LEADERSHIP IN A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

Semester 2, 2015

Course Overview
Important Notice

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We welcome ideas to improve these course materials. Please email suggestions to coursematerials@agsm.edu.au

# COURSE OVERVIEW

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### Semester 2, 2015

#### Leadership in a Complex Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week no</th>
<th>Week begins</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Assessment due (% weighting)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participation is assessed throughout the semester (20%)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3 August</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7 September</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due on 7 September by 9.30am Sydney time – analytical report (35%)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14 September</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>21 September</td>
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<td>19 October</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>26 October</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Assignment 2 due on 26 October by 9.30am Sydney time – covering report and plan (45%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Monday 5 October is a public holiday in NSW

Mid-term recess: Saturday 26 September – Monday 5 October*
This course was developed in recognition of the fact that many 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.

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 degree 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.

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.
This course will help students to understand the leadership dimensions of different challenges that are explored in other parts of the program (e.g. case studies).

More specifically, there are some clear links with the following courses: Business Management for a Sustainable Environment, Managing for Organisational Sustainability and Management of Innovation and Technical Change.

Course learning outcomes

After studying this course you should be able to:
1. 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
2. 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
3. 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
4. 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
5. apply relevant conceptual frameworks, ethical decision support systems and models of leadership to address ethical dilemmas and sustainability challenges.

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.
Program quality assurance

A number of international standards are embedded in the program to ensure the courses you study are high quality. At present this includes specific design to meet AACSB accreditation standards (through measurement of students’ program-level learning outcomes), and the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (UNPRME). EQUIS accreditation is also held by UNSW Business School.

Program-level learning goals and outcomes assessed for AACSB accreditation

The Course Learning Outcomes are what you should be able to do by the end of this course if you participate fully in learning activities and successfully complete the assessment items.

The Course Learning Outcomes will also help you to achieve at least some of the overall Program Learning Goals that are set for all postgraduate coursework students in AGSM programs.

However, course-level learning outcomes are not sufficient to fully describe a student’s skills as they complete the qualification, and so we add an additional set of Program Learning Goals. These specify what we want you to have achieved by the time you successfully complete your degree. As an example, for the Teamwork learning goal we specify: ‘Our graduates will be effective team participants’.

You demonstrate that you have met these Program Learning Goals by achieving specific Program Learning Outcomes that are directly related to each goal. These indicate what you are able to do by the end of your degree. In the case of the Teamwork goal, the related outcome includes: ‘participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams’. Note that the ability to meet these program-level learning goals and outcomes will be measured in each capstone course for your degree program.

The Program Learning Goals (and related outcomes) used at the AGSM for the MBAX and MBT programs are as follows.

1. Knowledge:
   - Our graduates will have current disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge applicable in local and global contexts.
   - Learning outcome: Students should be able to identify and apply current knowledge disciplinary or interdisciplinary theory and professional practice to business in local and global environments.

2. Critical thinking and problem-solving:
   - Our graduates will have critical thinking and problem-solving skills applicable to business and management practice or issues.
   - Learning outcome: Students should be able to identify, research and analyse complex issues and problems in business and/or management, and propose appropriate and well-justified solutions.
3. Communication:
   Our graduates will be effective communicators in professional contexts.
   Learning outcome for 3a – Written Communication: Students should be able to produce written documents that communicate complex disciplinary ideas and information effectively for the intended audience and purpose.
   Learning outcome for 3b – Oral Communication: Students should be able to produce oral presentations that communicate complex disciplinary ideas and information effectively for the intended audience and purpose.

4. Teamwork:
   Our graduates will be effective team participants.
   Learning outcome: Students should be able to participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams, and to reflect on their own teamwork, and on the team’s processes and ability to achieve outcomes.

5. Ethical, social and environmental responsibility:
   Our graduates will be aware of ethical, social, cultural and environmental implications of business issues and practice.
   Learning outcome for 5a – Ethical, social and environmental responsibility: Students should be able to identify and assess ethical, environmental and/or sustainability considerations in business decision-making and practice.
   Learning objective for 5b – Social and cultural awareness: Students should be able to consider social and cultural implications of business.

6. Leadership:
   Our graduates will have an understanding of effective leadership.
   Learning outcome: Students should be able to reflect upon their own personal leadership style and on the leadership needs of business and of team.

Associated governing bodies

AACSB: http://www.aacsb.edu
EQUIS: https://www.efmd.org/accreditation-main/equis
UNPRME: http://www.unprme.org
Resources

Learning resources

You have four major resources to help you learn:

1. The course materials, comprising the weekly study units with readings, references, insights and commentary. You will do much of your learning outside the classroom by working through the course materials, and by completing the exercises as they arise.

2. Your online or face-to-face classes with your facilitator. The facilitator’s job is to guide your learning by conducting class discussion, answering questions that might arise after you have done the week’s work, providing insights from his or her practical experience and understanding of theory, providing you with feedback on your assignments, and directing discussions and debates that will occur between you and your co-participants in the classroom.

3. Your co-participants. Your colleagues in the classroom are an invaluable potential source of learning for you. Their work and life, and their willingness to question and argue with the course materials, the facilitator and your views, represent a great learning opportunity. They bring much valuable insight to the learning experience.

4. In addition to course-based resources, please also refer to the AGSM Learning Guide (available in Moodle) for tutorials and guides that will help you learn more about effective study practices and techniques.

Course materials

The course materials comprise this Course Overview, the Assessment Details and 12 Units. Each Unit has a number of associated readings.

Readings

Readings are provided as resources that you may choose to use, but are not compulsory. We have highlighted which readings we consider to be ‘highly recommended’, and ensured there are no more than two of these readings per Unit. Readings are available via active hyperlinks and URLs. Please note that you may be required to enter your UNSW zID and zPass in order to access these hyperlinked articles. Please also note that only the two ‘highly recommended’ readings are included in the print version of these materials (if permitted under copyright).

If you experience any problems in accessing the readings, please try the following:
- Search directly for the article on the UNSW Library home page (https://library.unsw.edu.au/) by placing the name of the article in the Search box.
• Search directly for the book excerpt on the UNSW Library home page (https://library.unsw.edu.au/) by placing your course code into the Search box. When you do this all the course readings that are excerpts from books will appear.

**Book**

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:

**eLearning**

To access Moodle, go to: https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/agsm/students/mbt-students/online-classes and select Login to Moodle.
Login with your student zID (username) and zPass (password).

**Moodle eLearning support**

Should you have any difficulties accessing your course online, please contact the eLearning support below:
For *login* issues:
**UNSW IT Service Centre**
Hours: Monday to Friday: 8am – 8pm
Saturday and Sunday: 11am – 2pm
Email: ITServiceCentre@unsw.edu.au
Phone: Internal: x51333
      External: 02 9385 1333
      International: +61 2 9385 1333

For help with technical issues and problems:
**External TELT Support**
Hours: Monday to Friday: 7.30am – 9.30pm
       Saturdays and Sundays: 8.30am – 4.30pm
Email: externaltelescope@unsw.edu.au
Phone: Internal: x53331
      External: 02 9385 3331
      International: +61 2 9385 3331
Administrative and eLearning support

Student Experience
If you have any administrative queries, they should be addressed to Student Experience.

Student Experience
AGSM MBA Programs
UNSW Business School
SYDNEY NSW 2052
Phone: +61 2 9931 9400
Email: studentexperience@agsm.edu.au

Additional student resources and support
The University and the UNSW Business School provide a wide range of support services for students, including:

- **Business School – Education Development Unit (EDU)**
  https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/learning-support
  The EDU provides academic writing, study skills and maths support specifically for Business students. Services include workshops, online resources, and individual consultations.
  EDU Office: Level 1, Room 1033, Quadrangle Building.
  Phone: +61 2 9385 5584; Email: edu@unsw.edu.au

- **UNSW Learning Centre**
  www.lc.unsw.edu.au
  Academic skills support services, including workshops and resources, for all UNSW students. See website for details.

- **Library training and search support services**
  http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html

- **UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services**
  https://student.unsw.edu.au/wellbeing
  Provides support and services if you need help with your personal life, getting your academic life back on track or just want to know how to stay safe, including free, confidential counselling. Office: Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building;
  Phone: +61 2 9385 5418.

- **Student Equity & Disabilities Unit**
  http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au
  Provides advice regarding equity and diversity issues, and support for students who have a disability or disadvantage that interferes with their learning. Office: Ground Floor, John Goodsell Building;
  Phone: +61 2 9385 4734; Email: seadu@unsw.edu.au
Continual course improvement

Our 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.

The AGSM 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 program in general. This student feedback is taken into account in all course revisions.

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. At the time of writing, student feedback via CATEI was only available for the 2013 and 2014 classes (i.e. five classes in total).

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

The last round of student 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 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.

At the time of writing (2015), we believe the design of this course is working well, the content is up to date, and no major changes are warranted.

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 provided by the Class Facilitator (e.g. 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)

• are currently employed in the workforce, as the course includes elements that are more easily completed in this context (e.g. seeking feedback from colleagues on leadership-related strengths and weaknesses)

• 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.
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 UNSW Australia, 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. 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 AGSM Student Experience. 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 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 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, 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*, 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, AGSM @ UNSW Business School, 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 wishes to acknowledge the work of Bill Twyman (former MBT Course Development Manager) and Andrew Chambers (AGSM Educational Development Manager) in the process of reviewing and editing the course material.