

Victoria University of Wellington



**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
(Exec)**

**PADM 512**

**Work-based Project (2003 cohort)**

**2005 Course Outline**

(First Trimester course – 24 points)

This course is co-ordinated and delivered by the Australian New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) of which Victoria University is a participating partner.



the Australia and New Zealand

**School of Government**

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## WORK-BASED PROJECT

### **SUBJECT OUTLINE for 2003 cohort**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The Work-Based Project forms part of the core curriculum of the ANZSOG EMPA. As the last core subject in the program, the role of the Work-Based Project is to provide students with the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge they have developed through their participation in the EMPA. The major element of assessment will involve cross-jurisdictional project teams analysing and proposing a solution to a substantive and contemporary issue in public management or public policy. Projects will test the team's ability to define a 'real-life' problem, design a strategy for addressing the problem, gather data, formulate and evaluate options and make recommendations. The Work-Based Project will conclude with a 2½ day residential component in May 2005 in Brisbane when students will have the opportunity to present the outcomes of their project to ANZSOG faculty, their EMPA colleagues and invited guests.

It is intended that the Work-Based Project will bridge the worlds of classroom and practice to address a real problem confronting governments. In the process, participants will manage the challenges of working cooperatively in teams spanning jurisdictions and work backgrounds to develop genuine and sustainable solutions to difficult and complex issues. The subject will thus provide a true capstone experience in the EMPA.

#### **SUBJECT OBJECTIVES**

The core activity in this subject is the preparation of a major report by a team comprising no more than five members. In addition, participants will contribute to a group presentation at the residential component and submit an individual essay outlining key learning processes and outcomes. The subject will enable participants:

1. To apply relevant theory and concepts to an actual problem confronting government in order to develop creative 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

4. To conduct research in accordance with ethical principles

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the conclusion of the subject each student should:

1. Demonstrate the capacity to undertake primary research within a team-based, multi-disciplinary framework
2. Learn to identify which aspects of a problem are capable of solution
3. Be able to assess the resource impacts of recommendations and proposed actions
4. Develop presentation skills to support the strategy proposed by their report

## **FORMING TEAMS**

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 becoming increasingly important in the business environment (Pfaff and Huddleston 2003). The academic literature also reports that collaborative learning has the potential to increase individual achievement more than individual or competitive learning. This is so, it is argued, 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).

Teams will generally comprise five students drawn from the full range of participating jurisdictions. Students will be given the opportunity to indicate preferences and ANZSOG will endeavour to accommodate at least some of these preferences. Teams will be formed by late September 2004.

## **THE ROLE OF THE PROJECT TEAMS**

It is intended that the Project Teams, once formed, will be **self-managing**. Apart from choosing a topic and related research question, project teams will need to:

- negotiate a 'contract' relating to working arrangements with the academic supervisor assigned by ANZSOG to their team
- locate and negotiate suitable working arrangements with a work-based mentor to provide the team with informal feedback
- conduct research in accordance with ANZSOG's ethical guidelines
- develop possible solutions to the problems identified in the course of their research and
- prepare a substantial presentation and final report.

As teams will be multi-jurisdictional, it is anticipated that most if not all interaction between team members will be either by email or teleconference. (This does not rule out face to face meetings but these would need to be organised and funded by members of the team concerned). Teams will need to establish a means of convening and communicating that best suits their composition and their respective commitments. Teams will also need to allocate functions, roles and responsibilities within the group and to agree upon a timeframe for meetings/communication, as well as significant milestones in the completion of their task.

Teams will be given broad guidelines to assist them in the development of their working arrangements with their academic supervisor.

## **SELECTING A TOPIC**

The key task of each team is to prepare and submit a major report of approximately 10,000 words prepared to normal academic standards that addresses a significant issue confronting government today. An indicative list of these topics may be found at Attachment A. However, project teams or sponsoring agencies may identify another topic (ie. one not listed on the Attachment) which should then be forwarded to the Subject Leader for approval.

Once a team has chosen a topic it will then need to develop a specific research question in relation to this topic which would then form the basis of the major report. When this has been done, the topic and research question should be conveyed to the Subject Leader. The role of the Subject Leader at this point is to approve the topic and research question or to suggest modifications. When the team's topic and research question have been approved, the team can then proceed to research, analyse and consider various possible solutions to the problems it has chosen to focus upon.

## **CONDUCTING ETHICAL RESEARCH**

All research conducted as part of the Work Based Project must be in accordance with *The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* issued by the Australian Government and endorsed by the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee. In the words of the *National Statement*:

It is now widely accepted that all kinds of research involving or impacting upon humans should conform to the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical practice (1999 p.2).

To ensure that research involving humans meets the highest standards, the *National Statement* requires that such research must be reviewed and approved by an appropriately constituted ethics committee before it can be undertaken. An ANZSOG Ethics Committee will be appointed for this purpose.

But what does the term 'research involving humans' mean and how does it apply to the Work Based Project? To many, the term might be assumed to refer to aspects of medical or scientific research, such as research involving the use of human tissues. But this is only one aspect of 'research involving humans'. The *National Statement* defines 'research involving humans' to include 'the use of and/or collection of personal, collective or cultural data from participants and their records, which may include their oral testimony' (p.6). Thus research involving opinions, questionnaires, surveys, observations and interviews - all research tools which might be adopted by project teams in the Work Based Project - would be subsumed within this definition. As such, project teams using these research tools will be required to submit an application for ethics clearance to ANZSOG's Ethics Committee. Further information regarding procedures for gaining ethical clearance will be available on the ANZSOG website, together with the application form to be submitted (if necessary). Academic supervisors appointed by ANZSOG to assist project teams will also play a key role in providing guidance and support to teams in matters relating to the ethical conduct of research.

## **SUPERVISION OF THE MAJOR PROJECT**

An academic supervisor, drawn from one of ANZSOG's partner universities, will be allocated to each team once its topic has been approved by ANZSOG. Supervisors will be appointed on the basis of capacity to assist teams and relevant supervisory experience. It is not expected that academic supervisors will necessarily be experts in the particular field of public policy or public management that a project team chooses to focus upon

In general, the role of the academic supervisor will be to discuss and provide guidance upon the team's research methodology and the preparation of the report. The supervisor might have advice regarding, for example, means of accessing data. Similarly, the supervisor might agree to read and comment upon one or more drafts of the report. It is not, however, the role of the supervisor to project manage the team or to ensure that the team meets its

deadlines. Such matters are the responsibility of the team itself, **not** the supervisor.

To clarify the respective roles of the team and the academic supervisor, it is proposed that the team and the supervisor agree upon a 'contract' setting out the expectations of each party in relation to such matters as key deadlines, nature and timing of consultations, guidance on research methods and feedback and advice on written material. This 'contract' should be concluded at the earliest opportunity and guidelines will be provided for teams in this matter.

Another key role of the academic supervisor will be to guide and advise the project team in matters relating to the ethical conduct of their research. A particular responsibility of the academic supervisor will be to assist the project team in the preparation and submission of an application for ethical clearance to ANZSOG's Ethics Committee if required.

## **WORK-BASED MENTOR**

In addition to the role of the academic supervisor, project team members may wish to have access to a work-based mentor to provide informal feedback and advice. Each team is asked to identify and secure the cooperation of its own work-based mentor following agreement within the team upon their needs. Once a work-based mentor has agreed to act in this role for a team, a statement of respective roles and responsibilities should be prepared and agreed by both parties.

It is intended that the 'sounding board' role of the work-based mentor should complement the more formal role of the academic supervisor.

## **PRESENTATION**

Each project team will make a formal 15 minute presentation on their project during the residential component of the subject in Brisbane and take questions from ANZSOG faculty, guests and fellow students in relation to their presentation and its recommendations. Each team member will be expected to contribute to the presentation. Marks will be allotted on the basis of quality and content of presentation (including audio-visual aids), and responses to comments and questions from the audience.

## INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

In addition to the team report and presentation, students will be required to submit an individual essay of no more than 2,000 words identifying

- How the team pursued its task, including research methodology
- Their role within the team – specific tasks and contributions
- Key findings and recommendations of the report
- How report findings and recommendations might be applied to their own workplace
- Personal learning outcomes

## READING

There is no textbook for this subject. Students will be expected to refer to a broad range of readings in the preparation of both the major report and the individual essay. Students may find some past readings from other EMPA subjects useful in terms of approaching the task of the major report. Teams would be expected to discuss literature relevant to their research topic with their academic supervisor and work-based mentor.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK

Both the team based report and the individual essay must be prepared and completed to appropriate scholarly standards. Most universities have web-based material providing guidelines for the presentation of written work and it is advised that these be consulted. In addition, students may wish to refer to the *Style Manual* (2002) - a classic reference prepared for the Commonwealth Government and now widely recognised as an authoritative aid for writers in government.

A summary of expectations in relation to written work follows:

**Referencing:** All materials used in the preparation of the report and the essay (including unpublished material and web-based documents) must be acknowledged and cited. If extracts are used these must be cited. Where ideas are used or relied upon to advance argument, these too must be acknowledged. Students are free to choose the style of referencing they wish to employ although the Harvard or Scientific method is preferred (eg. Hughes 2003)

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism (presenting the work of another person as your own) is unacceptable and a serious academic offence that may lead to disciplinary action. Please take great care to acknowledge the ideas and words of others in your work.

**Presentation:** All written material submitted for this subject should be typed in 12 point Times New Roman, double or one and a half spaced on A4 paper with ample margins on both sides. Given the size of the team report, project

teams should submit their report in a ring binder or some other form of binding.

**Word limit:** Word limits must be observed. Where word limits are exceeded, the words written in excess of the word limit will not be read. The word count does not include tables, footnotes or endnotes (if used), bibliography or appendices.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The allocation of marks for the subject is as follows:

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Team-based report (10,000 words) | 40% |
| Presentation (15 minutes)        | 30% |
| Individual essay (2,000 words)   | 30% |

## **DUE DATES FOR ASSESSMENT**

Friday 13 May 2005 - Submission of team-based report. This is to be submitted as a **hard copy** to Carmel Barker, Student Coordinator, ANZSOG, PO Box 4023, Parkville, Victoria, Australia, 3052.

Friday 13 May 2005 - Submission of individual essay.  
This can be submitted electronically to [assignment@anzsog.edu.au](mailto:assignment@anzsog.edu.au)

18,19,20 May 2005 - Presentations on team-based report.

Attachment B shows key deadlines for the Work Based Project.

## **SUBJECT LEADER AND CONTACT DETAILS**

The Subject Leader is Dr Deirdre O'Neill, Academic Director of the EMPA. She is located at the ANZSOG offices at Level 4, 161 Barry Street, Carlton, Victoria, 3053.

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Fax: +61 3 9349 5849  
Email: [d.oneill@anzsog.edu.au](mailto:d.oneill@anzsog.edu.au)

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Parkville, Victoria 3052  
Australia

**NB:** Deirdre O'Neill will be on leave from Friday, 3 December 2004 to Thursday 27 January 2005. Any queries in relation to the Work-Based Project during this period should be directed to ANZSOG on (03) 8344 1990.



## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **INDICATIVE LIST OF TOPICS FOR WORK-BASED PROJECT\***

- 1. Joined Up Government**
- 2. Declining Trust in Public Agencies**
- 3. Security**
- 4. Allocating Resources in the Context of Declining Revenues**
- 5. Measures of Productivity**
- 6. Governance**
- 7. Weeding Out Corruption**
- 8. Developing Policy Capability**
- 9. Indigenous Issues**
- 10. Service delivery – Outsourcing, Partnerships**
- 11. Ageing Population**
- 12. Global Governance - International treaties**
- 13. Workforce planning**
- 14. Forms of Regulation**

**\* NB Each team will be expected to develop an appropriate research question in relation to the topic they select.**

**Teams may propose another topic to those listed. In such cases teams should submit this topic to the Subject leader for approval.**