



**UNIT BUS854:  
MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY  
IN BUSINES**

**Dr Elizabeth Christopher**

**Semester 1, 2009**

**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**  
**UNIT OUTLINE**

**Year and Semester: Semester 1 2009, February 23 - 26 June**

**Unit convenor: Dr Elizabeth Christopher**

**Prerequisites/Co-requisites: There are none for this Unit but it is assumed that enrolled students at Master's level will have a basic knowledge and understanding of management principles.**

**Students should read this Outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains essential information. If anything is unclear, please email Elizabeth on [echristo@efs.mq.edu.au](mailto:echristo@efs.mq.edu.au)**

**ABOUT THIS UNIT**

Credit Points: 4

This unit discusses the implications for organisational leaders in view of increasing cultural differences between individuals and groups within and between organisations. In particular the unit examines practical problems and opportunities in managing human diversity in contemporary cross-cultural and international settings.

For the purpose of this Unit, culture is defined in its widest sense as:

- Accumulation of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions: acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group behaviour;
- Cultivated behaviour: the sum of individuals' social learning and experience through symbols deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions, accepted generally without question and passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next: thus culture is communication and communication is culture.
- Cultural symbols such as artifacts, traditions, legends, icons, that represent patterns, explicit and implicit, of distinctive and desirable achievement by members of the relevant group.
- Culture systems are both products of action and conditioning influences on further action: a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS UNIT** is to explore cultural dimensions of international management. Specific objectives are to learn more about:

- 1- Managing cultural differences in international business environments;
- 2- Culture-based risks and challenges for international managers;
- 3- Differences in cultural views of social responsibility and corporate governance in multi-national enterprises;
- 4- The role of culture in management of diversity;
- 5- Communicating across cultures: different perspectives on 'reality'
- 6- Cross cultural negotiation; cultural differences in tactics and manoeuvres;
- 7- Cultural bases for strategies in international alliances;
- 8- Differences in cultural views of control systems and labour relations;
- 9- Developing international managers;
- 10- Motivation and leadership in the management of diversity

#### **TEACHING STAFF**

- Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Christopher
- Tel: 0417 236 531. Email: [echristo@efs.mq.edu.au](mailto:echristo@efs.mq.edu.au)
- Consultation hours: before and after each class.

#### **CLASSES**

Class times:

Tuesdays, 2 - 5 pm. in Building E4B Room 316;

The class will be offered also on Wednesdays, 9am -12pm in Building E4B Room 316

Face to face study hours: 3 hours per week.

The timetable for classes can be found on the University web site at:

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/>

#### **REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND/OR MATERIALS**

##### **SET TEXT**

Helen Deresky and Elizabeth Christopher, 2008, International Management: Managing across Borders and Cultures (Pearson Education Australia)

Obtainable from Macquarie University Coop Bookshop  
([macq\\_byr@coop-bookshop.com.au](mailto:macq_byr@coop-bookshop.com.au))

Students should have their own copy of this text if possible. There are some copies on the library shelves and in library reserve. Lectures support and add to the textbook but cannot replace it. It is a standard work of reference on cross cultural management, specifically addressed to the Australasian market.

Also in library reserve is a very useful book of readings: Elizabeth Christopher (editor), 2008, *Managing cultural diversity in international business*.

Classroom sessions are backed up online with lecture notes, case studies, articles and discussion points on the ten major topics above that make up the content of the Unit.

#### **UNIT WEB PAGE**

Online address for Blackboard: <http://learn.mq.edu.au>

Users can log directly into the course by using the following URL:

<https://learn.mq.edu.au/webct/logon/24268665001>

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

After completing this unit students should be able to do the following:

- \* Sketch the multicultural 'big picture' in which global trade and government forces operate; and summarise the major culture-based challenges faced by international managers (political, legal, economic and technological);
- \* Present a range of culture-based arguments concerning the need for social responsibility and ethical behaviour in multi-national enterprises;
- \* Identify major cultural characteristics, including communication styles, that characterise regions, nations, communities, organisations, groups and individuals;
- \* Discuss a range of culture-based tactics for international negotiation;
- \* Describe major cultural differences in views on strategy for international alliances, including controls, labour relations and management;
- \* Present arguments for adopting particular leadership styles in given situations; and for varying motivational techniques depending on circumstances;
- \* Enhance generic skills (foundation skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology; self-awareness, interpersonal and communication skills; critical analysis; problem-solving; creative thinking; logical argument; leadership and teamwork).

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY**

This unit is presented through four learning media:

1. A weekly classroom lecture combined with class and small group discussions, quizzes and self-assessment.
2. Supported online on Blackboard: <http://learn.mq.edu.au>

Lecture notes, assignment details, assessment methods, case studies, reading and reference materials and a sample exam paper will be posted.

3. The set textbook;

4. The students themselves. Nobody wants to listen to a lecture for 3 hrs every week. Much learning will be from peers. Students are expected to attend as many classes as they can and to offer themselves as a learning resource. All students will be invited to give a short talk (10 minutes maximum), Weeks 3 through 10, on a specific and personal aspect of their culture.

### **ASSESSMENT:**

In order to pass this Unit, students will be expected to:

1. Make a short presentation to the class on an aspect of their culture. Presentations will begin in Week 3. (5%, no written report required).
2. Write a case study based on a news item of their own finding (examples and guidelines online; 20% max., approx. 2,000 words);
3. Participate in a group research project, including a class presentation, and submit a written report (examples and guidelines online, 15% max., approx. 1,000-1,500 words),
4. Sit a 2-hour end-of-semester written exam (60%, answers should total the equivalent of about 6 A4 pages, i.e. about 2,000 words; sample exam online with suggestions for appropriate answers)

### **STUDENTS WILL NEED TO:**

- Obtain at least a Pass overall (20/40) for all required coursework to be eligible to sit the exam;
- achieve at least a 50% pass in the final exam (30/60).

## **TIMETABLE**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>BEGINNING</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
1	Feb 23 2009	Overview
2	March 2	Going global
3	March 9	CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS BEGIN Social responsibility and ethics
4	March 16	GROUPS TO BE FORMED FOR GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT The role of culture
5	March 23	Communication
6	March 30	Negotiations and decisions
7	April 6	Strategic alliances

### **Mid-semester break Monday 13 April to Friday 24 April 2009**

8	April 27	Monitoring and controlling
9	May 4	Workforce diversity and international mgt CASE STUDY DUE MAY 8 BEFORE 12 PM
10	May 11	Leadership and motivation
11	May 18	Group projects: verbal reports begin...
12	May 25	...continued. WRITTEN REPORTS DUE
13	June 2 and 3	EXAM (2 hours plus 10 minutes' reading time)

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **1. Case studies: learning outcomes are to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the following:**

- Understanding of how theoretical principles can be generalized from a specific, real life situation or incident; and ability to explain key concepts;
- Recognition of how the major themes of the chosen news report fit within the discipline of cross cultural studies;
- Ability to combine and collate various items of information in the selected case into an explanatory whole;
- Reasonable and realistic arguments and ability to make clear, logical and organized relationships between different features of the chosen case;
- Ability to conform to correct procedures for writing and presenting academic work.

**2. Group research project, including a class presentation, and a written report: learning outcomes are to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the following:**

- Theoretical and practical knowledge of the three major methods for academic research: interviews/case studies; surveys; and unobtrusive or non-intervention methods;
- Ability to work as a member of a task-oriented and multi-cultural team;
- Leadership qualities: the management of workforce diversity;
- Increased ability to write academic reports (based also on experience gained and feedback from the case study assignment).

**3. End-of-semester written exam: learning outcomes are to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the following:**

- They have learned something from study of BUS854 (i.e. that they know more now on the topic of managing cultural diversity in business than they did before they enrolled in the unit);
- They understand what they have learned, i.e. it was not all rote learning and memorisation;
- They can apply this knowledge inductively and deductively through analysis, synthesis and evaluation, to relevant aspects of the management of cultural diversity in real life.

**ASSIGNMENT TASKS INCLUDING WORD LENGTH**

**1. Individual written case study (to be submitted via Blackboard end of Week 9).**

Students will find a news item online and explain how it illustrates one or more theoretical principles of cross cultural studies (see examples and "Guidelines for writing cases studies", online).

News items are expected to be no longer than 1,000 words and must be included with the online assignment submission. Students will be expected to write about 2,000 words of relevant discussion of the chosen case, based on their studies of BUS854; 20% max, due Week 9 (two weeks after the mid-semester break); submission: by Blackboard.

Examples of news items that might be discussed in terms of cultural factors can be found on Blackboard under 'Case Studies'. Each example is followed by three culture-based observations on the case, with suggestions for appropriate discussion of each.

**2: Group research project.**

Groups of 3-4 people will be created by Elizabeth in Week 4. Each group will be provided with its own private 'discussion board' on Blackboard so Elizabeth can keep

track of all groups. Guidelines and examples of former reports that earned high grades are provided online. After reading some literature on research methods for the social sciences (see <http://www.managementhelp.org/research/research.htm> and further references online) groups will each seek answers to a specific research question, based on assumptions derived from their study of the Unit. Each group will decide what relevant question they would like to research.

One or more members of each group will summarise its research to the class, in a presentation of about 15 minutes', beginning Week 11 and continuing in Week 12. Full written reports must be submitted online by the end of Week 12 for comments & grades to be returned before the exam. Reports should conform in style and content to academic standards for report writing (see guidelines online)

This assignment is worth a total of 15% including class presentation and written report. Due date for report, Week 12; submission by Blackboard. Length of report: approximately 1,000 - 1,500 words.

### **3. Individual cultural contribution**

Each week, beginning Week 3, through Week 10, student(s) are required to become 'cultural ambassadors' by sharing with the class some personal observations on any aspect of their cultural heritage. In Weeks 1 and 2 a list of presenters and dates will be compiled and some examples provided of presentations by former students. Each presentation is expected to last between 5 and 10 minutes and no written report is required. (This assignment is worth 5%)

ALSO there are readings online for general interest, not part of assessment. Lecture notes will be on Blackboard each week. Each week's topic goes with the relevant section of the textbook.

NOTE: Students may be penalised if they do not submit each item of required coursework by the due date, including work required for class.

If Elizabeth does not acknowledge any personal communication from any student within 24 hours, she has not received it!

### **4. Examination**

Value 60%; date: last week of classes (Week 13): 2 hours (plus 10 minutes' reading time). Part A: Case study; 3 questions 10 marks each (30 marks total); Part B: 2 short discussions on any 2/5 topics (15 marks each); sample exam paper online. Dictionaries are not permitted in the exam.

Students must sit the exam during their allocated class period. The only exceptions to sitting the examination at the designated time will be because of documented illness or unavoidable disruption. In these circumstances students may consider applying for Special Consideration. Information about unavoidable disruption and the special consideration process is available at <http://www.reg.mq.edu.au/Forms/APSCon.pdf>



If a Supplementary Examination is granted as a result of the Special Consideration process the examination will be scheduled after the conclusion of the official examination period. (Individual Divisions may wish to signal when the Division's Supplementaries are normally scheduled.)

Students are advised that it is Macquarie University policy not to set early or delayed examinations for individuals or groups of students. All students are expected to be available to sit the exam at the designated time and place.

## **PLAGIARISM**

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: "Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one's own." Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University's rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University's practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the *Handbook of Undergraduate Studies* or on the web at: <http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/>

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and/or referral to the University Discipline Committee.

## **DETERMINATION OF OVERALL GRADE**

Grades will be awarded using the standard Macquarie University scheme:

HD High distinction 85-100%

D Distinction 75-84%

Cr Credit 65-74%

P Pass 50-64%

PC Conceded pass 45-49%

F Fail 0-44%

An Incomplete (I) grade will only be awarded under exceptional circumstances. W indicates the student has chosen to discontinue the unit after the HECS census date and up to the end of week 10. Students who receive an "I" grade should contact Elizabeth immediately to discuss the reasons, and to find out what to do to complete the requirements of the Unit.

High Distinction (HD: 85-100) denotes performance which meets all unit objectives in such an exceptional way, and with such marked excellence, that it deserves the highest recognition;

Distinction (D: 75-84) denotes performance which clearly deserves a very high level of recognition as an excellent achievement in the unit;

Credit (C: 65-74) denotes performance which is substantially better than would normally be expected of competent students in the unit;

Pass (P: 50-64) denotes performance which satisfies unit objectives;

Pass Conceded (PC: 45-49) denotes performance which meets unit objectives only marginally;

Fail (F: 0-44) denotes performance which does not meet the unit objectives.

**SUMMARY:**

Students' work will be awarded a high grade to the extent to which it shows:

- Excellent understanding of the relevant principles and all key concepts;
- Discussion showed insight and was innovative; use of authorities and references was excellent; clear and logical statements were made and conclusions were sound and interesting.
- Reflection, obvious investment of time and effort.

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines on the distribution of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Students' final results will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG). On occasion the raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG received by the relevant students. Under the Senate guidelines, results may be scaled to ensure that there is a degree of comparability across the university, so that units with the same past performances of their students should achieve similar results.

It is important that students realise the policy does not require that a minimum number of students must fail in any unit. The process of scaling does not change the order of marks among students. Those who receive higher raw marks will also receive a higher final scaled mark. For an explanation of the policy see

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/Guidelines2003.doc> or  
<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/detailedguidelines.doc>.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can found on <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>.