

Inquiry Based Learning: WHY

The undergraduate nursing program has been developed with a strong emphasis on what we call “Inquiry Based Learning (IBL). We have chosen this approach to your learning and our teaching as two of the most important aspects of nursing practice is client assessment and clinical decision making. Nurses assess and make clinical decisions constantly to the extent that these activities are sometimes carried out automatically. For example, an experienced nurse assisting with basic hygiene needs may appear to be completing a simple task to an observer, when in fact the nurse is conducting a skin assessment. The simplicity of how the task may look to an observer does not reflect the complexity of the thinking and learning that the registered nurse brings to the task. Similarly nurses are constantly making clinical decisions ranging from very simple decision such as whether to move pillows through to complex decisions that may have life or death outcomes. The ability to make good clinical decisions is fundamental to providing high quality nursing care. Therefore it is important for a nursing curriculum to promote a learning process that develops clinical decision making skills.

For these reasons the learning process we have chosen to use is inquiry based learning and it will be used to a greater or lesser extent in every course in this program. That is, the skills you learn in this course will be built upon and used in subsequent courses. For you to be successful at inquiry based learning you will need to; actively participate, be willing to take considered risks, think critically, work collaboratively, share your thinking and take responsibility for your own learning. It will not be enough for you to try and remember everything because we will ask you not only what you know, but what you think and why!

In nursing there may be a number of “right” answers. That does not mean that there are no “wrong” answers, there are, but that nursing occurs in many environments and each situation will be different. There may be factors that are similar but never the same.

Not on your own

While the IBL approach emphasises your autonomy and responsibility for learning, you are not alone. There is plenty of help to support you through this demanding learning process. In fact an important aspect of being an autonomous learner is being able to recognise when you need help and to seek out that help.

Inquiry-Based learning (IBL) model

The model for inquiry based learning (see diagram below) was introduced into the Bachelor of Nursing in 2003. It is based on the work of Stripling (2003) but modified by School of Nursing and Midwifery team to make the model relevant for nursing. The Stripling model has six stages,

- Connect,
- Question,
- Investigate,
- Construct,
- Express,
- Reflect.

If you look Stripling up on the Internet you will see we have made a slight change. The second step “question” is called “wonder” in the original Stripling model. We thought about the word “wonder” and decided to change it as we wanted to highlight the need for you to question and thought ‘wonder” a bit vague. It is this type of thinking we want to encourage you to adopt. Question things! Just because it is written doesn’t mean it is “FACT” sometimes you need to challenge ideas.

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING



REFERENCE LIST

Stripling, BK 2003, 'Inquiry-Based Learning', in BK Stripling & SH-H Westport (eds), *Curriculum Connections Through the Library: Principles and Practice*, Libraries Unlimited, Connecticut, pp. 3-39.

Using IBL

In everyday life you use an IBL approach. If you are buying a computer you make decisions based on a range of factors that you subsequently research and finally make a decision.

Some of these factors will be objective, e.g. price, but others will reflect your values (e.g. environmental sustainability). Then after you buy it you reflect on whether you think you made the right choice. IBL is not significantly different other than we ask you to base your decisions in EVIDENCE (a strong theme through your program) and your values derive largely from the professional values you need to adopt that are part of professional identity for example the importance of client centred care.

Scenarios and Inquiry based learning

As you work through your topics you will find some that use client scenarios as the starting point for your inquiries which to some extent mirror the clinical practice setting. The scenarios are central to the inquiry based learning process and some are linked to assessment items including examination content. Therefore use these scenarios to engage with and apply the topic content.

The course writing team encourages you to embrace this IBL model, understand and apply it to your studies, your clinical practice and your everyday life. It is an important lifelong learning attribute that will prepare you for your future role as a registered nurse.