

UQ Summer Research Project Description - 2026

Project title:	Rural mental health strengths globally
Hours of engagement & delivery mode	Hours of engagement: 20 hrs per week for 6 weeks between 12 January and 20 February 2026. Location: Rural Clinical School, Boyce Gardens, Toowoomba.
Description:	Rural, regional, and remote communities are stereotypically described in health and mental health research as being worse off, exposed to greater risks, and disadvantaged by poorer access to services with a limited health care workforce. Despite these barriers, rural communities continue to overcome challenges and rural strengths (assets, resources, and protective factors) have been identified in the literature that are beneficial to mental health and wellbeing. Previous work (Luebbe et al 2024 and 2025) mapped mental health strengths across the Rural Strengths Socioecological Framework from rural literature in Australia, Canada, and the United States. These findings highlighted important socioecological aspects in rural, regional, and remote areas that positively impact wellbeing and should be considered in mental health service planning, policy, research, funding etc. These often-overlooked strengths are critical in designing relevant and sustainable mental health solutions for rural communities whilst recognising agency and moving away from metro-centric health care problem-solving. This research project builds on prior work by Luebbe et al by analysing the broader, global literature. A systematic literature review of studies from rural locations outside of Australia, Canada, and the US will be conducted. Strengths identified in these studies will contribute to broadening the understanding of rural strengths, build on and further adapt the Rural Strengths Socioecological Framework, and provide a more in-depth understanding of how rural assets, resources, and protective factors are being harnessed to maintain or improve mental health and wellbeing.
Expected learning outcomes and deliverables:	Applicants can expect to learn how to conduct systematic literature reviews, use Covidence, critically interpret study designs and properties, map to and adapt a Socioecological Framework, and contribute to a publication. Students may have the opportunity to produce a report or give an oral presentation at the end of their project.
Suitable for:	This project is suitable for students interested in public health, mental health, and rural health. This would be particularly relevant for those who have a background in psychology, bio-med/pre-med, public health and/or those interested in completing a higher degree by research (MPhil or PhD).
Primary Supervisor:	Dr Annika Luebbe a.luebbe@uq.edu.au

Further info:	The supervisor MUST be contacted by students prior to submission of an application.
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