

WORK-BASED PROJECT

SUBJECT OUTLINE

OVERVIEW

As the last compulsory subject in the EMPA, the Work-Based Project represents a true capstone experience by providing students with the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they have developed through their participation in the program to a real-life issue within government. The major element of assessment, a major research report, will involve cross-jurisdictional project teams analysing and proposing solutions to substantive and contemporary issues in public management and public policy identified by agencies in participating jurisdictions. Projects will test each team's ability to define a 'real-life' problem, design a strategy for the problem, gather data, formulate and evaluate options and make recommendations addressing the problem. The intention is that the Work-Based Project will bridge the worlds of classroom and practice as participants manage the challenges of working cooperatively in teams spanning jurisdictions and work backgrounds to develop genuine and sustainable solutions to difficult and complex issues.

SUBJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Work-Based Project is to bring to a successful conclusion a complex task within the constraints imposed by working in a team that may span jurisdictions, disciplines and working backgrounds. The rationale for this arrangement is that it places students in a fairly accurate approximation of the real world – where the achievement of goals is frequently dependent upon the successful navigation of complex working relationships with others. Research consistently indicates that ability to collaborate creatively, write and manage tasks and projects is increasingly important in the business environment (Pfaff and Huddleston 2003)¹. The academic literature also reports that collaborative learning has the potential to increase individual achievement more than individual or competitive learning. This is because collaborative learning requires persistence when facing adversity, willingness to perform difficult tasks, ability to translate knowledge from one task to another, greater social skills, and intrinsic motivation (Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1998)².

¹ Pfaff E and Huddleston P (2003) 'Does it Matter if I Hate Teamwork? What Impacts Student Attitudes Toward Teamwork', in *Journal of Marketing Education*, 25(1) 37-45

² Johnson, DW, Johnson, RT, and Smith, KA (1998) 'Learning returns to college. What evidence is there it works?', in *Change*, (30) July/August

The subject will enable participants:

1. To apply relevant theory and concepts to an actual problem confronting government in order to develop genuine and sustainable solutions to this problem.
2. To develop the skills to conduct a major piece of applied research from problem recognition and definition through to completion.
3. To utilise appropriate strategies to respond to the challenges of working with others to complete the task and achieve an effective outcome.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of the subject each student should have:

1. The capacity to undertake primary research within a collaborative, team-based framework
2. Skills in evidence-based analysis
3. Enhanced strategic capability
4. A better understanding of the context of public policy and public management in Australia and New Zealand
5. Written and verbal communications skills to convey the significance of their research, its findings and recommendations.
6. Capacity to network across government and levels of government
7. Improved policy design skills
8. Demonstrated evaluation capabilities
9. An understanding of how to conduct research in accordance with ethical principles