

Title of Submission

Distance Education - Opening the Door for Rural and Remote Nurses in Outback Australia

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Abstract

Distance Education - Opening the Door for Rural and Remote Nurses in Outback Australia

Objectives:

- To investigate the effectiveness of teaching a pre-service nursing degree via distance education.
- To explore methods that can be utilized when applying principles of distance education for pre-service nursing in remote areas.
- To explore the effectiveness of the program in upgrading enrolled nurses to registered nurses to meet the demand for registered nurses in all areas, including rural and remote.

Proposed outcomes of research:

- The use of distance education to attract students who otherwise would not be able to access a pre-service program to complete a Bachelor of Nursing. This gives the potential to reduce the critical shortage of Registered Nurses in many rural and remote areas.
- That students will reach an equal academic standard regardless of whether they study on or off campus.
- The use of distance education is a viable option for enrolled nurses to upgrade their qualifications.

With the availability of a flexible Bachelor of Nursing Program through internal and external mode, the Northern Territory University has attracted undergraduates from all states and territories of Australia, and as far away as New Guinea. The combination of distance education and part time studies has enabled many enrolled nurses to upgrade to registered nurse status, while maintaining their employment, thus giving them the financial ability to complete their studies. The Bachelor of Nursing offered by NTU has core clinical skills units at each year level. These units are followed by a placement in an appropriate clinical setting – acute care, residential aged care, primary health care or a remote area. The School of Health Sciences has been innovative in ensuring that students enrolled in their course are clinically prepared for practice in the same way, regardless of where they live. By utilizing satellite centers located in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, information technology and preceptors working with their students, this has been achieved.