



Curtin University



# Faculty of Business and Law

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

## Strategic Project Profile

**PROJECT TITLE:** Understanding the barriers to implementing strategy: developing a conceptual framework for effective strategy execution

**FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE:** 1503

**PROJECT SYNOPSIS:** Whilst it is impossible to deny the importance of developing strategy, many of the strategies produced have little effect on the organisation and instead collect dust on shelves. This loss of opportunity is due to many factors including; lack of recognition of the socio political considerations of organisations (thus impacting buy-in and ownership of the strategy), insufficient acknowledgment and management of the challenges associated with the impacts of costing and reward systems on the strategic change activities, and insufficient support in the form of sponsorship (championing the strategy) and resources. Furthermore, the learning opportunities and insights that exist from monitoring the success (or not) of strategy are being lost.

Given the increasingly competitive global environment, better ways to develop implementable strategy is an important consideration to managers in public, private and not-for profit organisations, and at senior and middle levels.

In developing effective implementation models it is important to recognise that for some organisations a detailed strategy is likely to be inappropriate given the speed of change (typically in the ICT sector) whilst for others detailed action plans are necessary to justify public funding. As such the emergent conceptual model will need to attend to context.

This PhD opportunity focuses on eliciting an understanding of the barriers and opportunities associated with implementing strategy, looking at possible avenues and associated research (for example project management) and building a conceptual framework to enable organisations think and act strategically.

It is anticipated that the research design will be a combination of interviews with managers responsible for strategic management (so as to develop the nascent framework) alongside an action research program to test out the framework's effectiveness thus enabling the emergent conceptual framework to provide both a theoretical and practical contribution – in the words of Lewin 'there is nothing as practical as good theory'.

The project provides the candidate with an opportunity to become fully conversant in the strategy making process and develop distinctive competences in the area of strategy implementation. Furthermore, both the topic (strategy) and the research design (interviews and active testing/action research) will provide the candidate with valuable skills for futures in either academia or industry.

#### **FEASIBILITY AND RESOURCING – DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT THIS PROJECT WILL RECEIVE:**

The student will receive the usual support of a laptop, workspace and research training (both in terms of research methods but also specialised training e.g. NVivo, Concept Mapping etc.). Alongside this there will be funding for consumables and for conference attendance (which can be augmented at School level should this be required/advantageous) In addition, the School has an active and engaged Advisory Board supportive of research projects and this, alongside the industry networks of the supervisory team, will ensure access to organisations/managers in terms of interviews and testing the emergent conceptual model.

Finally, the newly developed Management HQ will provide an excellent resource for testing out the strategic implementation framework.

#### **WHAT MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS EXPECTED BY THE CANDIDATE BE COMPETITIVE:**

Honours 1 or higher

Prior research experience is important - particularly in areas such as a) ability to work with and model qualitative data, b) confidence and competence in interviewing and interacting with middle and senior managers, and c) comfort in working in a multi-disciplinary environment. In addition, research outputs if available

#### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT/ PROGRAM FOR THE ENROLLING SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION:**

Strategy as part of the Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Strategy, and International Business discipline is a key area within the School of Management and has been successful in a) attracting considerable industry funding, b) has developed a strategy making approach that is taught in a range of Universities and used by organisations and c) has been the basis of a number of well received executive education master-classes across the globe.

This project focusing on the implementation of strategy would add depth and breadth to the discipline and would potentially provide a bridge between research being undertaken in strategy and project management. Likewise it would facilitate further engagement between academia and industry.

Students are advised to contact the Project Lead listed below prior to submission of their scholarship application to discuss their suitability to be involved in this strategic project.

#### **PROJECT LEAD CONTACT**

**NAME:** Associate Professor Paul Alexander, Faculty of Business and Law

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#### **PRIMARY SUPERVISOR**

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