



Curtin University



Faculty of Humanities

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

Strategic Project Profile

PROJECT TITLE: Supporting Aboriginal School Staff to become Teachers

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1303

PROJECT SYNOPSIS: Recently the Education Department of WA granted the School of Education, Curtin University, \$3.3m to fund a project to support Aboriginal teaching assistants (AIEOs) to be fully qualified teachers so that they may remain in their communities to teach students who reside in such locations. This initiative will see the use of our school's online courses, supplemented with different models of tutoring support to enable cohorts of Aboriginal people to attain a Bachelor of Education (Primary). The research component of the project will involve an evaluation of the program, seeking to determine what mechanisms are most helpful, which strategies most supportive and how best to support not only this cohort, but future Aboriginal students wishing to undertake a degree in teaching. Whilst generously funded in terms of teaching support, this scholarship will enable ongoing data collection and in-depth interrogation of data at a level most suitable for this type of research.

In terms of research methodology, those students who are enrolled in the program will be surveyed at the beginning of their course and throughout their study to ascertain their perceptions about the program and the support structures. As is culturally appropriate, this will be done mostly through informal oral interviews (ie yarning), although this will also be supplemented by simple online surveys. In this way the project will follow a mixed methods design and will also involve both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis.

The project will be supervised by Professor Rhonda Oliver who has undertaken several projects about the Needs of Aboriginal students (see next section), but also of Higher Education students more generally. (e.g, Dooley, P., Oliver,

R., & Rochecouste, J., 2012, The role of motivation in the English language growth of international students after University Entry. *English Australia*, 28(1), 3-19. Oliver, R., Vanderford, S., & Grote, E., 2012; Evidence of English language proficiency and academic achievement of non-English speaking background students at an Australian university. *Higher Education Research & Development*, iFirst, 1-15; Rochecouste, J., Oliver, R. & Mulligan, D., 2012, English Language Growth After University Entry. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 1- 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.11.005>).

She also has considerable experience supervising HDR students - having supervised approximately 50 to successful completion. In the last decade she has developed considerable expertise working in the Indigenous Education field - with two ARC Linkages and an ARC Discovery grant in this field. She also has numerous research outputs and several more in train.

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

The school of Education will provide those facilities necessary for undertaking this research. The PhD candidate will be housed within the School of Education with access to computing resources, travel funds as required (e.g., to regional and remote locations to 'yarn' with participants face to face) and equipment (e.g., audio recorders).

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

Where possible an Aboriginal person will be the ideal candidate. If not, cultural awareness and familiarity working in Aboriginal Education contexts will be essential. Ability to undertake research using mixed methods and experience analysing qualitative and quantitative data. High level of English writing skills is essential.

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

There are many long term Aboriginal support staff in schools who, if they gain a teachers qualification, would be a significant asset to their communities. This initiative has the potential to 'make a real difference' particularly in regional and remote communities. This scholarship will provide an opportunity to research our program - both as we establish and implement it. It will allow us to determine what is useful in supporting other Aboriginal students to successfully undertake their teaching qualifications. The project will enable us to forge our school as the preferred Initial Teaching Educator in the state. The research is an important component providing rigor to understanding of best teaching practice for this 'high stakes' program.

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

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