

skills were applied. Analysis revealed that students engaged in a range of activities, including conducting research, participating in collaborative case discussions, developing psychoeducational resources, engaging in professional development, observing psychological assessments and therapeutic interventions, providing social support, and performing administrative tasks relevant to psychological practice. These findings offer insight into the diverse roles psychology students occupy during placements. The presentation will go on to discuss the ways in which students integrate academic knowledge into real-world professional environments. This research contributes to the ongoing discussion of how undergraduate psychology programs can better prepare students for the workforce by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Presentation 2: *Professionally Psyched*: Building professional identity through a student-centred podcast series

Presenter: Dr Dan Miller

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Sense of belonging between students and their university is critical to career readiness and an important driver of retention (TESQA, 2020). However, national Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) data shows that, in general, psychology students have the lowest levels of peer engagement (44.8% positive rating) in comparison to other disciplines, which is thought to be a consequence of high levels of external study. While work-integrated learning is integral to developing student understanding of their career pathways, placement-based learning can be restrictive and inflexible for students with location barriers and time-based demands. On this basis, we piloted a podcast series in 2024 that aimed to build professional identity in our department's undergraduate cohort to enhance belongingness, career pathway clarity, and retention. The podcast series, *Professionally Psyched*, has been well received by students. To extend the series, our current project aims to incorporate two additional components to the podcast production: an interview skills training workshop for students interested in hosting a podcast episode and the establishment of the *Professionally Psyched* advisory board comprising of student representatives from each year level (1-4), HDR students, and academic staff. In this presentation, we will share findings from our research regarding these components. With data collection underway, our discussion will explore how developing student leadership through the workshop and advisory board not only shapes the podcast's direction but also cultivates a more connected, confident, and professionally engaged student community. It is anticipated that this may strengthen their professional identity, enhances retention, improves post-degree career outcomes, and fosters a more interconnected and resilient community of professionals.

Presentation 3: Came for the advice, stayed for the connection: The role of Facebook groups in fostering connection in online higher education

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Demand for online higher education has increased considerably as people seek to upskill and retrain while balancing work and family commitments. Online education offers benefits, including flexibility and overcoming geographical barriers that may otherwise preclude study. However, it also presents unique challenges, including increased isolation and lower sense of connection, which may be exacerbated in fast-paced accelerated online programs. Students in all study modes utilise social media, particularly Facebook, to form student-led groups. For online students, these groups are often their only avenue for informal connection with peers. Therefore, students studying online may rely more heavily on student-led social media groups.