



Figure 1. Student Terrie Sichter and Senior Lecturer Dr Jane Evans.

# Griffith University: Committed to dental technology education

By Dr Jane Evans and Prof. Ward Massey

**G**riffith University's Bachelor of Oral Health in Dental Technology (BOH DTech) continues to engage dental technology students with knowledge, skills and attitudes to contribute to oral health care. Since its inception, the program has evolved and been modified to meet the needs of the students, graduates and profession.

The bachelor program offers students practical experiences in dental technology material science and tooth morphology from semester 1 first year (Table 1). The intensity of the technical practical experience heightens as students' progress toward graduation.<sup>1</sup> One identifying key factor of the program is that it is founded on interprofessional education (IPE)

where students learn "with", "from" and "about"<sup>2</sup> dentistry and other health professional students.<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of work integrated learning (WIL) - "real-life, real-time" learning ensure authenticity throughout the program and enhances students' professional identity,<sup>4</sup> provides genuine opportunity for reflection and transformation,<sup>5</sup> and promotes work readiness.<sup>6</sup> Students have the opportunity to learn on real patient cases - with dentistry students. Through an independent commercially based clinic and laboratory, students are exposed and required to complete actual clinical cases under the close supervision of tutors and demonstrators in orthodontic, removable and fixed prosthodontics.

Where students show confidence with awareness, they are invited to contribute to patient care in first and second year. However in third year, it is a compulsory component where dental technology and dentistry students collaborate in specified teams to meet the needs of the prosthetic patients in the privately operated Griffith University dental clinic.

Students study courses in chemistry, anatomy and physiology, oral biology, oral health practice management, public health, prosthetic technology, laboratory practicum, professional practice and research as can be seen in Table 1. Assessment varies from planning and preparing and completing written and drawing assignments, individual, pairs



Table 1. Topics covered - BOH Dent Tech at Griffith University

| Year   | Semester | Topics  |
|--------|----------|---|
| First  | 1        | Tooth morphology, material sciences, communication, chemistry   |
|        | 2        | Removable prosthetics, anatomy, infection control   |
| Second | 1        | Orthodontics, thermoformed appliances, professionalism, managing workplace health and safety  |
|        | 2        | Removable partial dentures, public health   |
| Third  | 1        | Fixed prosthetics, research   |
|        | 2        | Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and working in designated oral health care teams to provide prosthetic services to clinicians and patients. Oral health practice management, Field study |

and team presentations, poster design and presentation, case or field studies, creating a portfolio of practical projects and reflective journals. All of these activities are designed to guide and motivate students to engage deeply into the theory and application of skills and develop their ability to critically analyse situations and circumstances.

Student feedback indicates that IPE would "prepare us to deal better with real world problems". Students report increased opportunities for communication, collaboration and reflection for

solving problems as a group.<sup>1</sup> They also report developing confidence and professional identity: "I feel that now I can

approach others for their opinions and guidance, whereas before I felt uncomfortable". In 2012, 94% of GU DT graduates were registered with the Dental Technicians Board of Queensland.

Griffith University also offers registered dental technicians with the Diploma of Dental Technology the opportunity to upgrade their academic skills. Registered dental technicians can apply to enter the Bachelor of Oral Health in Dental Technology (Post Registration), however since the removal of registration this program will have its final intake in 2014.

### References

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- Provide user training services.
- Provide on-site services as and when required

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- Exposure to professional customers in demanding industries
- High level of education & trade specific courses. Industry training highly regarded - formal qualifications although desirable are not necessary.
- Some knowledge of the Dental laboratory environment would be preferred
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