MNGT6271
Approaches to Change

Session 2, 2015
The UNSW Business School is actively monitoring student learning and quality of the student experience in all its programs. A random selection of completed assessment tasks may be used for quality assurance, such as to determine the extent to which program learning goals are being achieved. The information is required for accreditation purposes, and only aggregated findings will be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of UNSW Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential and will not be related to course grades.
Approaches to Change

Course overview

We welcome ideas to improve these course materials.
Please email suggestions to coursematerials@agsm.edu.au
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## Approaches to Change
Graduate Certificate in Change Management (GCCM)

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<tr>
<th>Week no.</th>
<th>Week begins</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Assessment due (% weighting)</th>
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<td>Introductory activities</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>25-May</td>
<td>2 &amp; 3</td>
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<td>1-June</td>
<td>4 &amp; 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8-June</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dialogue 2</td>
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<td>15-June</td>
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<td>22-June</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment 1</strong> due 22 June (15%)</td>
<td>Dialogue 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29-June</td>
<td>6 &amp; 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Videoconference 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6-July</td>
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<td>Dialogue 4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>13-July</td>
<td>8 &amp; 9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>20-July</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment 2</strong> due 20 July (25%)</td>
<td>Dialogue 5</td>
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<td>27-July</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3-August</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dialogue 6</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>10-August</td>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Assessment 3</strong> Online dialogues 1–7 (30%)</td>
<td>Dialogue 7</td>
<td>Videoconference 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17-August</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assessment 4</strong> due 22 August (30%)</td>
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Getting started

Welcome to Approaches to Change, one of the four courses in the Graduate Certificate in Change Management

In this opening section of the Course Overview, we briefly outline some opening activities that will enable you to make a good start in your studies. Ideally, you would have completed all or most of these activities before the beginning of Week 1.

☐ Connect your UNSW zMail address to a preferred email address
- Make sure that emails sent to your UNSW zMail address are forwarded to a preferred email address. To do this, go to: https://www.it.unsw.edu.au/students/zmail/redirect_external.html
- Your instructor will use your UNSW zMail address to send you important information about the course (including assessment feedback and grades). So it is important that you set up, and keep current, your email forwarding address at UNSW Identity Manager: https://idm.unsw.edu.au
- Please take a few minutes to check that now. It will ensure you do not miss out on emails vital to your success and enjoyment of the course.

☐ Read the Course Overview
- This will give you a picture of the overall goals, structure and content of the course, the assessment requirements, the learning processes that you will be using and the resources that will enable you to make the most of the learning opportunities.

☐ Log in to the online classroom and complete four introductory activities:
- Post your profile
- Book a place in an introductory videoconference in Week 1
- Send an introductory email to your instructor
- Post two or three contributions to the Introductory Dialogue in the week leading up to Week 1.

These activities will help you to get to know other members of your class and your instructor, find your way around the website, and start familiarising yourself with the online dialogue process.
To log in to the course website:

- Go to https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/.
- Then, enter your zNumber and your zPass to access Moodle.
- Under ‘Course overview’, click over your Approaches to Change class and this will take you to the online classroom and the course Homepage.

For details of assistance with login problems, see the sub-section on eLearning support at the end of the section on Learning resources.

☐ **Seek a learning partner/study group and a mentor**

- Take steps towards forming a learning partnership or study group (see p. 11 of this Overview).
- Take steps to find someone who could act as your mentor during the course (see p. 12 of this Overview).

☐ **Survey what lies ahead**

- Look ahead at the tasks and activities over Weeks 1 to 13 and consider how you will program your activities week-by-week. The following flow diagram gives an indication of the pattern of tasks and activities over the span of the course. Further details about these tasks and activities are given in later sections of this Course Overview.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Intro</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-May</td>
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<td>25-May</td>
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<td>1-Jun</td>
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<td>17-Aug</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
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<td>Units 2 &amp; 3</td>
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<td>Units 4 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>Units 8 &amp; 9</td>
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<td>Unit 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unit 11</td>
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</table>

**Assessment 1**
Due 22 June
Preparing Assessment 1:
Action learning review

**Assessment 2**
Due 20 July
Preparing Assessment 2:
Diagnosis of an organisational problem or challenge

**Assessment 3**
**Online Dialogues**
<table>
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**Assessment 4**
Due 22 August
Arranging and conducting an interview with a change agent

Writing Assessment 4:
Analysis and evaluation of a change agent's effectiveness

**Video Conferences**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VC1</th>
<th>VC2</th>
<th>VC3</th>
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Course outline

Learning goals

As in all GCCM courses, our broad aim in Approaches to Change is to help you strengthen your effectiveness as a change agent. We define ‘change agent’ very broadly as:

a person who attempts to positively influence organisational change through his or her own actions and through influencing the actions of others.

Our focus in Approaches to Change is on:

• the concepts, frameworks and theories that guide your thinking and practice as a change agent.
• the tools and methods that you use in critically important change activities like diagnosing what needs to be changed, deciding how best to change it, and building the required level of commitment to support and enact the change.

The four central goals of the course are to encourage and enable you to:

• examine the concepts, frameworks and theories that have influenced your perspectives on change management and your approach to managing change
• extend and enrich your ideas and perspectives
• develop your skills in applying these concepts, frameworks and theories – to analyse and evaluate change management practices, to diagnose what needs to be changed, to decide on the best change to make, and to find effective ways to influence change
• increase your effectiveness in managing change by expanding your change agent toolkit and developing the situational judgement to choose the best tools for particular change management challenges.

To support these goals, successive units will outline:

• a range of concepts, frameworks and theories for understanding change and change management
• a variety of tools that you can use in critically important activities like diagnosis, decision-making, assessing readiness for change and building commitment for change

Some of the terms we have used to describe these broad aims (e.g. ‘frameworks’, ‘theories’, ‘perspectives’) are explained more fully after the following list of learning outcomes.
Learning outcomes

The course aims to enable you to:

• clearly articulate the concepts, frameworks and theories that guide your understanding of organisational change and your practices in managing change
• understand and constructively critique a variety of different approaches to managing and leading change, and the ideas and assumptions that underpin them
• work flexibly with a more expansive and diverse repertoire of ideas and perspective, sometimes selecting particular perspectives for particular purposes, at other times working with multiple perspectives
• become more skilful in using ideas, frameworks and theories to analyse change processes and devise effective ways of managing change
• use a more systematic approach to change management and be able to explain and justify your approach to others
• work flexibly with a more expansive and diverse repertoire of tools and methods
• understand others’ approaches to leading and managing change
• use the action learning cycle to continually examine and strengthen your approaches to managing change.

The course materials will provide you with ideas and tools to enable you to achieve these learning outcomes. The online dialogues, the videoconferences and the written assessments will also support your learning.

We will continually ask you to test your understanding of course concepts and to test the course concepts themselves, by applying them to your work and experience as a change agent. This could involve using them to analyse your own actions or the actions of others, or to analyse how change is led and managed in your organisation. The online dialogues will provide many opportunities to apply course concepts in this way.
Vocabulary used in the course

We will use 'concept' to refer to an idea that can be used to identify and understand a significant factor or element in organisational change. For example, Edgar Schein made an important distinction between two roles that change agent can play – a 'content-expert' role in which the change agent influences change by using expertise to offer solutions and a 'process-facilitation' role, in which the change agents helps people to find their own solutions. Here, Schein was making an important distinction between two concepts for analysing a change agent's roles.

We will use 'framework' to mean a set of connected concepts (ideas and distinctions) to distinguish and arrange various elements in a topic-domain. In Unit 1, for example, we look at some frameworks for distinguishing the different kinds of roles that a change agent can play in a change process.

A theory goes further than a framework to say something about causal relationships between the elements or factors distinguished in the theory. To turn a framework into a theory, we need a set of causal arrows between the elements in the framework.

We will use 'model' interchangeably with 'theory'. 'Mental model' will be used for a theory or model that someone uses implicitly or explicitly to understand the world and to guide action. The Business Dictionary's defines a mental model as follow:

Beliefs, ideas, images, and verbal descriptions that we consciously or unconsciously form from our experiences and which (when formed) guide our thoughts and actions within narrow channels. These representations of perceived reality explain cause and effect to us, and lead us to expect certain results, give meaning to events, and predispose us to behave in certain ways.

An important distinction that we'll return to at various points in the course is that between theories-in-use and espoused theories (Argyris & Schon 1974). Your espoused theory is the theory that you would sincerely tell people is the theory that guides your thinking and practice as a change agent. So for example, someone's espoused theory about the best way to manage change may favour highly collaborative and consultative approaches. Your theory-in-use is the theory or model that is implicit in the approaches that you actually use. So someone with an espoused theory that favours collaboration and consultation may have a theory-in-use that is much more directive and non-consultative.

So we will be inviting you to reflect, not only on your espoused theories and models, but also on the theories and models that are implicit in how you actually manage change.

(For a fuller account of Argyris and Schon’s distinction between a theory-in-use and an espoused theory, go to:

In *Approaches to Change*, we will frequently be talking about the change agent’s perspectives and the importance of working with multiple perspectives. We will use ‘perspective’ to mean a way of looking at something (e.g. at resistance to change) – how we perceive, interpret and understand it. The perspective with which we approach resistance will be determined by our ideas, frameworks and theories about how and why people resist change.

## Course structure

### Introduction

Unit 1 sets the scene by outlining a framework for understanding the variety of processes involved in organisational change. We look at some distinctions between different types of change and at the different roles change agents can play. The unit concludes with a review of the rates of success and failure in change programs.

### Section 1: Influencing change

Unit 2 outlines some theories about the factors that influence human behaviour and discusses the implications of these theories for the change agent. In Unit 3, we look at the sources of power and influencing tactics that a change agent might use to bring about change.

### Section 2: Perspectives on change

In this section, we examine some perspectives and theories that have significantly influenced change management thinking and practice.

In Unit 4, we look at the strategic perspective and systems thinking. In Unit 5, we explore a variety of different perspectives on change and how a change agent could operate with multiple theories and perspectives rather than looking for the one best theory and approach.

### Section 3: Diagnosis and prescription

In Units 6 and 7, we examine the challenges of using diagnosis to identify the core change issues that need to be addressed, and then deciding on the best change to address these issues.

### Section 4: Creating momentum for change

In Unit 8, we discuss a number of different approaches to building commitment to change; and, in Unit 9, we examine ways of understanding resistance to change and constructively responding to it. Unit 10 reviews a variety of models of change leadership.
Review

The final unit is a review unit that provides an opportunity for you to take an integrative look at the ideas and approaches that we have covered in the course.

The unit structure is summarised in the following diagram.
The action learning cycle

In each of the units in the course, we encourage you to reflect on your work as a change agent, devise ways to develop your skills and improve your performance, and begin implementing your development plans. These processes are part of the action learning cycle.

In the action learning cycle, you use information – gained from self-awareness, self-observation, observation of your environment and feedback from others – to reflect on your practice, performance and skills as a change agent. In your reflections, you aim to identify:

- what you do effectively as a change agent and the strengths that enable you to be effective
- areas of your work where there is a need or opportunity to improve your effectiveness.

You then generate ideas about ways to develop your skills and improve your performance and you formulate development plans. In the implementation phase of the cycle, you take the steps outlined in your plans.

The cycle is summarised in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 Using action learning for skills development**
Learning resources

In *Approaches to Change*, the following resources are available to assist you in your learning:

- the units and readings
- your instructor
- your learning partner or study group
- your mentor
- online dialogues
- videoconferences.

The units and readings

The units and readings are intended to provide concepts, theories and frameworks to help you reflect on your skills and devise plans to improve your effectiveness as a change agent.

The exercises in the units encourage you to continually apply the course ideas to yourself and to your work as a change agent, and to explore their practical implications for your development.

You can find the units and readings in your online classroom on the eLearning website.

To log in to the course website:

- Go to https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/.
- Enter your zNumber and your zPass to access Moodle.
- Under ‘Course overview’, click over your *Approaches to Change* class and this will take you to the course Homepage.

For details of assistance with login problems, see the sub-section on eLearning support at the end of the section on Learning resources.
Your instructor

Your main contact with your instructor will be in the online dialogues on the eLearning website (https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au). Your instructor will post dialogue topics and facilitate the dialogue process.

Feedback on your written assessments will be sent to you via email.

As one of the introductory activities for the week before Week 1, you are invited to send an email to your instructor introducing yourself and outlining your reasons for undertaking the course.

Your learning partner or study group

Your learning partner/study group is a critical ingredient of the GCCM learning process.

It is best to find a learning partner/study group in your geographic area so that you have an opportunity for face-to-face contact with fellow students during the course.

Learning partners/study groups normally meet once a week. Within each unit, we have indicated particular exercises as suggested topics for discussion with your learning partner or study group.

In forming your learning partnership/study group, it will be helpful to use the profiles that members of the class have posted on the online classroom (https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au).

Once you have selected a learning partner/study group, it would be good to clarify the arrangements for meeting, your learning goals for the partnership/group and the ways you will be working together.

Remember that you are a learning resource for your learning partner/study group – a source of support, insight and challenge. It would be good to reflect on the contributions you can make as an effective learning partner.
Your mentor

Your mentor’s role is to assist you in linking your learnings to the workplace. You could have the same mentor through all the GCCM courses or find a different mentor for each course.

After the initial contact with your mentor, six mentoring sessions are recommended over the duration of the course, with specific activities suggested for each session (see the Schedule of contacts, later in this Course Overview).

The GCCM Mentor’s Handbook outlines the mentor’s role. We encourage you to read this outline. It will give you an idea of what might be expected from your mentor and may influence your decision about whom to approach. When you approach someone to be your mentor, please provide him or her with a copy of the Handbook.

In your initial contact with your mentor, you will need to discuss your arrangements for further meetings and what you expect from him/her.

You should also discuss your mentor’s expectations for the mentoring relationship. This is a learning opportunity for them too and an opportunity to discuss the latest thinking about change management with you. In return for the wisdom, guidance and support provided by your mentor, make sure that he/she receives intellectual stimulation from you.

The online dialogues

There are seven assessable online dialogues in Approaches to Change. These provide opportunities to explore course concepts, frameworks and theories and their application to your work as a change agent and to your organisation’s approach to change management. Each online dialogue is an important forum for sharing your ideas, experiences and learnings with fellow-students and with your instructor.

The introductory activities in the week before Week 1 will provide opportunities to explore the dialogue process before the first assessable dialogue in Week 1.

The seven dialogues together count towards 30% of the grade, each dialogue counting equally.

Later in this Overview, we provide more advice about your contributions to the online dialogues. Further advice is given in Section 2 of Managing Your Learning, which can be found in the Resources area of the eLearning website (https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au).
Videoconferences

There will be three videoconferences with your instructor during the course, with about 6 participants in each videoconference. The first videoconference in Week 1 will provide an opportunity to clarify course requirements, learning processes and resources.

Student services

AGSM MBA Programs

Student Experience

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

Student Experience
AGSM MBA Programs
UNSW Business School
UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052

Tel: +61 2 9931 9400
Fax: +61 2 9931 9205
email: studentexperience@agsm.edu.au

Courier address:
AGSM Building, Gate 11, Botany Street,
UNSW Campus, Randwick NSW 2031

Mailing address:
Student Experience
AGSM MBA Programs
UNSW Business School
UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052

UNSW Business School

Education Development Unit (EDU)

(https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/learning-support/consultations)

Academic writing, study skills and maths support specifically for UNSW Business School, AGSM and MBT students. Services include workshops, online and printed resources, and individual consultations.
EDU Office: Level 1, Quadrangle Building; Ph: + 61 2 9385 5584; Email: edu@unsw.edu.au.
UNSW services

- 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

- UNSW IT Service Desk
  Technical support for problems logging in to websites, downloading documents etc. Library, Level 2; Ph: +61 2 9385 1333.
  Website www.its.unsw.edu.au/support/support_home.html

- UNSW Counselling Service
  (www.counselling.unsw.edu.au)
  Free, confidential service for problems of a personal or academic nature; and workshops on study issues such as ‘Coping With Stress’ and ‘Procrastination’.
  Office: Level 2, Quadrangle East Wing; Ph: +61 2 9385 5418.

- Student Equity & Disabilities Unit
  (http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au)
  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; Ph: +61 2 9385 4734.
Online dialogue

Dialogue, discussion and debate

Peter Senge (2006) makes an important distinction between two processes that a group can use to exchange and explore views, ideas and experiences – processes he labels ‘discussion’ and ‘dialogue’.

Senge defines ‘discussion’ as a process in which the purpose is to ‘win’, in the sense of ‘having one’s views accepted by the group’ (2006, p. 240). The extreme version of this kind of process is a debate in which each side seeks to demolish the position of the other. In dialogue, on the other hand, individuals suspend their assumptions and their attachment to their opinions and focus on expanding and enriching a shared understanding of the topic or issue.

Note that Senge does not dismiss the value of discussion as a process. He writes that ‘both are important to a team capable of continual generative learning, but their power lies in their synergy, which is not likely to be present when the distinctions between them are not appreciated’ (2006, p. 240).

However, we have labelled our online activities 'dialogues' because we wish to encourage a process of dialogue rather than discussion, believing dialogue to be more effective for the learning process in this course.

Table 1 further unpacks the distinction between dialogue on the one hand and discussion and debate on the other.
Table 1  *Dialogue, discussion and debate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
<th>DISCUSSION AND DEBATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MINDSET</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer or that there a number of ‘right’ answers</td>
<td>Assuming there is a right answer and you have it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing all sides of an issue</td>
<td>Seeing two sides of an issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willing to suspend and test your assumptions</td>
<td>Invested in/committed to your assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness to letting your assumptions go</td>
<td>Determined to be right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to play with and try out new ideas and possibilities</td>
<td>Resistant to entertaining alternative points of view</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GOALS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expanding options and appreciating complexity</td>
<td>Seeking closure by deciding which view is to prevail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding common ground and working toward a common understanding; Win-Win</td>
<td>Attempting to show that the other side is wrong and that you are right; Win-Lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your view is enlarged and changed</td>
<td>Your view is affirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shared understanding to which all contribute and which is: • greater than the sum of its parts • richer than any single participant’s contribution</td>
<td>Aiming for one view to prevail over others Deciding what is right or Seeking a compromise between alternative views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive, inquiring</td>
<td>Exclusive, polarising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared collaborative and co-operative enquiry – exploring complexities and options</td>
<td>Competitive and oppositional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on commonalities and connections</td>
<td>Focusing on differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building on others’ contributions</td>
<td>Using counter arguments to demolish others’ contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing your power and using the power of the group</td>
<td>Using your individual power and the power of your argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding and exploring new options and shared understandings. Keeping the discussion open to challenge and divergent views</td>
<td>Seeking a conclusion that ratifies your position. By creating a winner and a loser, discouraging further discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPRESSING YOUR VIEWS AND IDEAS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting your assumptions for examination and testing</td>
<td>Defending your assumptions as the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO OTHERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to understand, find meaning and common ground</td>
<td>Listening to find flaws and construct counter-arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for strengths and value in others’ positions</td>
<td>Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others’ positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging that others’ thinking can improve on your own</td>
<td>Defending yourself and your views against others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from three sources:
Guidelines for online participation

Getting started

If you defer posting until later in the dialogue week, you may find that by the time you attempt to contribute, there is a daunting number of postings to read and/or that most of what you wanted to say has already been said. So the earlier you can start the better.

If you are new to the GCCM, you might be a little nervous about getting online. Our advice is to take the plunge, begin posting early and then actively build your confidence as you become more familiar with the dialogue process.

Reader-friendly postings

Feedback from students indicates that they find that the following kinds of postings from fellow students frustrating and time consuming, discouraging rather than encouraging dialogue:

• Long postings that read more like a ‘brain dump’ than insightful commentary.

• Postings that make more than one or two key points. A reader friendly posting will often make just one point, with a brief supporting example or reason, ending with a question to stimulate further discussion.

• Postings that repeat course material in the student’s own words.
• Postings that do not link back to previous postings on the same topic. This suggests that either the student has not read others’ contributions and/or that the student is not engaging in a dialogue.

• Postings that repeat points already made by other students.

The implications for you in crafting your contributions are to:

• keep postings short and to the point
• read other relevant postings before drafting yours and build on these postings
• go for quality of insight rather than quantity of material.

The following is one simple template for an effective posting.

• Acknowledge and value previous contributions.
• Add value e.g. via clarification, providing an example, presenting a different view or perspective, asking a question to explore a previous posting, etc.
• Invite further responses via a thought-provoking invitation or question.

**Keeping track**

As more messages are posted, it will become increasingly difficult to keep track of everything. Don’t worry. You don’t have to keep track of everything everyone has said. If you were in a crowded room with everyone talking at once, you would not be expected to keep track of all the conversations.

It will help everyone decide which conversations to join if the dialogues are clearly structured into threads, with the postings in each thread headlined to indicate the topic of the thread.

Your instructor will post some dialogue topics and questions at the beginning of each dialogue week. However, feel free to post on any topics or issues relating to the week’s unit. One way of contributing to a lively dialogue is to post interesting questions or examples for discussion.
Other suggestions

The following are some additional suggestions for building a fruitful dialogue:

- Respond quickly to others’ postings. It can be off-putting to be out there alone!
- Be polite and look for opportunities to express appreciation and give positive feedback.
- Use inclusive humour and a light touch.
- Acknowledge other participants’ contributions before putting forward an alternative perspective.
- Actively invite and encourage contributions from others.
- Use other contributors’ first names in responding to their postings.
- Remember that there are no non-verbal clues in an online dialogue, only what’s on the screen. So you need to be particularly sensitive about the way in which you put your ideas across and respond to others.
- Have fun, enjoy the process and play a little with the possibilities.

eLearning support

For enrolment and login issues contact:

UNSW IT Service Centre
Email: ITServiceCentre@unsw.edu.au
Internal: x51333
External: +61 2 9385 1333
Hours: Monday to Friday: 8am – 8pm
Saturday and Sunday: 11am – 2pm

For ALL issues relating to the Moodle online platform contact:

External TELT Support
Email: externalteltsuppport@unsw.edu.au
Internal: x53331
External: +61 2 9385 3331
Hours: Monday to Friday: 7.30am – 9.30pm
Saturdays and Sundays: 8.30am – 4.30pm
Schedule of contacts

Videoconferences with your instructor

In addition to the contact with your instructor in the online dialogues, you will make contact with your instructor in three videoconferences. The schedule below is provided as a guideline only and could change depending on the needs of your class. Your instructor will advise you of any changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Videoconference topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1        | 25 May         | • Your learning goals and expectations  
                      • Course requirements, including the requirements for the assessments  
                      • Learning processes in the course, including the online dialogues  
                      • Assessment 1  
                      • Your learning strategies |
| 6        | 29 June        | • The online dialogues  
                      • Your learnings from the course so far  
                      • Assessment 2 |
| 12       | 10 August      | • Review and integration of Units 1 to 10  
                      • Assessment 4 |

Contact with your mentor

Mentors provide a bridge between theory and practice. The following is a suggested schedule of six meetings, with discussion topics. You may wish to adapt this schedule in the light of your learning goals and your mentor’s availability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Purpose of contact and topics for discussion</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 or 1</td>
<td>18 or 25 May</td>
<td>Make initial contact with your mentor and discuss the timing, topics and process of your future meetings. Discuss the change agent roles your mentor has played.</td>
<td>Course overview Unit 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>8 or 15 June</td>
<td>Interview your mentor about his/her ideas about what motivates people. Discuss your mentor’s use of power sources and influencing tactics in change programs.</td>
<td>Units 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29 June</td>
<td>Discuss the perspectives and theories that have guided your mentor’s approach to change management.</td>
<td>Units 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>13 July</td>
<td>Interview your mentor about his/her approach to diagnosis and decision making.</td>
<td>Units 6 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>Discuss your mentor’s approach to building commitment to change. Interview your mentor about situations in which he/she encountered resistance to change and about how he/she dealt with the resistance.</td>
<td>Units 8 &amp; 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Interview your mentor about the change leadership roles that he/she has played and about his/her model of effective change leadership. Review your learning from the course.</td>
<td>Units 10 &amp; 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online dialogues

After the non-assessable opening dialogue, there are seven assessable online dialogues, in the weeks indicated below. The seven dialogues comprise Assessment 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week no.</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Online dialogues</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 May</td>
<td>Opening dialogue (non-assessable)</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>Dialogue 1</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 June</td>
<td>Dialogue 2</td>
<td>Units 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>22 June</td>
<td>Dialogue 3</td>
<td>Units 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 July</td>
<td>Dialogue 4</td>
<td>Units 6 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20 July</td>
<td>Dialogue 5</td>
<td>Units 8 &amp; 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 August</td>
<td>Dialogue 6</td>
<td>Unit 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Dialogue 7</td>
<td>Unit 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your instructor will post some dialogue topics in each dialogue. However, feel free to post on other topics relating to the unit(s) being explored in the dialogue.
Assessment

There are three written assessments during the course. These are designed to assess your understanding of the course and to stimulate the practical application of the course to your work as a change agent.

The final assessment is in lieu of an examination. There is no examination in Approaches to Change.

Summary of assessment requirements

In order to pass this course, you must achieve an aggregate (overall) mark of at least 50 per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment 1: Action learning review</th>
<th>Due: Week 5, Monday, 22 June, 5.00 pm Sydney time</th>
<th>Weight: 15%</th>
<th>Maximum length: 4 pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 2: Diagnostic analysis of an organisational problem or challenge</td>
<td>Due: Week 9, Monday 20 July, 5.00 pm Sydney time</td>
<td>Weight: 20%</td>
<td>Maximum length: 6 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 3: Contributions to assessable online dialogues</td>
<td>Weight: 30%</td>
<td>Maximum length for a posting: 200 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 4: Analysis and evaluation of a change agent's effectiveness</td>
<td>Date: Week 13, Saturday, 22 August, 5:00 pm Sydney time</td>
<td>Weight: 35%</td>
<td>Maximum length: 10 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment criteria

Written assignments

In assessing your written work, consideration will be give to the following:

- your attention to the prescribed topics of the assessment
- the accuracy and insight with which you have applied relevant concepts, frameworks and theories
- how well you have supported the application of course concepts with succinct relevant, specific, descriptive details that provide evidence of how each concept applies
- the range of relevant concepts you have applied
- how you have linked and integrated the concepts you have used
• logical flow – the logical sequence of your points, the soundness of your arguments, and the logical flow between the sections of your assessment

• evidence of critical thinking, e.g. critiquing your own assumptions or the limitations of your arguments, or critiquing course concepts, frameworks and theories

• whether the assessment is written in clear, succinct prose without excessive jargon

• how far you have met the formatting, length and referencing requirements.

Grids giving details of the assessment criteria for each assessment will be posted in the online classroom: (https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au).

**Contributions to online dialogues**

Online assessment criteria relate to both the content of your postings and the ways in which you support a productive dialogue process. A grid detailing assessment criteria for the online dialogues will be posted.

The word limit for an online posting is 200 words. Please note that an effective online posting can often use considerably fewer than 200 words.

**Assessment 1 – Action learning review**

**Due:** Week 5, Monday, 22 June, 5.00 pm Sydney time  
**Weight:** 15%  
**Maximum length:** 4 pages

The purpose of the action learning review is to use course concepts to analyse a recent event in which you were acting in a change agent role: to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the change management practices and approach involved; and to consider ways of acting more effectively in the future.

Choose an event that involved an attempt to bring about a change, and one that can be analysed using relevant concepts from the course. The event should be an example of change management where there was room for improvement, so that you can outline a plan for an improved approach that would be more effective.

You can draw on concepts in Units 1, 2 and/or 3.

A recommended format for the review is as follows.
Observation
Provide a brief description of a specific event in which you were acting in a change agent role. Provide only as much detail as is necessary for the reader to understand what is important and to provide a platform for the analysis in the Analysis section of the review. The Observation section should include a brief description of the consequences of the event.
This section should comprise roughly 10% of your page count.

Analysis
Analyse and evaluate the change management interventions and approaches that were used in the event and their outcomes, using concepts from the course. Discuss the insights you obtained from using the concepts to understand what was and was not effective. Consider any limitations of the concepts in providing an understanding of the event.
This section should comprise roughly 45% of your page count.

Improvement plan
Based on your analysis, outline a plan for an improved approach that would be more effective.
Your plan should include the following:
• Descriptions of specific actions, interventions or approaches that would be more effective in similar situations in the future, and the improved outcomes that you would expect.
• The criteria and processes that you would use to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions and interventions.
• Possible obstacles to implementing your improvement plan (e.g. lack of time, insufficient resources, unsupportive colleagues), and how they can be overcome.
This section should comprise roughly 45% of your page count.

The Review provides you with an opportunity to use course concepts to identify specific ways in which you can become more effective as a change agent. Your instructor will assess the Review in terms of your demonstrated understanding of course concepts and your ability to use them in analysis and improvement planning.
Assessment 2 – Diagnostic analysis of an organisational problem or challenge

Due by: Week 9, Monday, 20 July, 5.00 pm Sydney time
Weight: 20%
Maximum length: 6 pages

Drawing on concepts from Units 1 to 6, analyse an organisation’s problem or challenge.

Step 1: Identify an appropriate organisation for your analysis. This may be the organisation in which you currently work or have worked in the past, or another organisation with which you are familiar. If you choose a large organisation, you may decide to focus your analysis on an identifiable work unit (e.g. branch, division).

Step 2: Briefly describe a current organisational problem or challenge faced by the organisation/unit. Examples of problems or challenges include high staff turnover, communication difficulties, client dissatisfaction with products or services, low staff engagement and morale, performance problems, endemic conflict, management deficiencies, the challenges posed by a new technology, etc. Note that these are only examples and you are free to focus on other problems or challenges. Choose something that is not working well now or which could cause a problem in the future.

Step 3: Provide a diagnostic analysis of the problem or challenge, identifying the root factors that would need to be addressed if the organisation were to successfully solve the problem/deal with the challenge. Be careful to limit your assignment to diagnosis and do not suggest solutions. Prepare a diagnostic report that would provide a clear focus for a subsequent solution-finding process, identifying the issues that would need to be addressed in solution-finding.

In your analysis:

- Draw on data to which you already have access or that you could easily obtain. Analyse the data and draw diagnostic conclusions about what explains the problem and/or about the critical factors helping or hindering the organisation in successfully meeting the challenge.
If available data is limited, pose some hypotheses about what might explain the problem or what might be critical factors helping or hindering the organisation in successfully meeting the challenge. Then describe how, if you were given considerable freedom to collect data to test your hypotheses, you would gather the data and analyse it.

Discuss whether and how your diagnostic approach and conclusions might be limited or biased and how you could minimise limitations and bias.

**Assessment 3 – Online dialogues**

Weight: 30%

Maximum length: 200 words per posting

Your instructor will post some dialogue topics each week. However, feel free to start dialogues on other topics relating to the unit(s) prescribed for that week.

**Assessment 4 – Analysis and evaluation of a change agent’s effectiveness**

Due: Week 13, Saturday, 22 August, 5:00 pm Sydney time

Weight: 35%

Maximum length: 10 pages

Interview an experienced change agent about a change project or program in which he/she played a significant role.

Write a report that analyses and evaluates the change agent’s effectiveness in the change process. Your report should address the following:

1. Analyse the type of change, the reasons for the change, and the role(s) played by the change agent.
   
   Recommended length: 15% of the page count.

2. Analyse and evaluate the change agent’s effectiveness in the change process.
   
   Recommended length: 45% of the page count.
3. Discuss the two most important lessons from the interview that you could put into practice in your own work. State why these lessons are important for you and outline a plan for implementing them in your work.

Recommended length: 40% of the page count.

This assessment provides opportunities to deploy and integrate concepts from Units 1 to 10.

The following are some suggestions for the interview.

**Interviewing the change agent**

- Make sure that your interview questions cover the topics in all the units on which you will be drawing in writing the assessment.
- Send your questions to the interviewee prior to the interview.
- Read the article ‘Interviewing as qualitative research’ from Appendix 1 before conducting the interview. This is a very readable and highly informative guide.
- Tape the interview. This will give you detailed data to draw on for Assessment 4. Remember to ask the interviewee for permission first.
- If possible, arrange a follow-up interview to fill gaps in your data.
Acknowledgements

Course coordinator
Geoff Mortimore MA, B Phil, BSc

People who contributed to this course
Paul Atkins BA, MCognSc, PhD
Gail Broady BSc, MMR, CTA, DipTAS, Cert III Investigations
Ben Bryant MBA, PhD
Julie Cogin PhD, MCom, Grad Dip Adult Ed, BBus
Geoff Mortimore MA, B Phil, BSc
Rose Trevelyan PhD, BA
References


Appendix

Appendix 1

Seidman, I. E. 2001,
Interviewing as qualitative research,
Teachers College, Columbia University,

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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Technique isn’t everything, but it is a lot

It is tempting to say that interviewing is an art, a reflection of the personality of the interviewer, and cannot be taught. This line of thinking implies that either you are good at it or you are not. But that is only half true. Researchers can learn techniques and skills of interviewing. What follows is a discussion of those skills as I have come to understand them from my own experience of interviewing and that of others.

Listen more, talk less

Listening is the most important skill in interviewing. The hardest work for most interviewers is to keep quiet and to listen actively. In contrast to many books about interviewing that concentrate on the types of questions that interviewers ask, I want to start this chapter by talking about the type of listening the interviewer must do.

Interviewers must listen on at least three levels. First, they must listen to what the participant is saying. They must concentrate on the substance to make sure that they understand it and to assess whether what they are hearing is as detailed and complete as they would like it to be. They must concentrate so that they internalise what participants say. Later, interviewers’ questions will often flow from this earlier listening.

On a second level, interviewers must listen for what George Steiner (1978) calls ‘inner voice’ as opposed to an outer, more public voice. An outer, or public, voice always reflects an awareness of the audience. It is not untrue; it is guarded. It is a voice that participants would use if they were talking to an audience of 300 in an auditorium.

There is language of the outer voice to which interviewers can become sensitive. For example, whenever I hear participants talk about the problems they are facing as a ‘challenge’ or their work as an ‘adventure,’ I sense that I am hearing a public voice, and I search for ways to get to the inner voice. ‘Challenge’ and ‘adventure’ convey the positive aspects of a participant’s grappling with a difficult experience but not the struggle. Another word that attracts my attention is ‘fascinate’. I often hear that word on talk-show interviews; it usually works to communicate some sort of interest while covering up its exact nature. Whenever I hear a participant use ‘fascinate’, I ask for elucidation. By taking participants’ language seriously without making them feel defensive about it, interviewers can encourage a level of thoughtfulness more characteristic of inner voice.

On a third level, interviewers – like good teachers in a classroom – must listen while remaining aware of the process as well as the substance. They must be conscious of time during the interview; they must be aware of how much has been covered and how much there is yet to go. They must
be sensitive to the participant’s energy level and any nonverbal cues he or she may be offering. Interviewers must listen hard to assess the progress of the interview and to stay alert for cues about how to move the interview forward as necessary.

This type of active listening requires concentration and focus beyond what we usually do in everyday life. It requires that, for a good part of the time, we quash our normal instinct to talk. At the same time, interviewers must be ready to say something when a navigational nudge is needed.

In order to facilitate active listening, in addition to tape recording the interview, interviewers can take notes. These working notes help interviewers concentrate on what the participant is saying. They also help to keep interviewers from interrupting the participant by allowing them to keep track of things that the participant has mentioned and come back to them when the timing is right.

A good way to gauge listening skills is to transcribe an interview tape. Separate the interviewer’s questions from the participant’s responses by new paragraphs. Compare the relative length of the participant’s paragraphs with the interviewer’s. If the interviewer is listening well, his or her paragraphs will be short, relatively infrequently interspersed among longer paragraphs of the participant’s responses.

Note the following one-page transcript, for example. It is taken from the beginning of an interview on the experience of being an instructional designer.

**Interviewer:** Could you tell me as much as possible about the details of your experience at work as an instructional designer presently or as a grad student working in the area of instructional design?

**Participant:** The details of instructional design… OK.

**Interviewer:** Your present experience…

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** As an instructional designer.

**Participant:** Umh… So something like… you mean something like perhaps the last several jobs I’ve done?

**Interviewer:** No, what you’re presently doing, like as a student maybe right now or you said you did have a job that you’re working on.
**Participant:** Yeah, well, I have one current, current job umh, the thing is that when you said current I may or may in any given day, I may or may not happen to have a job; you know they just, they just fall out of the sky. You don’t really – my experience in getting work has been that – no matter what I do to try to get work I don’t see any direct result between those efforts and getting the jobs, right. On the other hand, I do get jobs. They just fall out of the sky [laugh]. All I can say about you know like meteorites. Umh, and they range over a wide, wide variety of – of contact. Umh, [sniffle] it could be teaching office workers how to use software. I've done all of those, all of those kinds of things. Umh, and typically the things start through the proposal, umh less and less I've been doing the actual proposals, but usually I’m not ah – the actual getting the business is not my job and somewhere there is a line between; writing the proposal is part of getting the business and um so I usually have something to do with writing the proposal but I don’t do a lot of getting the business. Umh [sniffle] somewhere after the proposal is written or during the proposal stage I'm brought in [sniffle] – and I get to do the work (Tremblay 1990).

This text is a good example of an interviewer’s listening hard to a participant. At the beginning of the interview, the participant is not quite focused. The interviewer, concentrating on what he is saying, nudges him into the frame of reference of the interview. Once she has the participant in the right channel, she listens and lets him talk. Even when the participant pauses for a few seconds, she does not interrupt.

Patai (1987) describes the process of listening to her Brazilian women participants as an intense form of concentration and openness to them that led her to become absorbed in them (p. 12). Although not every interview takes on the almost magical quality that Patai describes, interest in the participant’s experience and a willingness to hold one’s own ego in check are keys to the hard work of listening in an interview that leads to the type of absorption Patai describes.

**Follow up on what the participant says**

When interviewers do talk in an interview, they usually ask questions. The key to asking questions during in-depth interviewing is to let them follow, as much as possible, from what the participant is saying. Although the interviewer comes to each interview with a basic question that establishes the purpose and focus of the interview, it is in response to what the participant says that the interviewer follows up, asks for clarification,
seeks concrete details, and requests stories. Rather than preparing a preset interview guide, the interviewer’s basic work in this approach to interviewing is to listen actively and to move the interview forward as much as possible by building on what the participant has begun to share.

**Ask questions when you do not understand**

It is hard work to understand everything people say. Sometimes the context is not clear. At other times we do not understand the specific referent of what someone is saying. In everyday conversation we often let such things slide by without understanding them. In interviewing such sliding undermines the process.

The interview structure is cumulative. One interview establishes the context for the next. Not having understood something in an early interview, an interviewer might miss the significance of something a participant says later. Passages in interviews become links to each other in ways that cannot be foretold. Also, the interviewer who lets a participant know when he or she does not understand something shows the person that the interviewer is listening.

Sometimes it is difficult to get the chronology of an experience straight. It is important for interviewers to understand experiences in the context of time. A question like, ‘Can you tell me again when that happened?’ is a reasonable one. I use the word again so as not to imply to participants that they are not being clear, thereby making them defensive, but rather, as is often the case, to suggest that I was just not attentive enough the first time around.

Sometimes participants use vague words that seem to be communicating but are not explicit. For example, one community college faculty member whom I interviewed consistently described his students by saying, ‘They are very nice’. I did not know what he meant by the term nice. In a way it seemed to trivialise the respect for his students that he had communicated throughout the interview. I asked him, ‘What is nice?’ He said,

‘The students at the private university [where he had previously taught] were rude, and they were frequently demanding. I don’t mean intellectually demanding. They would say, “You didn’t say that. You didn’t say you were going to test us on that sort of thing.” Our students at the community college are really nice. I realize this sounds silly; I apologize for it. It really sounds crazy to say for some reason we happen to have the nicest people around that happen to live in this neighborhood. Now that’s not likely. But we have an attitude on this campus. There is a kind of mutual respect and I get a lot of this when our students come back after they have gone somewhere else… There is a different feeling, even though it is a bigger school, and
you really don’t know everybody. Uh, nonetheless there is a kind of community feeling here and there is a lack of what I call a mean spirit where you are just touchy and aggressive and, uh, inquisitive. Maybe our students are not that motivated; maybe that’s why they are not; but they are really nice to teach. You almost never have anything you could call a discipline problem. It just doesn’t happen… I don’t know; I do like our students. I think it would be absolutely perfect if they were a little better prepared, but that’s not as important as being nice people… They are the kind of people that are pleasant to work with.’ (Seidman et al. 1983)

In responding to my request for clarification about his use of the word nice, the participant went more deeply into the nature of his teaching experience. By my taking this language seriously, he explored what he meant when he used the word nice. As the interviewer, I then understood better what, for him were the complexities implied in his use of the apparently simple word nice.

**Ask to hear more about a course**

When an interviewer wants to hear more about what a participant is saying, he or she should trust that instinct. Interviewers should ask questions when they feel unsatisfied with what they have heard. Sometimes they do not think that they have heard the entire story; other times they may think that they are getting generalities and they want to hear the details; or they may just be interested in what the participant is saying and want to hear more. Sometimes when listening, interviewers begin to feel a vague question welling up inside them because they sense there is more to the story. In those instances it is important for them to ask to hear more.

For example, in a study of older women returning to community colleges (Schatzkamer 1986), one student spoke about her experience in a math course. The last two-thirds of the technical math course she was taking was devoted to calculus. She said,

> ‘At that point, I capsized. That was beyond the capacities of my math…it was beyond me. So I was obedient. This is something I don’t usually do in school, but I just memorized and did what I was told and followed out the formulas the way I was told I should and which I regret. I got an A, but I regret it.’

The interviewer, hearing the phrase ‘I regret it’, wanted to hear more. She asked, based on what the participant had said, ‘What do you regret?’ The participant responded,

> ‘I never really understood it, you know. I didn’t really learn. I’m sure there is something lovely there under all that calculus to be learned and I didn’t learn that. I theoretically learned how to use it as a tool.'
By being slavish you know: plugging numbers into formulas and finding the right formula and stuff; that’s not the way math should be learned and it’s not really understanding.’

By following up on the participant’s phrase of regret, the interviewer gave the participant a chance to go a step further in her story. In so doing she revealed a desire to learn and a potential appreciation for the beauty of math that increases the reader’s understanding of her community college experience and our respect for her as an individual.

**Explore, don’t probe**

In referring to the skill of following up on what participants say, the literature on interviewing often uses the word *probe* (see, e.g. Lincoln & Guba 1985). I have never been comfortable with that word. I always think of a sharp instrument pressing on soft flesh when I hear it. The word also conveys a sense of the powerful interviewer treating the participant as an object. I am more comfortable with the notion of exploring with the participant than with probing into what the participant says.

At the same time, too much and ill-timed exploration of the participant’s words can make him or her defensive and shift the meaning-making from the participant to the interviewer. The interview can become too easily a vehicle for the interviewer’s agenda rather than an exploration of the participant’s experience. Too little exploration, however, can leave an interviewer unsure of the participant’s meaning in the material he or she has gathered. It can also leave the participant using abstractions and generalities that are not useful (Hyman et al. 1954).

**Listen more, talk less, and ask real questions**

Listen more, talk less. I repeat the first law of interviewing here for emphasis and because it is so easy to forget. When you do ask questions, ask only real questions. By a real question I mean one to which the interviewer does not already know or anticipate the response. If interviewers want to ask a question to which they think they know the response, it would be better to say what they think, and then to ask the participant what he or she thinks of the assertion.

**Avoid leading questions**

A leading question is one that influences the direction the response will take. Sometimes the lead is in the intonation of the question: the tone implies an expectation. Sometimes it is in the wording, syntax, and intonation of the question, as when an interviewer asks, ‘Did you really mean to do that?’ Sometimes the lead is in the conclusion implied by the
question. One interviewer, listening to a participant’s story about her family and her early schooling, asked: ‘Your parents pushed you to study, didn’t they?’ Or in another place, the interviewer asked, ‘How satisfied are you with your student teaching placement?’ instead of, for example, ‘What was your student teaching placement like for you?’ (For a more extensive discussion of leading questions, see Patton 1989; Richardson et al. 1965.)

**Ask open-ended questions**

An open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer. There are at least two types of open-ended questions especially relevant to in-depth interviewing. One is what Spradley (1979) calls the ‘grand tour’ question (pp. 86–87), in which the interviewer asks the participant to reconstruct a significant segment of an experience. For example, in interviewing a counsellor, an interviewer might say, ‘Take me through a day in your work life’. Or in working with a student teacher, an interviewer might ask, ‘Reconstruct your day for me from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed’.

There is also the mini-tour, in which the interviewer asks the participant to reconstruct the details of a more limited time span or of a particular experience. For example, an interviewer might ask a vice principal to reconstruct the details of a particular disciplinary session with a student; or an interviewer might ask a teacher to talk about the experience of a particular conference with a parent.

A second type of open-ended question focuses more on the subjective experience of the participant than on the external structure. For example, a participant might begin to talk about her experience in a parent conference. After asking her what happened at the conference, the interviewer might ask her to talk about what that conference was like for her.

Although there are many approaches to open-ended questioning, when I am interested in understanding the participant’s subjective experience, I often find myself asking the question, ‘What was that like for you?’. As Schutz (1967) indicated, it is not possible to experience what the participant experienced. If we could, then we would be the participant. Perhaps the closest we can come is to ask the metaphorical question implied in the word like. When interviewers ask what something was like for participants, they are giving them the chance to reconstruct their experience according to their own sense of what was important, unguided by the interviewer.
Follow up, don’t interrupt

Avoid interrupting participants when they are talking. Often an interviewer is more interested in something a participant says than the speaker seems to be. While the participant continues talking, the interviewer feels strongly tempted to interrupt to pursue the interesting point. Rather than doing so, however, the interviewer can jot down the key word and follow up on it later, when doing so will not interrupt the participant’s train of thought. The opportunity may come later in the same interview or even in a subsequent one (Richardson et al. 1965).

Once, for example, a teacher had been talking early in the second interview about the frenetic pace of her day and about having no place to hide. At the time, I was very interested in what she said, but she went right on to other aspects of her experience. Rather than interrupting her then, I wrote down in my working notes the phrases ‘frenetic pace’ and ‘no place to hide.’

Later, when there was a pause in her responses, I returned to those phrases by saying, ‘A while back you talked about a very frenetic pace. You talked about coming in the door, teaching your class, walking to your office, keeping extensive hours, having no place to hide. Would you talk more about that frenetic pace and having no place to hide?’ Richardson et al. (1965) terms this approach ‘the echo’ (pp. 157–163) [and cautions against its overuse].

The participant responded by talking about the effect of her community college’s architecture on her daily life. In order to make faculty as accessible as possible to students, the designers of her campus had made the wall of faculty offices that faced the hallway of glass. The participant spoke about her frustration with never having a place to go in her building where she could get some work done without being seen and, most likely, interrupted. Although she could close the door of her office, she could never close out those who sought her.

Ask participants to talk to you as if you were someone else

Every interviewer probably develops favourite approaches to participants. I have two to which I return often. The first I use when I sense that I am hearing a public voice and I am searching for an inner one (see above). In those situations, I often use what Patton calls role-playing questions (Patton 1989; also see Spradley 1979). I try to figure out the person with whom the participant might be most comfortable talking personally. I then try asking the participant to imagine that I am that person.

I might say, ‘If I were your spouse (or your father, or your teacher, or your friend), what would you say to me?’ Sometimes this question falls flat. I am
unable to shift the participant’s frame of reference enough so that he or she talks to me as though I were someone else. But often, if used sparingly, the role-playing approach works. The participant takes on a difference voice, becomes animated in a way that he or she has not been until then, and both the participant and I enjoy for a few moments the new roles that we have assumed.

**Ask participants to tell a story**

I also often ask participants to tell me a story about what they are discussing. In a sense, everything said in an interview is a story. But if a participant were talking about, for example, relationships with students, I might ask for a story about one particular student who stands out in his or her experience.

Not everybody is comfortable with being asked directly to tell a story. The request seems to block people who may think they do not tell good stories or that story telling is something only other people do. Others, however, suddenly remember a particular incident, become deeply engrossed in reconstructing it, and tell a wonderful story that conveys their experience as concretely as anything could.

I will always remember the story a student teacher told when she was describing the trouble she was having figuring out how to relate to her students. She had envisioned herself as a friendly older sister to them. One day she overheard a group of her students telling dirty jokes, and she told them a mild one.

About a week later, the vice principal called her to his office to say that parents were outraged about the joke. The student teacher went on to tell of a series of meetings with parents in which she had to explain herself. She described the vice principal’s lack of real support during those meetings. Finally she talked about the sobering realisation that she had not known where to draw the line with her students. She said, ‘The dirty joke was horrendous, and I understood that. I understood that I was just trying to be one of the kids, that I felt close to them… I was just being too familiar. I always thought that teaching… was relating to the kids.’

Stories such as this, in which the student teacher gave a beginning, middle, and end to a segment of her experience, drew characters, presented conflict, and showed how she dealt with it, convey experience in an illuminating and memorable way. (See Misher 1986, Chapter 4, for an extended discussion of the power of narratives.) If interviewers continually ask a participant to tell a story, the technique will wear out quickly. Used sparingly, however, asking participants to tell stories about particular aspects of their experience can lead to treasured moments in interviewing.
Keep participants focused and ask for concrete details

Keep participants focused on the subject of the interview. Try to guide them back to the focus of the interview if they diverge too much. Although the interviewer must avoid a power struggle, he or she must exercise enough control of the process so that participants respect the structure and individual purpose of the interview.

Throughout the interview ask for concrete details of a participant’s experience before exploring attitudes and opinions about it. The concrete details constitute the experience; attitudes and opinions are based on them. Without the concrete details, the attitudes and opinions can seem groundless.

Do not take the ebbs and flows of interviewing too personally

Watch for an ebb and flow in interviews and try not to take it too personally. In-depth interviewing often surprises participants because they have seldom had the opportunity to talk at length to someone outside their family or friends about their experience. As a result, they may become so engrossed that they say things that they are later surprised they have shared (Spradley 1979). Interviewers often arrive at a second interview thinking what a wonderful interview the first was, only to be surprised that now the participants pull back and are not willing to share as much as before. At this point, interviewers have to be careful not to press too hard for the type of sharing they experienced before. A third interview allows participants to find a zone of sharing within which they are comfortable. They resolve the issue for themselves.

Share experiences on occasion

There are times when an interviewer’s experience may connect to that of the participant. Sharing that experience in a frank and personal way may encourage the participant to continue reconstructing his or her own in a more inner voice than before. Overused, however, such sharing can distort an interview and distract participants from their own experience to the interviewer’s. I can remember sharing stories of mine that I thought connected to what the participant was saying and sensing that the participant was impatient for me to stop talking. (For a somewhat different perspective on the amount of interaction that is desirable between interviewer and participants, see Oakley 1981.)

Ask participants to reconstruct, not to remember

Avoid asking participants to rely on their memories. As soon as interviewers ask if people remember something, impediments to memory spring up (Tagg 1985). Ask participants, in effect, not to remember their
experience but rather to reconstruct it. Ask directly ‘What happened?’ or ‘What was your elementary school experience like?’ instead of ‘Do you remember what your elementary school experience was like?’.

Interviewers can assume that the participants will be able to reconstruct their experience and thereby avoid many of the impediments to memory that abound. Reconstruction is based partially on memory and partially on what the participant now senses is important about the past event. In a sense, all recall is reconstruction (Thelen 1989). In interviewing, it is better to go for that reconstruction as directly as possible.

**Avoid reinforcing your participants’ responses**

Avoid reinforcing what your participant is saying, either positively or negatively. A useful training exercise is to transcribe verbatim five minutes of an early interview. What sometimes becomes clear is that the interviewer is in the habit of saying ‘uh huh’ or ‘OK’ or ‘yes’ or some other short affirmative response to almost every statement from the participant. Sometimes interviewers are hardly aware that they are doing it.

On having such reinforcement called to their attention, many new interviewers suggest that there is nothing inappropriate about the practice. They argue that it shows they are listening and being attentive and that participants appreciate knowing that; it keeps them talking. Often, I think, it is a relatively benign controlling mechanism that is difficult to give up.

But interviewers who reinforce what they are hearing run the risk of distorting how the participant responds (Richardson et al. 1965). A more effective and less invasive method is to refer later in an interview to something participants said earlier. (For a more balanced perspective on reinforcements, see Richardson et al. 1965.)

**Explore laughter**

Often a participant will say something and then laugh, sometimes because what he or she just said is self-evidently funny. At other times, the laughter may be nervous or ironic, its origin unclear to the interviewer and often worth exploring. For example, when interviewing a female science teacher, I asked her how the fact that there were ten women in her community college science division of 60 faculty affected her sense of power in the college. I related the question to Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s (1977) discussion of numbers and power in her book, *Men and women of the corporation*. The participant responded:
Well, you see this isn't a corporation. I mean, people are not jockeying for position within, and that would make a tremendous difference, I think, if we were really competitive with one another or something. [laugh] it might be a tremendously important factor. But we're not competing for anything. There are very few people who want to, say, go up to the next step, which is division director. I feel I could get elected to division director, if I so chose. [Pause] My sex would not at all interfere. [Pause] It might even be a plus, but, uh, most people here are not interested, it's not a power play situation; we're all retired really [laugh]. (Seidman et al. 1983)

After she finished and I weighed in my mind the juxtaposition of her laughter with what she was saying, I said, ‘That sounds bitter.’ In reply, she spoke about the positive and negative aspects in her experience of not being in a highly competitive, upwardly mobile faculty. I did not follow up at that point because I thought doing so might make her defensive. I wrote in my working notes, ‘laughter?’ and came back to it later in the interview.

Follow your hunches

Follow your hunches. Trust your instincts. When appropriate, risk saying what you think or asking the difficult question. Sometimes during an interview, a question will start to form, perhaps as a vague impression, then as a real doubt. My experience is that it is important to trust those responses, to figure out the question that best expresses them, and to ask it.

During one interview with an intern teacher, I became increasingly uncomfortable. I could not figure out what was bothering me until I realised that the participant was talking positively about his teaching experience in a very formal way but with very little energy. His nonverbal language was contradicting his verbal language. I began to think he was really very unhappy with his teaching, even though he was talking relatively positively about it.

I was very uncomfortable with this hunch, but finally after we were more than two-thirds of the way into the second interview, I said to him, ‘You know, I can’t figure this out. You are talking as though you are enjoying your teaching, but something about the way you are talking makes me think you are not. Is that fair?’

He responded as though I had opened a floodgate. He began to talk about how angry he was that intern teachers got all the ‘lowest’ classes. He said that even though he had solid math preparation, he would not have a chance to teach upper-level courses for perhaps five more years, because all course assignments were made on the basis of seniority. Then he talked about how hard he worked, how little time he had on weekends to be with his wife, and how little money he was making. As a result of following up
on a hunch, I gained a completely different picture of his experience, and in the rest of the interview his verbal and nonverbal language coincided.

**Use an interview guide cautiously**

Some forms of interviewing depend on an interview guide. The interviewers arrive with preset questions to which they want answers or about which they want to gather data. In-depth interviewing, however, is not designed to test hypotheses, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions. Rather, it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experience and to explore their meaning. The questions most used in an in-depth interview follow from what the participant has said.

Nonetheless, in-depth interviewers may want to develop an interviewing guide. The basic structure of the interview is the question that establishes the focus of each interview in the series. However, interviewers never come into an interview situation as clean slates. They have interests, or they would not have chosen the research topic they did. In addition, some participants will require more prompting than others to go forward in the reconstruction of their experience. Also, over the course of a number of interviews, the interviewer may notice that several participants have highlighted a particular issue, and the interviewer may want to know how other participants have responded to that issue.

For these reasons, in our study of the experience of student teachers we developed a guide that listed the following areas: student teacher’s relationship with mentors, with students, with other student teachers, with parents, with tracking, testing, and grading. In most cases, student teachers raised these topics on their own as they talked about their teaching experience. In those instances when they did not, and if there was an opportunity to do so without interrupting or diverting a participant’s reconstructions of his or her own experience, the interviewer referred to the interview guide and raised an issue that had not been touched upon.

If interviewers decide to use an interviewing guide, they must avoid manipulating their participants to respond to it. They should ask questions that reflect areas of interest to them in an open and direct way, perhaps acknowledging that the question comes more from their own interest than from what the participant has said. Interviewers must try to avoid imposing their own interests on the experience of the participants. Interviewers working with an interview guide must allow for the possibility that what may interest them or other participants may be of little interest to the person being interviewed. Interview guides can be useful but must be used with caution.
Tolerate silence

Interviewers sometimes get impatient and uncomfortable with silence. They project that discomfort onto their participants. They see pauses as voids and jump into the interview with a quick question to fill the void. A useful exercise is to play back an interview tape and record how much time the interviewer gives the participant to think before he or she jumps in with a question. My experience is that new interviewers think they are waiting a considerable time before asking their next question, but when we go over audio tapes of their interviews, we determine that in reality they are waiting only a second or two. Thoughtfulness takes time; if interviewers can learn to tolerate either the silence that sometimes follows a question or a pause within a participant’s reconstruction, they may hear things they would never have heard if they had leapt in with another question to break the silence. (See Mary-Budd Row 1974, on the effect of how much time teachers wait for answers to questions on the quality of students’ responses.)

Conclusion

There is no recipe for the effective question. The truly effective question flows from an interviewer’s concentrated listening, engaged interest in what is being said, and purpose in moving forward. Sometimes an important question will start out as an ill-defined instinct or hunch, which takes time to develop and seems risky to ask. Sometimes the effective question reflects the interviewer’s own groping for coherence about what is being said and is asked in a hesitant, unsure manner.

Effective questioning is so context-bound, such a reflection of the relationship that has developed between the interviewer and the participant, that to define it further runs the risk of making a human process mechanical. To some extent, the way interviewers are as people will be the way they are as interviewers. If interviewers are the sort of people who always have to be talking, who never listen, who demand to be the center of attention most of the time, who are really not interested in other people’s stories, no matter what procedures they follow in interviewing, those characteristics will probably pervade the interviewing relationship.

The most important personal characteristic interviewers must have is a genuine interest in other people. They must be deeply aware that other people’s stories are of worth in and of themselves and because they offer something to the interviewer’s experience. With a temperament that finds interest in others, a person has the foundation upon which to learn the techniques of interviewing and to practice its skills.