



Scientia Education Investment Fund Grants Final Report

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Title of project

A Learner-Centred Approach to attain Significant Learning of Oral Communication for AOL in MCom Programs

School/Faculty/Unit

Banking and Finance, UNSW Business School

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[The completed report should be 8 pages in length]

1. Executive Summary

- Summarise the project, context, priorities addressed, outputs, key findings and recommendations (if relevant)

In light of our experience with oral communication assessment in a capstone course where we saw many MCom students of ESL background struggled to meet AoL standards that are based on the three Vs of communication (visual, vocal and verbal), this pedagogy-informed project sets out to

- achieve educational excellence in the assessment of oral communication, and
- develop sustainable infrastructure and effective out-of-class peer assisted learning of oral communication for all MCom students, irrespective of their level of communication apprehension and knowledge of oral communication, so as to improve the overall student experience.

Not only has the project demonstrated the Business School commitment to enhanced outcomes in learning and teaching, and continuous and strategic self-review and improvement, it has also addressed the 2025 Strategy, Theme A2: Educational Excellence – the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience, Initiatives 1, 2 and 3.

We have produced diagnostic tools for students to self-assess their knowledge of, and feelings towards, oral communication. Furthermore, we have curated several Lynda video courses for students to learn oral presentation skills from the professionals, commenced a depository of exemplar student presentations to improve student understanding of the assessment, transformed the Business School rubric for oral communication into an interactive L&T resource that is enriched with links to Lynda-videos for staff to teach oral communications, trialled the use of interim presentation before the final presentation to improve assessment design and facilitate the giving of formative feedback, and developed a business communication workshop for peer-assisted learning of oral communication.

We have learnt the diversity of our students, some of whom do not share the same presentation style and have the same opportunity to learn and practise oral communication as the local students. That about one in five people are fearful of public speaking is also true to our student sample. For those MCom who completed the peer-assisted business communication Workshop, 100% believe the workshop improved their knowledge and understanding of the art of oral communication; and are now feeling (since the workshop) more confident in their ability to verbally communicate ideas and information effectively and professionally. For those students enrolled in the capstone course, over 90% were satisfied with the resources provided for the oral presentation assessment; and felt they made improvements through practice and more prepared for the final presentation.

Given the resounding success of the Workshop and remedial resources, we recommend making the deliverables achieved to date available to business students from all programs and levels; turning the outputs into a not-for-credit Moodle course to recognise student completion of the self-paced and peer-assisted learning activities; and rather than just relying on in-house training as originally planned, continuing funding of eight NIDA corporate course per year to hone the skills of the future business communication mentors.

2. Outcomes and impact

- Describe the major achievements of your project in relation to the outcomes and deliverables.

The project has two three achievements. Firstly, it applies the RASE model, or learner-centred approach, as the over-arching framework, to

- Understand the students (their knowledge and feelings towards oral communication) and their needs (that would help improve their learning experience in oral communication);
- Provide **R**esources and **S**upport to prepare students for oral communication tasks;
- Guide the use of interim presentation before the final task for students to rehearse and receive peer-assisted **E**valuative feedback that is formative; and ultimately
- Improve student experience of oral communication assessment **A**ctivity

Secondly, it borrows the 5Ws and 1H principle to develop a Lynda-video enriched rubric for AoL assessment of oral communication. Not only does this enriched rubric

- i. Declutter the existing rubric provided by the Business School, which focuses on What (it takes to deliver a memorable presentation effectively); it also
- ii. Transform the rubric into a dynamic document, whereby links to the characteristics listed on the rubric are inserted for staff to direct students to Lynda.com, and
 - o Show them Where to find oral communication resources;
 - o Explain the importance of knowing Who the audiences are;
 - o Illustrate When, How and Why they should apply and practise the strategies, such as building credentials and maintaining meaningful eye contact.

Thirdly, it applies the peer-assisted learning pedagogy to the development of a Business Communication Mentor Program that

- i. Provides peer-assisted learning of oral communication to those mentees who need help;
- ii. Is continuing; and
- iii. Offer the peer mentors the opportunity to participate in a worthy co-curricular activity.

- Discuss project impact – how and to what extent has the project impacted students, staff, faculty institution, and higher education as relevant to the project.
- Include the strategic priorities addressed.

Through thoughtful assessment design, sustainable infrastructure, and effective peer-assisted and self-paced resources, this project has made, and will continue to make, a significant impact on student learning, staff teaching, and assessment of oral communication in the Business School.

Firstly, we have developed a blueprint for the Business School to promote the usage of a learner-centred approach to attain significant learning of oral communication for AoL which entails

- i. Surveys for students to self-assess their strengths and weaknesses in oral communication;
- ii. Online Lynda courses and a business communication workshop for students to learn oral communication from the experts and their peers;
- iii. Exemplar presentations of students in the past for students to better understand the requirements of the assessment; and
- iv. An interim presentation for students to practise and receive formative feedback before the final presentation and summative feedback.

Implementation of this assessment design, to assure the development of highly transferable oral communication skills that employers want most from the graduates, has helped

- i. demonstrate the commitment of the Business School to enhanced outcomes in learning and teaching, and continuous and strategic self-review and improvement; and
- ii. address the 2025 Strategy, Theme A2: Educational Excellence – the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience, Initiative 1 whereby “outstanding program design, an emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning, ... and complementary career-focused themes, will give our students an opportunity to personalise and tailor their educational experience and provide graduates with the attributes necessary for success in the 21st century”.

Secondly, the Lynda-video enriched rubric presents an innovative tool for any staff across the Business School to bring to the classroom, and to use the high-quality videos to illustrate and engage students in the learning of oral communication skills. The rubric addresses the 2025 Strategy, Theme A2, Initiative 2 through its support of “exceptional teaching”.

Thirdly, students are given a suite of resources to learn oral communication – Lynda courses and exemplar presentations that are online, self-paced and individual-based, versus a Workshop that is in-person, peer-assisted and group-based. They can select any to suit their learning needs and styles. The

suite of resources is aligned to the 2025 Strategy, Theme A2, Initiative 3, enabling "students to personalise their education and allow the University to individualise student support programs".

- Include the number of courses/programs/students likely to benefit from this project.

The project has benefited MCom students commencing 2018 and FINS5568 students in 2018 S2. Through the development of a not-for-credit Moodle course, "Self-paced and peer-assisted learning of oral presentation", to engage students in the activities achieved to date, the project is likely to benefit all students and programs of the Business School in the future.

2. Dissemination strategies and outputs

- Describe the outputs achieved until now and that are likely to occur as a result of this project.

To date we have achieved the outputs as planned below:

- Present knowledge of oral presentation (PKOP) – PKOP is a self-diagnostic tool for students to learn their present level of knowledge of oral presentation. It contains thirty-six multiple-choice questions on oral presentation techniques and strategies. The questions are sourced from Lynda.com, a leading online learning platform that helps anyone learn business, software, technology and creative skills to achieve personal and professional goals.
- Augmented PRCA-24 instrument – This is another self-diagnostic tool for students to receive a Personal Report of your level of Communication Apprehension. It contains thirty statements that describe feelings about communicating with others in five situations - Group Discussions, Meetings, Interpersonal, Public Speaking and Video Recording. Statements for the first four situations are sourced from the renowned PRCA-24 instrument in McCroskey, J. C., 2005, An introduction to rhetorical communication, 9th edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. We add a new situation and six statements to consider speaking to an audio-visual recording device in a controlled environment such as a recording studio, classroom or home office that does not have an audience.
- Communicating for Success Set – This HBR bookset is specifically written for business communication and published by the renowned Harvard Business Review.
- Overcoming your Fear of Public Speaking – This is a Lynda course that helps viewers to learn techniques to prepare themselves mentally and physically, so that they can feel comfortable—or even enjoy—delivering their message to an audience.
- Business Communication Mentor Program (BCoMP) – This program offers co-curricular opportunities to students of the Business School who want to become a mentor and peer-assist the learning of oral communication of other students with less experience in oral communication. The mentors will receive training to hone their communication skills in-house at UNSW, or at NIDA while funding permits.
- Business Communication Workshop – The three-hour Workshop is filled with activities for students to practise oral communication skills under the guidance of the mentors.
- Exemplary videos – These are video-capture of presentations delivered by past students in various courses across the Business School.

Since the commencement of the project, we have further produced a rubric and curated three more online courses from the library of Lynda.com for dissemination in 2018. In the future, we will offer and add private consultation to the list of peer-assisted learning. Below are details of the additional resources and activities.

- a Lynda-video enriched rubric for AoL assessment of oral communication – This document lists the characteristics of every grading criterion that are considered as exceed expectation. For each characteristic, a direct link to a specific Lynda video is provided to illustrate the strategies and techniques that viewers can learn and use to improve the presentation.
- Communicating with Confidence – This Lynda course provides viewers with simple communication tools, strategies, and tips to help them sound more confident, use body and language to better express ideas, and overcome anxiety.

- iii. Establishing Credibility as a Speaker – This Lynda course is about the techniques that professional speakers use to develop personal credibility and earn the attention and interest of their audience right away, by using key nonverbal and emotional skills.
 - iv. Public Speaking Foundations – This Lynda course helps viewers develop the skills to project confidence when they prepare, open, deliver, and close their speeches.
 - v. Private consultation – The consultation is for students to practise their presentations and receive feedback from the mentors. During the consultation, the responsible mentor will record the mock delivery, watch the recording with the student and offer advice. The student may redo certain parts or practise certain strategies as suggested.
- Describe the dissemination activities and events that have been implemented and/or being planned in the future.

During the year,

- i. The Business Student Centre helped distribute the augmented PRCA-24 instrument to all commencing MCom students in February via email. Students enrolled in FINS5568 in 2018 S1 were also given the same instrument in paper form to learn their own level of communication apprehension.
- ii. Paul Macmullen, Business Educational Portfolio, assisted us in posting the HBR bookset, Lynda course: Overcoming your Fear of Public Speaking, and Lynda-video enriched rubric on the Connect intranet of the Business School to improve visibility of the deliverables as potential L&T resources for staff to use.
- iii. To draw the attention of students who are interested in becoming a mentor, we submitted the Business Communication Mentor Program to UNSW Advantage for accreditation. Once accredited, we delivered a presentation about the Program and forthcoming Workshop at PG Orientation Day, and engaged two business student societies, GSA and FINSOC, to assist us in recruiting the mentors. Colleagues from the Education Quality and Support Unit had also helped promote and find suitable candidates for the Program.
- iv. To inform students of the Workshop, while Business Student Opportunities assisted us in posting the event on Eventbrite, the LICs of four core Master of Commerce courses supported the event by announcing the Workshop in class and via Moodle.
- v. Project members helped spread the opportunity for students to have their presentations recorded as exemplars to their respective colleagues.
- vi. We presented the outcomes of the project twice, the first time at UNSW Learning and Teaching Forum, and the second time at Business Academic Showcase to spread the program to academics, professional staff, and guests and students invited to the events.

In the future, commencing T1 2019 and the years to come, we plan to

- i. Roll out the not-for-credit Moodle course, "Self-paced and peer-assisted learning of oral presentation" as mentioned earlier. To follow the course, instructor may use access key: oral presentation-INST. For students, they should use: oral presentation-STUD.
- ii. Open the Moodle course to all UG and PG students of the Business School, rather than just commencing PG students enrolled in Master of Commerce as originally planned.
- iii. Explore ways to acknowledge students' completion of the Moodle course – from self-diagnosis on level of knowledge and fear of communication, then self-paced learning of oral communication via the curated Lynda courses and exemplars, to peer-assisting learning of oral communication via the Workshop and consultation with a mentor.
- iv. Encourage colleagues to watch out for outstanding presentations so we could engage students in producing and growing the depository of exemplars.
- v. Seek continuing support from colleagues and units across the Business School to promote the activities and spread the L&T resources for oral communication.

3. Evaluation of project outcomes

- Describe the evaluation strategy (formative/summative), tools and actions.

We conducted several surveys and interviews to evaluate the usefulness of the L&T teaching resources developed to date from the perspective of

- mentees who have attended a Workshop in 2018 S2 to receive peer-assisted learning of oral communication,
- mentors who joined the Business Communication Mentor Program in 2018 and have received training at NIDA and in-house at UNSW, and
- students enrolled in FINS5568 in 2018 S2 who have access to the L&T resources.

Links to the respective surveys are:

http://asb.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_06ZVteHTk84pNJj,
http://asb.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5syxSJuCteCsjPf, and
http://asb.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1LB6mQliPHbAnXy.

To gauge the effectiveness of our promotional effort of the Business Communication Mentor Program and Workshop, we reflected on the experience and looked at the number of mentors and mentees against the target numbers.

- Include any results of data collection or analysis.

On surveys and interviews:

Firstly, we learnt from the responses of ten out of thirteen mentees that:

- 75% are interested in becoming mentors; and were very satisfied with the constructive feedback they received at the Workshop
- over 90% believed their mentors were well prepared; positive and enthusiastic; provided appropriate opportunities to engage with them and other mentees; and connected the theory with practice
- 100% found the workshop atmosphere friendly and encouraging; interesting; and to be a valuable learning experience
- 100% were satisfied with the number of opportunities they had to participate and contribute at the Workshop; and would like to be involved in more workshops like these
- 100% believe the workshop improved their knowledge and understanding of the art of oral communication; and are now feeling (since the workshop) more confident in their ability to verbally communicate ideas and information effectively and professionally

Further to the mentee survey, we video-captured our interviews with the mentees after the Workshop. The video can be assessed by clicking [HERE](#).

Secondly, we learnt from the responses of two out of fourteen mentors that they both found the NIDA course valuable for their development of oral communication skills; was worth the time they spent; and accommodated their learning styles. They also wrote the following comments when asked about

- the most valuable part of their experience – “The NIDA courses are extremely helpful. It builds up my confidence and teaches me how to present myself confidently in the public. It is not just about communication, but also about loving yourself and presenting yourself to others”
- opinion on the suitability of NIDA training to their learning styles – “Good mix of theory and practical applications. The teacher was expressive so the lessons were very interesting and easy to absorb.”; and “It is interactive and all about practice.”
- Opinion on how a NIDA course could provide more value for BCoMP – “I don't think it is a good idea to offer the overall BCoMP based on all the courses of NIDA (negotiation, public speaking, digital presentation etc.) but each of the mentor just attended one type of the course, even though partnering with another mentor. I would feel more comfortable if I offer the topics I learned from NIDA, or at least I partner with two or more mentors, so each of us at least know one aspect of BCoMP.”

Lastly, we learnt from the responses of sixty-four out of two hundred and sixty-three FINS5568 students that:

- i. A total of 26% (44%) said the style of presentation in their culture is definitely and probably (might or might not be) different from the Australian style
- ii. Among the five grading criteria: eye contact, opening address, body language, voice and visual aids, on average,
 - o 91% strongly and somewhat agreed the LIC's in-class explanation of the rubric
 - o 84% said the self-paced Lynda videos helped improve their understanding of the grading criteria for oral presentations
- iii. For the self-paced resources, 80% and 83% would recommend the LIC to continue to provide exemplary presentations and the Lynda-video enriched rubric to future students, respectively
- iv. 93.5% were satisfied with the resources provided for the oral presentation assessment
- v. While 90% found the interim presentation beneficial to their development of oral presentation skills through the practice it provided, among those who rehearsed for the interim presentation,
 - o 95% felt they made improvements through practice
 - o 97% felt they are more prepared for the final presentation
 - o 86% felt they are more comfortable with oral presentations
- vi. Overall, 89% were satisfied with the oral presentation assessment

On the effectiveness of our promotional effort of the Business Communication, we managed to welcome in 2018 a total of

- o 18 mentors, 14 in S1 and 4 in S2 versus our target of 20
- o 13 mentees, out of an enrolment of 36 students (i.e., 23 did not show up) versus our target of 300 MCom students

- Provide an evaluation report on the approach and outcomes.

Based on the above surveys and interviews, we conclude that

- i. the Workshop is a resounding success;
- ii. the training received by the mentors is highly valuable to their collaborative effort in developing the Workshop; and
- iii. the self-paced L&T resources are well suited to address the student needs, all of which are useful to the student development of oral communication skills and play a role in improving their experience in oral communication assessments.

Given that the success of the Workshop is built upon the mentors and the training they receive, we have sought and received approval from the PVCE to revise our spending to increase the number of NIDA enrolment from 20 to 25. With 18 mentors to date, this means the project will support NIDA training of 7 new mentors in the future.

Despite our promotional effort, we fail to attract as many commencing MCom students as planned. We met with the mentors and professional staff across the Business School at the end of last year and thought of the following as possible reasons for the shortfall.

- i. Firstly, those students who lack oral communication skills and/or fearful of communication may not want to step out of their comfort zone and seek help.
- ii. Secondly, weighting allocated to oral communication tasks is typically less than 10%. Students may consider this as immaterial.
- iii. Thirdly, students are likely to be away during the September break when we ran the Workshop.

We came up with several ideas to attract and increase the number of students.

- i. Firstly, encourage the mentees who have attended and benefited from a Workshop to help us spread the words via social media such as WeChat.
- ii. Secondly, offer the Workshop early in the term when students are around, and to all UG and PG business students, rather than just PG students enrolled in MCom.

- iii. Thirdly, use the video that captures the positive experience of past mentees to increase the promotional effort on all fronts.
- iv. Fourthly, introduce a flexible form of peer-assisted learning, namely, private consultation, to the mentees on demand when they are ready to rehearse the presentations and want to receive formative feedback from the mentors.
- v. Last but not least, explore avenues to recognise mentee attendance of the Workshop and usage of the self-paced resources to improve oral presentation skills.