



Scientia Education Investment Fund Grants Final Report

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**English Language Intervention for Improved Student
Experience and Outcome**

UNSW Business School

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1. Executive Summary

Language capability and communication is a cultural and educational gateway to student experience and performance. The Business School has one of the largest international student populations within UNSW. External survey results (such as QILT) are strongly affected by the views of Business students due to the size of the programs and the large number of respondents. Expectations of student performance are high, yet we have evidence that the English language capabilities of many of our students are below those necessary for a successful learning experience. This has been proven to be a significant area of risk. Increased language proficiency and communication skills enhance the learning experience, assist with raising grade averages, and improve the classroom experience for both domestic and international students, ultimately enhancing our reputation as a top class global institution. This project aimed to develop tailored resources and processes for supporting a faculty-wide, sustainable approach to enhancing English language competency amongst our UG and PG students. Three online modules have been created and piloted. The development of the modules in the online form is currently taking place.

2. Outcomes and Impact

This project aimed to develop tailored resources and processes for supporting a faculty-wide, sustainable approach to enhancing English language competency amongst our UG and PG students. In particular the project deliverables listed were:

- Interactive online learning modules developed to address areas of developmental need.
- Interactive online learning modules developed that align to current course business communication and assessment requirements.
- Scheduling of Studio Jam Sessions to deliver aspects of the learning modules in a face-to-face environment and to consult with students (similar to the PASS program).
- 'Closing the loop' report which evaluates the success of the online modules and sessions in improving English language proficiency, business communication, student experience and grades.

Table 1 on the following page provides an overview of the major achievements of the project in relation to outcomes and deliverables.

To date, the Business School courses benefitting from the development of the modules and associated workshops are:

- MGMT1001: Managing Organisations & People
- MGMT5050: Professional Skills & Ethics
- ECON1401: Economic Perspectives

In T2, 2020 the following courses will have access to the modules and workshops:

- MGMT1002: Managing Organisational Behaviour
- MGMT2002: Managing Business Communication
- MGMT3101: International Business Strategy

Table 1: Major Achievements of the English Language Intervention Project

Project Deliverables	Major Achievements	Challenges
Interactive online learning modules developed to address areas of developmental need.	Three online learning modules have been written and support videos developed. All content has been piloted in face-to-face workshops. The modules are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Integration • Writing Concisely • Formality 	A reduction in allocated funding for this project has meant delays in producing the modules. The digital uplift of the modules is a priority in T2, 2020 and progress has begun on the development of the online version of the modules.
Interactive online learning modules developed that align to current course business communication and assessment requirements.	The three modules listed above were designed and developed to meet the assessments requirements of current business courses.	
Scheduling of Studio Jam Sessions to deliver aspects of the learning modules in a face-to-face environment and to consult with students (similar to the PASS program).	In T2 and T3, 2019 workshops, based on Learning module content, were delivered by a student in conjunction with the project officer. The student has continued to deliver the workshops in T1, 2020. It is hoped that this approach will be developed further in T3, 2020.	
'Closing the loop' report which evaluates the success of the online modules and sessions in improving English language proficiency, business communication, student experience and grades.	Some data collection mechanisms are in place to capture this data. To trial the online modules in an alternative format (due to funding withdrawal) pilot workshops were facilitated and student application of module content assessed through the collection of student assessments.	Limitations regarding transferring module content online has delayed this phase of the project.

The modules and workshops are currently offered primarily in the School of Management as this is where a significant number of 'communication' assessments take place. It is hoped that the modules will be offered in a number of additional schools in T3, 2020. Once the modules are fully online they can be made accessible to all courses in the Business School.

The project addressed the following priorities:

- Strategic Priority A: Academic Excellence: Significantly enhance the student experience and student outcomes, empowering them to become the best they can be. (Theme A2: Educational Excellence – the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience.)

- UNSW Council KPIs: KPI 6: Student retention, KPI 7: Student satisfaction, KPI 8: Graduate outcomes, KPI 13: Reputation and rankings, and KPI 14: International students
- SEIF Priority 4: Demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative technologies in achieving educational outcomes SEIF Priority 6: Significantly enhance the student experience or student outcomes

2. Dissemination Strategies and Outputs

Due to delays in the online development of the modules, the content was revised so that the videos and activities could be delivered as part of an 'in-house' series in the MGMT1001: Managing Organisations and People. To encourage students to engage in the workshops, the module content was aligned to the major assessment (Professional Development Plan – PDP). The module content was developed to aligned to the key communication requirements of the assessment; focussing primarily on formal academic language, writing concisely and evidence integration.

Students who attended the workshops were also invited to attend a PDP individual consultation post workshop. The purpose of the individual consultation was to review a draft of the student's plan and to highlight writing/language issues that may be addressed utilising some of the strategies outlined in the module content. Students were then encouraged to watch the module videos again and participate in the relevant learning activities. Once they had completed the engagement in the module material, they were encouraged to revise their work, employing the new strategies they had learnt, to their writing.

The dissemination strategies have primarily been 'in-house' (i.e. advertising the workshops in the relevant Schools). Once the modules are finalised in their online format they will be disseminated more broadly via Moodle and the Business School 'Academic Communication Essentials' webpage.

3. Evaluation of Project Outcomes

Evaluation of the modules, in pilot form, was informed by student engagement in the modules as outlined in section 2.

Prior to engaging a student in a discussion and evaluation of their written work in the individual consultation, the draft of their PDP was submitted to the consultant via email. The draft provided a baseline of the student's writing prior to engagement with the module content. Upon completion of the module content and activities, the student would then revise the draft of their PDP using track changes in Word. Once complete, the student provided this draft via email for comparison with the initial draft of the assessment. Collection of the student writing was facilitated in accordance with the methodology and data collection approach outlined in Ethics Project HC180241 – *Education Initiatives to enhance program learning outcomes, student engagement and performance in MGMT1001*.

An analysis of the students' work was then conducted, examining the students' 'uptake' of the literacy skills practiced in a scaffolded online module by comparing a pre- and post-module assignments. The aim was to explores the semiotic choices learners make in their editing process and to identify how the learning module informs these choices, supporting learners' development of these linguistic resources.

An evaluation of the success of student uptake and application of skills covered in module content was presented in: **Black, S., & Liardét, C.L., (2019) *Re-imagining online resources for academic success: An examination of SFL informed online modules***. For Presentation at: European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference, Polytechnic of Leiria, Leiria, Portugal 2019.

It is hoped that further research will be conducted following the same methodology in T3, 2020 to increase the sample size of this study. A paper will then be prepared for submission for publication.