**Citation**
For teaching diverse undergraduate business students that leadership is for everybody, with an inclusive and authentic approach that challenges traditional leader identity norms.

Overview
Societies around the globe have made great inroads toward embracing diversity, and yet the business world today still marginalises women, ethnic minorities, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Kalaitzi, Czabanowska, Fowler-Davis, and Brand (2017) find that these individuals remain particularly underrepresented in leadership roles, and it is here that I strive to make the greatest difference.
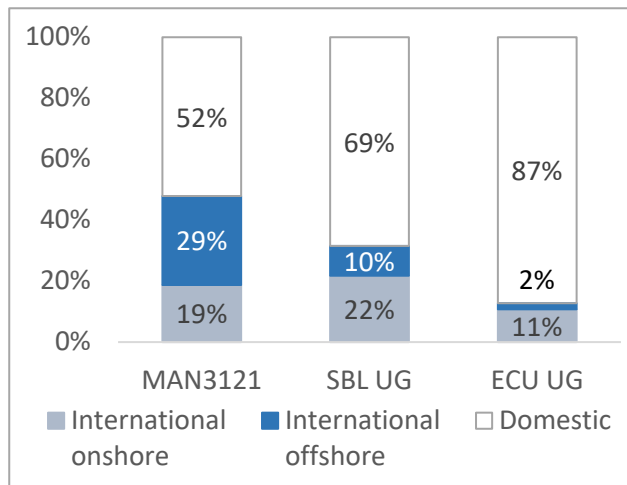
My students in third-year undergraduate unit MAN3121 Leadership come from all walks of life; 48% are international (see Figure 1), 49% are female, 46% are from a non-English speaking background (compared to an average of 28% in SBL UG and 17% ECU UG), around 9% are First in Family, and many have diversity, equity and inclusion vulnerabilities.

My teaching challenges traditional norms about leader identity and enables any student to aspire toward leadership roles. I show my students that **leadership is for everybody**, not only for the able, heterosexual, middle-aged white males from privileged backgrounds.

Figure 1. Graded EFTSL by student segment percentage (data is an average over 2019–2021).

My approach is uniquely framed as a series of targeted interventions, drawing on pedagogical advances by Harackiewicz and Priniski (2018). I teach my students contemporary positive leadership practices in a way that personalizes their learning, demystifying leadership and bringing it within their reach.

The outcomes of my unique approach are sustained over four years and evidenced by students' narrative experiences, their learning success, and feedback from my peers and external industry practitioners.

SAGE Publications Inc. recognized my unique approach to teaching business leadership and contracted me to write a leadership textbook as a sole author based on my work in this unit – due to be completed 2023.

Category 1: Developing teaching practice, curricula or learning environments that foster inclusion for a diverse range of students
My teaching applies a transformative pedagogy that empowers students to critically examine their beliefs, values, and experiences to develop a reflective self-knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of personal agency (Ukpokodu, 2009).

Realizing
I first expose my students to a range of contemporary leadership perspectives to show them that there is not one best way to lead, and that true leadership is something that emerges from within. Successful leaders in modern organisations are authentic and transformational (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016); they are true to themselves and it is through their diverse constellation of experiences, perspectives and heritages that they are so effective.

I really liked that we were not provided with the one "perfect" way to become a leader but could explore the topic from our perspective and get to know ourselves as potential leader. (UTEI MAN3121 – Unit, S2 2019)

These perspectives transforms students' self-concepts; they stop seeing their differences as weaknesses that prohibit them from succeeding to leadership positions and realize that these are unique strengths that distinguish them with rare advantage.

Andrei used reflective exercises that allowed me to voice my thoughts and challenge the stereotypes commonly associated with leaders. (Reference Letter, Hollie Schippers, 2020)

Embarking

My students then embark on a journey of emerging through reflective exercises that change the way they think about leadership, themselves, and their personal and professional development to pursue an identity that is aspirational. Personal reflection is at the core of transformative pedagogy (Meyers, 2008) and enables my students to become engaged active learners.

In addition to the formal assessments, students complete **over 30 online exercises** throughout my unit. The exercises are targeted interventions that guide them to reflect on themselves and their past experiences in relation to the content, which personalises their learning and reframes their experiences not just as 'things that happened to them,' but as leadership interventions and treasure troves of valuable self-knowledge.

> *The quizzes […] really made me open up and explore my leadership capabilities. This is one of my favourite units I have studied. (UTEI MAN3121 – Lecturer, S1 2020)*

I developed the online exercises as Blackboard Tests, so that students retain access to their answers. The exercises are completed during lectures at regular intervals among the content. On-campus students are required to bring an Internet-enabled smart device with Blackboard access to class.

The activities are graded only as complete or incomplete and I assure students that there are no right or wrong answers, but rather that their genuine engagement with the activities is what really matters. I invite students to share their experiences and I validate their perspectives, but I do not force them to engage. I thereby establish the unit as a 'safe space' where diverse students can share their unique perspectives and learn about others' (Brown, 2015).

> *This unit was extremely engaging as we had to fill out four or more lecture activities in every class, this was fantastic and helped me to get a better understanding of myself as a leader. (UTEI MAN3121 – Unit, S1 2019)*

Over the course of the semester, as they work through the series of reflective exercises, my students come to understand who they are, and who they want to be.

> *I think the weekly engagement activities were an excellent idea. I have never seen that format before. The self-awareness teachings were very beneficial to me. Powerful stuff.*
> *(UTEI MAN3121 – Unit, S1 2020)*

I provide them with both the reflective tools and the confidence that enables them to transform. I believe **in them**, and that seems to make a great deal of difference, helping them to discover their inner strength and undertake such metamorphosis. My pedagogical approach is therefore deeply student-centric (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2015) to enable their emergent transformative learning. Through these reflective exercises, my students start to change the way they think about leadership, about themselves, and begin to see aspirational leadership roles as real possibilities.

> *I […] am learning a lot about myself and my leadership skills. It has given me a lot of optimism about my future of what is possible. […] My ambition is that I too would like to be an effective leader one day. (Pulse Survey MAN3121, S1 2020)*

Becoming

The final stage for my students is to become leaders in their own right, a process that takes ongoing personal and professional development. My students are not only changed during their time in my unit, but continue to grow and develop afterward.

> *I was very sceptical about this unit, but I am now very keen to learn more after completing this unit.*
> *(UTEI MAN3121 – Unit, S1 2020)*

Transformative learning involves amending students' "fixed assumptions and expectations […] to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58). By embedding reflective practice throughout my unit I furnish my students with a **growth mindset** that sets them on a trajectory to pursue further education, career advancement, and personal excellence.

> *Thank you again for your lectures, guidance, and assistance. […] This is my final unit, the end of my ECU journey. […] I am considering furthering my studies next year, [and] applying for a one-week leadership program 'Ignite Management Program' […] which will further extend and develop my leadership potential. (Unsolicited Email, Natalie Hopkins, S2 2018)*

Outcomes

My unique approach is supported with evidence about the students' experience, their learning outcomes, and feedback from my peers and external industry partners.

Student Experience

Edith Cowan University has been the #1 public university for undergraduate teaching quality in Australia for six years in a row according to the QILT rankings. Yet even against this high standard, my approach excels.

**Figure 2.** Mean overall student satisfaction (Unit).
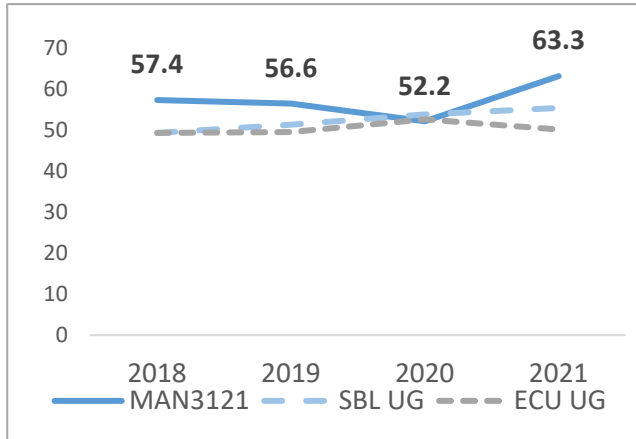
What I do in my unit MAN3121 Leadership is unique and is received particularly well by the students (see Figure 2 for the average student satisfaction scores).

Satisfaction dropped in 2020 due to the challenges of COVID-19, but then increased significantly when new online materials were developed for the unit.

My values are aligned with the ethos of the *Sage Athena Swan* initiative and under my stewardship over the last four years, the unit has demonstrated a strong demand from females (49% of enrolments 2017–2021), with more and more young women self-selecting into a leadership career trajectory.

Student Learning

International students (onshore and offshore) consistently achieve higher success rates than their domestic peers in this unit, in contrast to the average across SBL and ECU undergraduate students (see Figure 3).
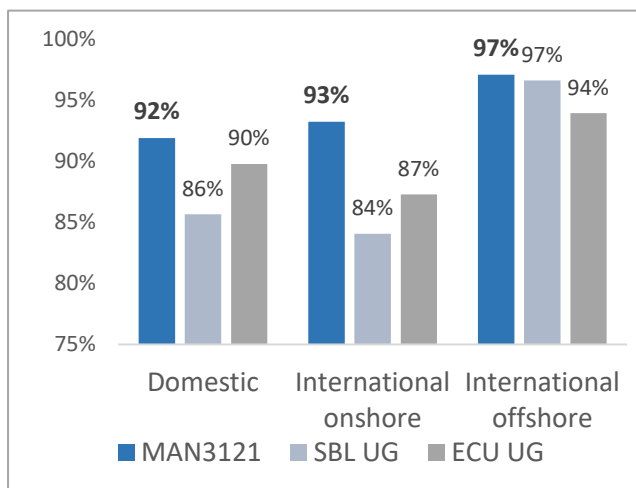
Student success in this unit is also higher for students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Figure 4) and for first in family students (Figure 5) compared to the averages across SBL and ECU.

Such students have very different educational and work experiences, and come from different cultural backgrounds. I teach them that these differences are valuable, rather than challenges to overcome, and these students perform particularly well.

I believe in my students and in 2021 I founded the 'Lux Future Leaders Award' for the student with the highest mark in MAN3121. I personally sponsor the award and put my reputation behind my students.

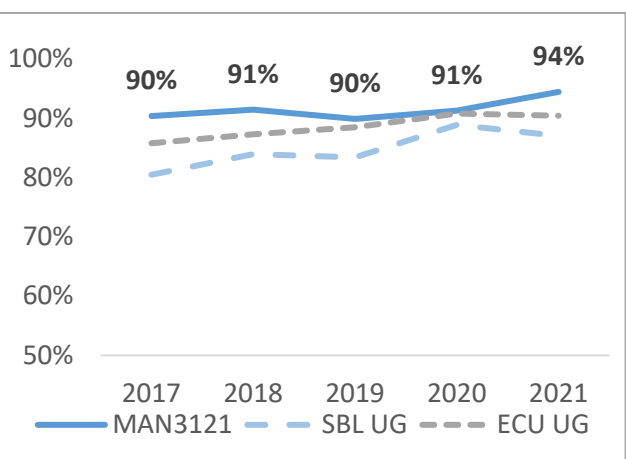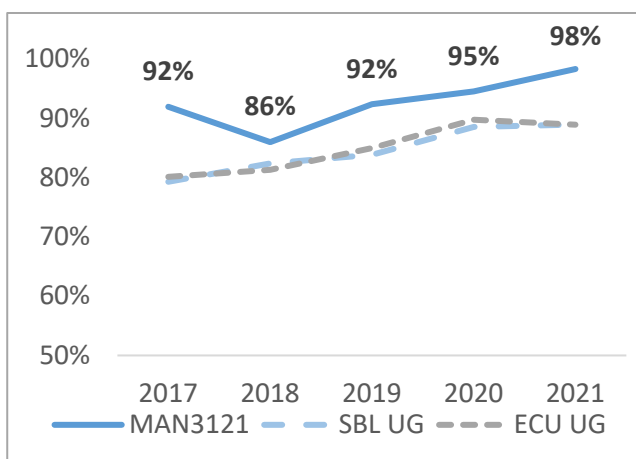**Figure 3.** Success rates by student segment (data is an average over 2019–2021).

Figure 4. Success rates for students from non-English Speaking Backgrounds.

Figure 5. Success rates for First in Family students.

Peer Review

The impact of my teaching practices extend beyond my students to also transform fellow lecturers. Dr Somayeh Bahmannia lectures in my leadership unit and I have been mentoring her in my approach by role modelling positive leadership behaviour. For example, empowering my lecturers rather than directing them, communicating with every student with respect, and constantly seeking feedback to continue improving the unit, as an application of my own growth mindset.

> *There have been lots of incidents where I was amazed by Andrei's behaviour, which seemed small but had a significant impact on me. Andrei always refers to "us" or "we", not "I" or "me", which made me feel included and valued. He inspires me to be always aware of my behaviour and his actions confirm that it is not just about diversity, but the inclusion of diversity. […] Working with him as a colleague and observing his behaviour has helped me to develop my own leadership and teaching skills.*
> *(Reference Letter, Somayeh Bahmannia, 2020)*

Industry Feedback

A range of industry leaders regularly engage with the unit. I first introduce them to my unique approach and then invite them to share their practical insights and experiences with the students. Below are some of their comments on the unit.

Rhonda Hardy, CEO at the City of Kalamunda

> *I recently gave a lecture on resilience and complexity leadership to Andrei's students. It was a great opportunity for me to share my 30 years of experience with future leaders. I commend the approach that Andrei is taking with his students bringing real world examples, instead of just theory, to the table. I wish I had a similar opportunity when I was a business student at ECU 30 years ago. (2021)*

Lois Andrijich, General Manager at St Ives, Executive Manager at Minda Inc., and Director of Life at Work

> *Teaching real-life business leadership skills in a university setting is essential, and Andrei's approach allows this by bringing real life examples into his class, showing that there are multiple ways to lead well, [and] dispelling the notion that leadership roles are set aside for certain gender or ethnic types.*
>
> *I am a strong supporter of Dr Lux's approach to teaching business leadership, and believe it is a key step in developing the strong and reflective leaders that will support our employees and businesses of the future. (2021)*

Conclusion

My application demonstrates how my inclusive and authentic teaching practices create an environment where diverse undergraduate business students are enabled to succeed. I have developed a series of targeted interventions anchored in transformative pedagogy and reflective practice that enable diverse students to realize their potential; I teach them that leadership is for everybody. The series of reflective exercises guides my students through an ongoing journey to emerge as leaders in their own right. Student narratives, success rates, and satisfaction results, as well as recognition from peers and external partners offer ample evidence of my sustained commitment to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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