisation contact time. The longest placement with regular and continuing attendance in a community was 4 months (n=1). One study reported 120h of service which included 6-8h per week in the organisation (n=1).

Structure. The studies provided details about student supervision and support, the number of students on placement, and placement length. There was a great variety in how research placements were supported and organised. For example, student supervision and support could be provided by faculty, faculty and organisation staff or senior students. In three studies students were supervised only by faculty; in six studies students were supervised by a combination of faculty, field supervisors and professional service staff. The remaining two studies reported on more senior students having been involved in the supervision of undergraduate students on placement. Similarly, there was a variety in the students on research placements and the length of the research. These were ranging between 2-43 students per semester (n=6), 7-8 over 2 years (n=1), and 8-73 over 3 years (n=2). Two studies

did not clarify the number of students on placement. Five studies reported on research projects that were conducted and completed by the same cohort of students within one semester. Three studies spread out over a longer period which involved different student cohorts working on different parts of the research projects, which were completed either three semesters or two years.

Research activities. Students were involved in a range of research activities including research planning, implementation and reporting. Research planning activities included the development of project proposals and research plans (n=5); an ethics application; a consent form and participant information sheet (n=2); the development and management of a database (n=1); a literature review (n=4) and relationship building (n=1).

Students were part of research implementation through needs assessments (n=4); and data collection (n=7), interview transcription (n=1); data entry (n=3); data analysis (n=6); and the development, implementation and evaluation of interventions or programs (n=5) and participation in policy development (n=1). Four studies reported student involvement in final reporting or presentation (n=4).

Challenges and enablers of research placements

Challenges. Five studies reported on challenges with research placement, offering a range of perspectives. Although some studies focused primarily on challenges from the student perspective, others highlighted supervisors' or agency staff's challenges. Levels of confidence in either conducting or overseeing practice research appeared to be a dominant theme across these studies. Issues highlighted included a lack of student confidence and preparedness to do research, and a lack of clarity around the student's status of a "research practitioner" or "practice researcher". Some field educators, agency staff and student supervisors suffered from a lack of confidence in their own ability, and at times in the research project itself (n=2).

Supervisor and organisational challenges included a disrupted flow of the research project during student cohort handovers; difficulties in time and staff management; differing organisational understanding of the research project and outcomes expected over time; a lack of time to create a coherent suite of placement activities, supervision arrangements, and a clear approach to project management; impaired staff availability for mentoring students; inability to respond to immediate community needs and student interests, complicated and time-consuming logistics such as the coordination of faculty, community, and student schedules (n=4).

Enablers. Six studies reported on enablers of research placements. While one study highlighted the need to support faculty with time and workload credit (n=1), the enablers primarily related to the research context and process and the student learning. In regard to the research context and process, studies highlighted the importance of strong, long-term relationships and collaboration between university and agency (n=2); community engagement and participatory action research approaches (n=2), and high-quality research to ensure the continuation of programs (n=1). Student learning was considered by recognising the value of providing a quality learning environment (n=2) and project-specific background and training to the student prior to the service work (n=1). One study recommended that the project design needed to consider the student's background and abilities, and included peer support, open communication, information sharing, academic support for the development and review of the ethics draft material (n=1).

Reported outcomes of the research placements

While only seven studies reported that the research project was completed, all studies reported on outcomes of the research placements. Studies reported on four types of outcomes: for students, the placement agency, the university, and clients and broader community.

Outcomes for students. Ten of the included studies discussed student-centred outcomes pertaining to improved research and other professional skills. Participation in the research placements assisted students in gaining knowledge and varying skills and abilities.

Advanced research skills and knowledge

Students reported increased confidence and competence in research and research leadership (n=2), including improved project management skills (n=1), increased competence in data collection, entry, and analysis (n=2) and knowledge of how to develop, implement and evaluate a program (n=2) through involvement in real-life research projects. Additionally, students better understood the value of research (n=1), the research process or pathway (n=4), partnership building (n=1), establishing links to funders (n=1), the role of advocacy (n=1) and the positive contributions research made to the end user (n=1).

Improved soft skills

Other skills developed or improved during the research placement included organisational skills (n=1), cultural awareness and competence (n=3), communication skills (n=3), and interpersonal and collaboration skills (n=3). Also, students reported an increased ability to self-discipline (n=1), work independently (n=1) but also as part of a team (n=1), and appreciated the professional and applied leadership experience they gained (n=1).

Enhanced professional skills and understanding

Research placements also enhanced a number of professional skills in the areas of public health science (n=1), learning and teaching (n=1), clinical social work (n=1), and nursing skills in the context of tribal communities (n=1). Students recognised the value of alternative care (n=1), the basic principles of social work ethics (n=1), essential concepts of health and illness (n=1), and gained a better understanding of the context of the law and social work discipline (n=1), and the partnering service (n=1).

Outcomes for industry partners. Only five (n=5) articles reported on outcomes that benefit the external placement partners, pertaining improved service delivery, collaboration and knowledge production, and policy development.

Improved service delivery

One (n=1) external service organisation commented that hosting students and partnering with the university provided them with a fresh perspective. Social workers of this organisation re-evaluated their own role with service users and the effectiveness of the service. Also, students provided recommendations on the recruitment and retention of participants in the physical activity program.

Collaboration and production of knowledge

A tribal community received recommendations for the evaluation of a large community program planning team. The same study (n=1) also reported on improved access for community members to university resources, support for grant submissions including an enhanced curriculum vitae, and faculty appointments for tribal community research associates. Other outcomes reported included solidified working relationships and an increased understanding of the value of measuring health outcomes and financial benefits (n=1).

Policy development

In one study students provided recommendations for a healthy snack policy for local elementary schools.

Outcomes for the University. Two papers reported on outcomes for the university: a better appreciation of the incorporation of Reiki and other parallel therapies into the nursing curriculum (n=1), and the establishment of a solid teaching mentorship for students (n=1).

Community outcomes. Research projects were completed in eight (n=8) of the eleven papers, however, only two of the research projects reported on tangible outcomes for the community. One project reported reduced client pain levels and increased client comfort and relaxation. The other project reported outcomes pertaining to a variety of community activities in a tribal community, such as a breast cancer survivorship education event, a cancer prevention and diabetes education program, events to increase physical activity and to reintroduce traditional foods and nutrition, and the establishment of policies related to nutrition and the purchase of foods. Another community gained improved access to crucial community health promotion and prevention services.

Quality assessment of the included studies (see Appendix D)

The inclusion of a study in the assessment of the methodological quality was determined by its research design. Six of the studies were concerned with the description of a project, program or intervention. These qualitative studies provided little or no detail about data collection or analysis, and conclusions were mostly drawn from observations. The remaining five studies were appraised utilising the CASP checklist for qualitative research studies.

Insert Table 1 here

All studies clearly stated their research aim, appropriately chose a qualitative methodology, clearly stated their findings, and discussed how their research contributed to the existing body of knowledge. However, only three studies outlined the research design and analysis, and only four the data collection. Moreover, in all studies the recruitment strategy, relationships between study participants and the researcher, and ethical considerations were insufficiently discussed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this systematic literature review was to provide an overview of current literature by reporting on the characteristics and methodological quality of included studies and the characteristics of student research placements, including outcomes from the research project undertaken on placement. The limited studies available for review provide some insights into research placements, however, the main reporting in the included studies focuses on the outcomes for students. Research placements are highlighted as opportunities for student growth and learning, both in terms of research skills, confidence and expertise, but also regarding other skills necessary for professional practice. Thus, student research placements, as previously identified in the literature, are beneficial to student learning (Appleton et al., 2016; Blakemore & Howard, 2015; Harder, 2010) both in terms of research and the practice learning that placement opportunities should provide. It appears that while students might be reluctant to explore research (Blakemore & Howard, 2015) as a field education opportunity, research placements provide the holistic practice experience that allows students to apply what they have learnt in theory in practice (Appleton et al., 2016). The identified soft skills are core skills for social work practice, which are important to the attainment of graduate attributes (AASW, 2012). It is also unclear, though, from the reporting whether and how students' attainment of graduate attributes were assessed (AASW, 2012). This might warrant further research to develop a framework for research placement to ensure that they are not just focused on research per se, but in the process allow the student to fully develop as a professional practitioner.

However, if they are set up to meet the AASW (2012) requirements, research placements could become an integral and valued part of the field education experience for all students. The integration of research skills, such as collecting data, analysing data, drawing conclusion and implications into practice, is crucial for the practitioner's ability to use

evidence to develop and improve practice. Research placement can prepare future practitioners to develop skills to synthesise and analyse knowledge and to participate in and undertake research; moreover, through placement student supervision and discussion and research involvement, current practitioners' skills in research design and implementation are developed (Joubert & Hocking, 2015). Thus, in the quest for matching students to quality learning opportunities, it might be a fallacy to exclude students who have not shown a desire or are pre-disposed for research if we are keen to develop a workforce able to apply evidence-informed practice. Thus, it then becomes important to identify how supervision, resources and support can enable students and educators to value research placements as important opportunities to practice using research and evidence to inform practice (Nurses and Midwifery Board Australia, 2016). Additionally, it is also an opportunity to learn what it means to be in an organisation, to practice in a certain field of practice, to work in teams and to understand one's own skills and aptitudes for professional practice.

Though overall positive outcomes for students were clearly highlighted in the included studies, less is known about outcomes for supervisors, academics and organisations and clients and the broader community. In a way, this might be about the selection of the studies. Reporting of the outcomes might have happened elsewhere and not included the discussion of a student research placement supporting the research. However, only two papers reported on the client or broader community impacts. Given that the Government impact agenda for research has an emphasis on societal impact (ARC, 2017) it is crucial that outcomes and impact are considered from the onset of research and then reported on widely. A systematic literature review exploring social work academic's research engagement with industry and the impact of this research also identified a lack of reporting of the outcomes and impact of the research (Zuchowski, Miles, Gair, & Tsey, 2019). Clearly tracking and reporting on research impacts needs to be central to all publications.

While not all studies reported on the enablers and challenges of research placement, enough information was presented in the studies that did, to highlight that research placements require a time investment to form partnership and relationship with the agency. Successful research placements tend to be based on long-standing close relationships and are seen as a collaboration between university, students and external service providers. The personal agency of staff (university and organisation) in supporting the research engagement was often described as important with a tendency to go beyond their scope of employment agreements. Thus, in a way, research placements would be better organised systematically and would not be the ideal solution to the last-minute rush to identify placement opportunities for students. While there are difficulties to find enough quality placement opportunities for students (Zuchowski, et al. 2018), the approach to using research placements needs to be a long-term strategy, carefully planned and supported. Placement support is time-consuming, and enough time and resources need to be available to alleviate the stress associated with preparation work undertaken by the academic.

As the search was limited to only peer-reviewed journal articles in the English language, it is acknowledged that potentially useful publications, including books, reports, and other grey literature, also in other languages than English were excluded, which could have potentially been of relevance.

To conclude, research placements are one avenue of teaching students research skills through the involvement in real-life research projects. This systematic literature review has provided some insights into the student learning that can be achieved, however, further research how research placements can be better enabled and supported would be valuable. Moreover, it would be pertinent to explore whether research placements improve evidence and service delivery, and if so, how and if not, how could they.

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