



Subject Outline

Overview of the Subject

This course is about an omnipresent yet curiously ill-understood phenomenon in government: leadership, and its relation to stability and change in public policies and public organisations. Calls for better, stronger, more authentic, more ethical leadership in the public sector are often heard these days – as indeed they have been on and off through the ages in most political systems. But what does it mean when people say they want better leadership? What does ‘leadership’ really add to the mix of institutions and processes that make up the business of government? What place can leadership have in a democracy? How is its exercise being facilitated and constrained by the institutions of democracy and the rule of law? How do political and bureaucratic leaders at the apex of government interact, and how can they exercise collaborative leadership in driving policy change and organisational innovation? These are the core questions of this course.

Overview of the Residential

During five intensive days (and partly nights) of lectures, discussions, encounters with top-level public leaders, we aim to identify and debunk pervasive myths in contemporary management speak about ‘leadership.’ Instead, more empirically sound perspectives on political and bureaucratic leadership, as well as the relations between political and bureaucratic leaders, will be presented. Participants will be encouraged to apply these perspectives in diagnosing and dealing with leadership predicaments in relation to forging stability and/or reform of public organisations and policies.

Subject Objectives

Learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this subject each student should have:

1. An enhanced ability to discriminate between myths and realities of public leadership discourse and practice.
2. A deep understanding of the institutional, contextual and (inter)personal factors shaping the behavior of political and public service leaders, as well as the interaction between them.

3. An enhanced strategic capability, particularly in instigating, implementing or modifying processes of policy and organisational change in the public sector
4. The ability to discern, reflect upon and cope with ethical dimensions of exercising leadership.
5. An enhanced ability to work in collaborative teams on strategic assignments in the context of time pressure.
6. An ability to cogently communicate strategic leadership advice to top-level office-holders.