Extension Grant Process

The L&T Grants Submission process consists of three parts:

1. Grant registration (via online submission)
2. Grant application (this template)
3. Itemised budget (budget template)

This grant application and the Itemised budget should be attached to the grant registration via the online submission system.
The combined total response to selection criteria should not exceed 8 A4 pages in total and need to address all criteria. The Font used should be 12 pt Georgia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Embedding and evaluating active learning in a large foundational unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Contact Full Name:</td>
<td>Dr Alison Vicary</td>
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JUSTIFICATION:

Extension Grants Criteria

Extension grants are awarded to fund projects that lead to embedding of good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching. Projects should include a program of activities that will embed project findings into ongoing practice.

Applications must demonstrate strategies to deliver outcomes in:

- **Leadership** - The project should aim to build leadership capacity in ways that promote and advance learning and teaching at Macquarie University.
- **Scholarship** - There should be more than anecdotal evidence to support the project planned and the evaluation of the outcomes should be designed to be integral to the project.
- **Sustainability** - The project should develop effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of good individual and institutional practice, including addressing particular contextual barriers to taking on the good practice identified.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

**Describe the background and rationale for the project. e.g. the learning / teaching issue or problem area the project will address; Value / need etc.**

ECON110 is a large first-year foundational unit with enrolments of over 500 students per session each year. As with most other units in the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) and the University more generally, tutorials play a crucial role in helping students practice and apply their understanding. Tutors currently undertake the centrally-organised Tutor Induction Program, but this generalised form of professional development is unable to properly address important discipline-specific nuances or contextual differences (Underhill & McDonald 2010). Additionally, new tutorial modes such as online synchronous sessions designed as part of a Faculty...
Participation Program (FPP) project for ECON110 can support rich supplementary teaching opportunities, but pedagogical and technical best practices remain underexplored (Kear et al. 2012). A major issue with the existing model of tutor teaching and development is the lack of connection and collaboration between tutors and other academic staff.

Therefore, aiming to extend and build upon the experiences that tutors have with face-to-face and online tutorials within this unit, we propose to develop and implement a new model of tutor development following a distributed leadership paradigm (Jones et al. 2014). Through this, we seek to build tutor capacity and philosophy to move beyond the traditional tutorial which is tutor-centred, to supporting student-centred activities such as collaborative group work in face-to-face sessions. In online sessions, more flexible equipment and resources are required to support effective teaching. These needs to help tutors and tutorials grow have been identified as part of the ECON110 FPP.

Research shows the value of tutor-tutor and tutor-convenor interactions, sharing of experiences, and mutual encouragement in a discipline-contextualised manner (Calma 2013). Aspects of this resonate with a pattern of distributed leadership, where a culture of respect, trust, collaboration, and recognition are used to build capacity and communities of practice (Jones et al. 2014). In this project, we seek to apply this model to build and embed a culture of connected community within tutors and convenors, providing necessary pedagogical, developmental, and technical support, with the purpose of improving learning and teaching in face-to-face and online tutorials. In this model, teaching staff will build an informal community of practice where convenors can share their teaching philosophy for the unit, and tutors can share and learn from each other’s experiences in leading active learning (Underhill & McDonald 2010). Teaching staff would be involved in ongoing peer support and reflection, to build a community where tutors are valued and motivated (Underhill & McDonald 2010). Evaluation is integral to this process, both in terms of the impact on tutor development, as well as the impact on student learning in sessions supported by tutors who are part of this community of practice.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

| What are the intended outputs (or deliverables) of project? | Through developing and implementing this connected community, we aim to develop a sustainable model of distributed leadership for tutors and convenors that can be applied in other units and programs to improve student-centred practices in face-to-face and online |
tutorials. Flexibility is inherent in such models, as is the provision of resources such as time, space, and a small amount of funding to grow these communities (Jones et al. 2014). This project will develop and trial a model, together with supporting resources to deliver workshops and a community of practice, which can be used to develop future connected communities of tutors. Through evaluating these initiatives, this project will provide an evidence base to determine the return on investment for such a model of tutor development.

What will be the impact of the project? This project has direct impact on the learning experiences of over 1000 students and a team of 15 tutors each year. Additionally, FBE is considering how online teaching might supplement lectures, especially in first year. This project will measure and evaluate possible changes to ECON110 in this area, such as through online tutorials and other resources. Together, this serves a primary FBE agenda of improving the first year experience. The results of this project are applicable to other large first year units across the University, in which a positive learning experience is key to improving student retention and success.

Describe the approach and methodology. The model for building the connected community of tutors would include a two-hour introductory workshop for ECON110 before the start of session. In this workshop, unit convenors would share their teaching philosophy, and together with tutors would collaboratively build a model for tutorial best practices by sharing discipline-specific experiences, participating in collective decision making, and building a mutually supportive environment (Underhill & McDonald 2010; Calma 2013; Jones et al. 2014). To encourage ongoing support, one-hour workshops in the middle of session and after the session concludes would be run to allow teaching staff to reflect on and discuss their teaching, and contribute to unit improvement (Underhill & McDonald 2010). Additionally, throughout the session, tutors would also be encouraged to voluntarily participate in peer observation and feedback in order to continue ongoing informal mentoring processes (Calma 2013). Tutors will also be invited to an online community where they can continue to discuss issues and share experiences. This online space will be designed using existing enterprise tools and embedded into the three workshops. For tutors also involved in online tutorials, technical support (in the form of devices and training) would be provided, leveraging current enterprise systems such as Blackboard Collaborate. These workshops will be initially developed and run by the project team, but in the spirit of distributed leadership, would evolve to suit the needs of the tutors. Evaluation of the impact on student learning and tutor development will also be conducted by the team at a number of points throughout this process.
## THE PROJECT

### How will the project be managed? Team?

The existing FPP project team of Dr Alison Vicary, Dr Onur Ates, Dr Danny Liu, Ms Natalie Spence (project manager), Mr Roneil Latchman, and Mr Chris Froissard will be involved in the planning and delivery of this project as an extension of their FPP work.

### How will the project be evaluated?

The learning and teaching strategies and models developed in the preceding FPP project, and supported by this project, will be evaluated through student and tutor questionnaires, student outcomes, and staff and student focus groups. An ethics application for evaluating the impacts on student learning has been submitted, and an additional ethics application will be submitted to investigate the impacts of this project on the professional development of tutors.

## POST PROJECT

### Outline the extensibility of the project outcomes.

Because the connected community model will be designed for sustainability, the team envisage the model to be applicable, with a small financial outlay, to units in FBE and across the University which have a group of tutors teaching a sizeable cohort. The development of online tutorial modalities and the supporting technologies will be of interest to all unit and program convenors who may need to support face-to-face sessions with collaborative online sessions. This project will establish a set of best practices surrounding student and staff support in these contexts, which will also be of interest beyond Macquarie University.

### How will the project results be disseminated? How will outcomes benefit the University Community?

A presentation will be made at the Learning and Teaching Week at Macquarie University. The team plans to also disseminate the connected community model and its impacts on students and tutors at conferences (such as the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia) and through relevant journals in the areas of higher education and economics education.

## References


