Leadership in a Complex Environment
GBAT9131

Course Overview
Semester 1 2015
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### Semester 1 2015 course schedule

w/c Monday

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<th>Unit 1</th>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>Ethics and authentic leadership</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>23 March</td>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>Transformational leadership</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Unit 5</td>
<td>Team leadership</td>
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**Mid-term recess: Friday 3 April*– Sunday 12 April

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>13 April</th>
<th>Unit 6</th>
<th>Leadership for creativity and innovation</th>
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<td>Leadership development principles and methods</td>
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<td>Individual leadership development plans</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
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<td>Examination week 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examination week 2</td>
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* 3 April is Good Friday

** 8 June is the Queen’s Birthday public holiday (except WA)
Course staff

Course Coordinator

Each course has a Course Coordinator who is responsible for the academic leadership and overall academic integrity of the course. The Course Coordinator selects content and sets assessment tasks, and takes responsibility for specific academic and administrative issues related to the course when it is being offered. Course Coordinators oversee Class Facilitators and ensure that the ongoing standard of facilitation in the course is consistent with the quality requirements of the program.

The Course Coordinator is:

**André Taylor**

BSc (Hons Class 1) – University of Tasmania
MEM – University of Queensland
PhD – Monash University
email: andre.taylor@unsw.edu.au

Dr André Taylor is a consultant who works with leading individuals and organisations to effect positive change. He directs his own consulting business, specialising in leadership development, high-performance teams, facilitation and capacity building. He has more than 20 years of experience working across Australia for consultancies, government agencies and academia. He enjoys working with enthusiastic, authentic and self-aware professionals who are keen to learn how to improve their leadership abilities.

André led the team of authors who first built this course. In addition to his role with the University of New South Wales, he is the Leadership Specialist with the International Water Centre, which aims to foster tomorrow’s leaders in the water sector. He has extensive experience in designing, delivering and evaluating leadership development programs and short courses. His PhD research focused on the champion phenomenon and building customised leadership development programs for emerging leaders.
Class Facilitator

The role of your Class Facilitator is to support and enhance the learning process by encouraging interaction amongst participants, providing direction in understanding the course content, assessing participant progress through the course and providing feedback on work submitted. MBT Class Facilitators comprise academics and industry practitioners with relevant backgrounds.

You will be notified of your Class Facilitator’s name and contact details in your class confirmation email sent by MBT Student Services. Details will also be available in the gallery section of your online class for face-to-face and distance classes.

Course authors

The *Leadership in a Complex Environment* course was built in 2012 in response to strong feedback from staff and surveyed students that the MBT program needed to provide up-to-date, relevant and practical guidance on leadership. This demand reflects the rapidly changing, uncertain and complex nature of modern workplaces, and the need for leadership in such challenging contexts.

The course has been designed to provide up-to-date information on relevant leadership theories, models and conceptual frameworks, but also to keep the content grounded so that knowledge can be readily applied in practice. The choice of Units reflects the nature of leadership challenges faced by many MBT students, such as the need to provide leadership in diverse, cross-boundary teams and engage in forms of leadership to foster creativity and innovation. The course’s authors were recruited based on their academic expertise and practical experience in leadership and leadership development.

The authorship team consisted of the following people:

- Dr André Taylor (Course Coordinator, Leadership in a Complex Environment, MBT Program, UNSW, Units 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12)
- Dr Tracy Wilcox (Lecturer, UNSW Business School, Unit 3)
- Dr Jaco Lok (Senior Lecturer, UNSW Business School, Unit 7)
- Dr Mehreen Faruqi (former Academic Director, MBT Program, UNSW, Unit 10).

The course notes will be refreshed approximately every three years to keep practical examples and supporting academic readings current. This review process is particularly important for relatively new and rapidly evolving frameworks for understanding leadership, such as complexity leadership theory (see Unit 8).
Acknowledgements

The authorship team also wish to acknowledge the work of Bill Twyman (former MBT Course Development Manager) and Andrew Chambers (MBT Educational Designer – E-Learning and Web) in the process of reviewing and editing the course material.
Course information

Aims

This course was developed in recognition of the fact that many technology-based businesses and organisations now operate in environments characterised by rapid change, complexity, uncertainty and the need to work across organisational boundaries. These work environments represent a leadership challenge to organisations and people who wish to instigate and drive change, enable change, innovate or simply exert influence. This course aims to support students who are faced with this leadership challenge – to help them become more authentic, self-aware, creative, collaborative, flexible and effective leaders.

More specifically, this course aims to:

• provide emerging and established leaders working within technology-based work environments with opportunities to build self-awareness, acquire new knowledge and access practical tools to survive and thrive as leaders

• introduce leadership frameworks (e.g. theories and conceptual models) and research findings that are relevant to work environments that involve complexity, rapid change, uncertainty, and the need to innovate and collaborate across organisational boundaries

• strengthen the leadership attributes (e.g. knowledge, networks and skills) needed to address business problems, exert influence and drive change in technology-based environments – this includes the ability to exert influence vertically (e.g. to engage executives) and laterally (e.g. to engage colleagues across organisational boundaries)

• provide practical guidance on leadership-development principles and techniques that can be used to manage one’s own development as well as to assist others (e.g. staff and mentees)

• facilitate opportunities for the sharing of views and experiences related to aspects of leadership and leadership development. This objective reflects the view that all students will have some relevant experience of leadership (e.g. of particular forms, challenges or strategies), and this experience represents a potential resource to each class.

• provide a structured opportunity for students to incrementally build a personalised leadership development plan using knowledge gained from the course content, exercises and facilitated discussions. The process of building this plan begins in Unit 1 and culminates in Unit 12. The development of this plan is also part of the course’s assessment framework.
Structure

Unit 1, *An introduction to leadership in a complex environment*, sets the scene for the following Units by explaining key terms and concepts, such as the difference between leadership and management. It also provides a definition of leadership and explains why it is particularly important in work environments characterised by uncertainty, complexity and rapid change. It then presents a high-level overview of historically popular theories of leadership (e.g. situational leadership, charismatic leadership) as well as recent trends in the study of leadership. It concludes by communicating practical guidance to students on how to get the most out of the course.

Unit 2, *Personal values, personality traits and self-leadership*, encourages students to look inwards and build self-awareness. This Unit is based on the premise that to lead others we must first lead ourselves. It provides information on the significance of personal values and personality characteristics to leadership emergence and effectiveness. It also explores the notion of self-leadership, where leaders are aware of their nature and their needs as individuals (e.g. needs relating to one’s career, health and family), and are able to motivate and direct themselves to meet these needs.

Unit 3, *Ethics and authentic leadership*, responds to concerns that individuals and organisations in positions of authority often fail to meet social and ethical responsibilities. The Unit makes the point that without a clear ethical foundation, leadership is rudderless and developing leaders must be aware that all leadership is conducted within a social context. The Unit also provides an introduction to ethics and ethical thinking, as well as the notion of authentic leadership. It provides opportunities for students to reflect on the ethics underlying their own leadership behaviour and provides some tools to assist students to explore ethical dimensions of leadership challenges.

Unit 4, *Transformational leadership*, explains a popular model that is used to understand and develop leadership within organisations. The Unit provides two conceptual frameworks to understand and apply this approach to leadership. The Unit also explains the relationships between this form of leadership and leadership effectiveness, personality characteristics, leader demographics and a leader’s context. It explores the strengths and weaknesses of the model and provides students with opportunities to identify actions that could be taken to become a more effective transformational leader.

Unit 5, *Team leadership*, provides an introduction to teams and the different forms of leadership that can occur within teams (e.g. focused and distributed leadership). The Unit highlights the typical characteristics of high-performance teams and explains two models of team leadership. These models reflect the ‘functional approach’ to team leadership where the principal role of a team leader is to monitor the team’s needs and take
whatever action is needed at that time to meet these needs. The Unit also provides guidance on leading cross-boundary and virtual teams.

Unit 6, *Leadership for creativity and innovation*, provides guidance on how to foster innovation within organisational units (e.g. teams). This guidance operates at two levels: at the individual level where leaders learn to be more creative (i.e. self-leadership); and at the team level, where leaders can learn how to enable others to be more creative. The Unit begins by defining terms such as creativity, innovation and creative thinking. It also explains some of the key factors that contribute to creativity at the individual, job, team and organisational levels. It explores the relevance of various leadership theories to this leadership challenge and explains a conceptual model of creative leadership.

Unit 7, *Power and influence*, offers guidance on how to successfully exert influence. It provides definitions of power, politics and influence. It also explores the different types of power that leaders can build and use, as well as a range of influence tactics. The Unit emphasises that the ethical use of power and engaging in politics is essential to leadership, despite these terms often having negative connotations. It also provides opportunities for students to reflect on their own sources of power and influence strategies and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Unit 8, *Complexity leadership*, examines a relatively new and rapidly evolving perspective of leadership. The Unit explores forms of leadership that are needed within complex systems and for complex challenges. It begins by explaining the significant difference between technical problems and complex challenges (also known as adaptive challenges or wicked problems). It then describes three interconnected forms of leadership within organisations that are needed to address complex challenges. In particular, it focuses on ‘enabling leadership’ where leaders create environments where people can interact, experiment and let solutions emerge (e.g. through pilot projects or communities of practice). The Unit also highlights the importance of matching appropriate forms of leadership to different leadership situations, such as situations that involve crises, complicated problems and complex challenges.

Unit 9, *Emergent leadership, change agents and champions*, explores the difference between leadership and authority. It also focuses on people who engage in leadership behaviours that are not part of their formal role description. It explains some of the factors that contribute to the emergence of leaders and the types of power that leaders with little authority can use to exercise influence. The Unit also explores the overlapping concepts of change agents and champions. In particular, it highlights the significance of ‘champions of innovation’ who often play critical leadership roles in identifying and strongly advocating new ways of doing business within organisations. The Unit concludes by providing guidance on how to foster the champion phenomenon in order to help these emergent leaders to drive desirable change (e.g. the adoption of innovative technology).
Unit 10, *Part A: Sustainability leadership; Part B: Social networking for leaders*, reminds students that increasingly organisations are focused on delivering products and services to meet financial, social and ecological goals. The task of promoting sustainability within organisations, particularly at a cultural level, is a significant leadership challenge that typically involves many types of leaders (e.g. senior, assigned leaders and emergent leaders throughout the organisation). This Unit explains the nature of sustainability-related leadership challenges and the relevance of several leadership theories. It also explains some of the key attributes of effective sustainability leaders (e.g. their values, skills, traits, behaviours and social networks). The Unit also explores social networking as a critical leadership skill. It explains the different types of networks effective leaders cultivate and some of the strategies developing leaders can use to create such networks. These networks may provide leaders with access to new ideas, energy, personal support, career-development opportunities and the capacity to exert influence at an operational and strategic level.

Unit 11, *Leadership development principles and methods*, reminds students that developing as an effective leader is a challenging, lifelong process that requires individuals to take control of their own developmental process. The Unit offers guidance on leadership development principles and methods to use throughout one’s career. This guidance has direct relevance to building an individual leadership development plan (the focus of Unit 12).

Unit 12, *Individual leadership development plans*, provides practical guidance to students on how to build a high-quality individual leadership development plan. It describes the features of effective plans and a recommended process to build such a plan (a model plan/template is also provided). The development of such a plan is linked to the course’s assessment framework (i.e. Assignment 2). The intent is for students to use their plan to strategically apply new strategies, tools and behaviours in the workplace to improve their leadership effectiveness and accelerate their development as leaders.

**Learning outcomes**

After studying this course you should be able to:

- understand a range of leadership-related frameworks (e.g. theories and conceptual models), assessment tools, guidelines and research findings that you can use to improve your ability to exert influence and drive change, especially in work environments that involve complexity, rapid change, uncertainty, collaboration and working across organisational boundaries

- apply these frameworks to: analyse and reflect upon your own leadership ability as well as leadership challenges that are common in technology-based environments; and identify strategies to improve leadership effectiveness
• understand the principles and methods of leadership development that you can apply throughout your career to manage your own development, as well as help others to reach their leadership potential
• create and apply a practical individual leadership development plan that seeks to strengthen the leadership attributes (e.g. knowledge, networks and skills) you feel you need to address business challenges, exert influence and drive change in your work environment.

Skills and experience you will need

There are no prerequisites for this course. This course has been designed for people who have not studied leadership or been involved with leadership development activities before. It can be taken at any stage in your MBT Program.

Students with experience leading projects or teams of staff should benefit from being able to more easily contextualise the information presented in this course. You do not, however, need to be an assigned leader in an organisation to do the course.

Please refer to the AGSM Learning Guide (available in Moodle) for information you will find very useful in pursuing your studies.

Resources

There is no prescribed textbook for this course. However, if students would like to acquire a single, broad-ranging and high-quality textbook on leadership to complement the course notes, the following book is recommended.


Relationship to other courses in the MBT program

This course provides an introduction to what leadership is, why it is important, and provides several different conceptual frameworks to help identify effective leadership strategies in different situations. Consequently, the course will help students to understand the leadership dimensions of different challenges that are explored in other parts of the MBT program (e.g. case studies).
More specifically, there are some clear links with the following MBT courses: GBAT9103 Business Management for a Sustainable Environment, GBAT9119 Managing for Organisational Sustainability and GBAT9104 Management of Innovation and Technical Change.
Assessment

There are two major assignments to be completed for GBAT9131 *Leadership in a Complex Environment*. Assignment 1 is an analytical report that uses several conceptual frameworks of leadership to examine a real case study. Assignment 2 involves preparing an individual leadership development plan with a covering report. The process of preparing this plan starts in Week 1. Note that assignments must be received by 9.30am Sydney time on the due dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Throughout the semester</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Monday 20 April 2015 (Week 7)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Monday 1 June 2015 (Week 13)</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Extensions to assignment deadlines will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, and where adequate supporting documentation can be provided. Please note that work commitments do not constitute grounds for an extension. Your Class Facilitator may approve an extension of up to two days, after which requests must be made through the special consideration process. For details about this process, see: [https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration](https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration)

In the case of late lodgement without an approved extension, 10% of the assignment weighting will be deducted for each day late.
Continual course improvement

MBT courses are revised each time they run, with updated course overviews and assessment tasks. All courses are reviewed and revised every three years and significant course updates are carried out in line with industry developments, and also when new editions of prescribed textbooks are published.

The MBT surveys students via the UNSW CATEI system each time a course is offered. The data collected provides anonymous feedback from students on the quality of course content and materials, class facilitation, student support services and the MBT Program in general. This student feedback is taken into account in all course revisions.

The UNSW Business School also monitors the quality of students’ learning experiences in all its programs. A random selection of completed assessment tasks may be used for quality-assurance purposes. This information will be aggregated and used:

- to determine the extent to which program learning outcomes are being achieved for accreditation purposes
- to improve the quality of UNSW Business School programs.

All material used will be treated as confidential and these processes will have no bearing on course grades.

Student evaluations from the last presentation of the course

This course was first delivered in 2013 via two online classes. In 2014, a face-to-face class was added. Overall, the feedback from students in 2013 and 2014 was strongly positive. In 2014, student ratings for the quality of the course across all three classes averaged 5.3 on a 0 to 6 Likert-type scale. Ratings for the quality of teaching/facilitation averaged between 5.3 and 5.6 across the three classes.

Coordinator’s response

This feedback was used to make some improvements to the course, such as providing a more succinct description of the assessment tasks, and developing a new framework to assess student participation in face-to-face classes. We have also changed the way we use readings in the course to reduce the time commitment for students. In short, all readings are now provided as resources that students may choose to use, but are not compulsory. In addition, we have highlighted which readings we consider...
to be ‘highly recommended’, and ensured there are no more than two of these readings per unit.

Based on feedback from past students, it is suggested that future students are likely to benefit the most from this course if they:

• engage with all of the course materials (i.e. the overview videos and course notes)
• quickly gain an understanding of the overall course structure, and the nature of the individual leadership development plan that will be prepared as Assignment 2 at the end of the course
• clearly understand and apply the ‘communication guidelines’ for their class (these will be provided to students in Week 1)
• familiarise themselves with the nature of Assignments 1 and 2 early in the course so they can recognise how each Unit can help them to efficiently complete these assignments
• manage their time so they can fully engage with all of the weekly discussion/learning activities (e.g. visit the online discussion and contribute at least twice per week)
• adopt a mindset of being an active student who participates in all learning activities and helps to create a supportive and rewarding learning environment for the whole class.