

# Online Transdisciplinary Research Training for Rehabilitation Students In South Africa: Experience And Lessons Learnt

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## Abstract

Research methodology is an exit regulatory prerequisite for all rehabilitation graduates in South Africa. However, significant variation exists in the approach, learning outcomes, and graduate competencies among programmes, even within the same institution. The traditionally siloed undergraduate training can impede integrated, multidisciplinary learning and strain resources. We initiated an online transdisciplinary rehabilitation research module, providing an ideal opportunity for a co-design approach and allowing flexible student engagement opportunities across disciplines to bolster the rigour and outcomes of research training. Currently in its third implementation cycle, the module has yielded positive outcomes, but several challenges persist. The first lesson learnt involves securing timely leadership buy-in at conceptualisation. Consensus on core competencies, essential for meeting the requirements of all professional regulatory boards, was crucial. To support these decisions, we compiled an evidence base of published competencies, proving to be valuable. Active involvement of stakeholders representing the participating academic programmes facilitated implementation. The most prominent ongoing challenge revolves around changing behaviours and entrenched beliefs about research methodology training. We advocate for feasible, realistic efforts and stepwise goal setting to foster lasting change. Student feedback emphasised the time-related benefits of online teaching, appreciating technological features for understanding complex concepts and the user-friendly online platform. Further exploration into the optimal duration of podcasts and the ideal number of online group activities is needed. Facilitators noted the potential of shared learning experiences. We propose that the shared learning environment of transdisciplinary research training can lay the foundation for a collaborative, practice-ready workforce, particularly in resource-limited contexts.

**Keywords:** curriculum; e-learning; methodology; health sciences; inter-disciplinary