



Course Information Guide 2025

Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics)

National Institute of Organisation
Dynamics Australia Ltd (NIODA)

PO Box 287, Collins Street West, Melbourne VIC Australia
www.nioda.org.au +61 (0)414 529 867 info@nioda.org.au



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About NIODA

Thinking differently, creating possibilities, changing the world of work.

The National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia (NIODA) has grown from long traditions and practice in systems psychodynamics in Australia for over 40 years. NIODA was established in 2010 for the purpose providing education in systems psychodynamics and advancing the field through leading edge research and development for the improvement of organisations, community and society.

We are an international centre of excellence advancing systems psychodynamics and making an impact on the world of work.

NIODA's values of Openness, Collaboration, Respect, Dialogue, Reflection, Creativity and Rigour shape and inform all that we do. These values are of particular importance in informing our planning and are reflected and lived in implementation.

Registration and Accreditation

NIODA is an accredited Institute of Higher Education (registration no. 14039 in 2016). NIODA's Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) degree is accredited under the Tertiary Education Act.

NIODA's accredited courses and graduation processes are compliant with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Levels, Criteria and Qualification Type, Learning Outcomes Descriptors and its Qualifications Issuance Policy.

Local and Global Professional Bodies

Group Relations Australia (GRA, www.grouprelations.org.au) is the professional body for systems psychodynamic practitioners in Australia, and the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations (ISPSO, www.ispso.org) is the international body.

Introducing the Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics)

The Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) is designed for work-experienced professionals who wish to develop their capabilities through the application of systems psychodynamic concepts to organisational leadership and management. Ultimately, it is designed to support individuals to shape and to take up their work roles in ways that are more meaningful, values-based and that best serve the purpose of the organisation.

The course fosters analytic and academic skills aimed at deepening students' understanding of the unique demands of particular work systems and enhancing their appreciation of the professional, political, cultural, emotional and ethical nuances of organisational life. It provides industry-relevant, post-graduate education grounded in rigorous conceptual development and work experience.

Students can expect a course that:

- integrates work experience with academic theory
- uses international industry benchmarking to enhance course development, delivery and relevance
- provides opportunities for engagement with real-world learning in a social and global context
- facilitates connections across disciplines and contexts through an integration of psychological, sociological, anthropological and philosophical approaches to organisations.

Distinctive Design Features

The Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) is designed for learning to be problem-based within a conceptual framework for understanding organisation dynamics. It is only offered on a part-time basis to people with an appropriate level of work responsibility and experience.

The course is designed around cohorts of students learning together across time. It is a 'temporary' organisation within which students study the emerging classroom dynamics alongside the issues that concern them within their own organisations. Small student cohorts (fifteen or less) enter Year one and remain together as a learning group, as far as possible, across the two-year course. This cohort-based design seeks to maximise depth learning through the development of trust and familiarity with group members' work issues. As cohorts progressively deepen their capacities to explore and think together, the course content and student experience become more meaningfully interrelated. There is increased opportunity for students to venture into creatively applying their learning in the workplace.

Assessment reflects the focus on work-integrated learning. The assignments are practical in application whilst also requiring the use of rigorous theoretical concepts.

The course is a carefully designed learning experience that is tailored to support incremental learning that builds semester by semester across the course.

Course Outcomes

On successful completion of the Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) graduates have the following.

Knowledge

Competency of the core conceptual frameworks spanning systems and psychodynamic dimensions.

Skills

Developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to be able to apply a 'mind' for systems psychodynamic thinking, which includes:

- interpreting from a 'systems' perspective the management of connections, sometimes hidden or unconscious, between people, tasks, structure, technologies and context; to understand and manage the unconscious defences which impede work group functioning and task accomplishment
- appraising, critiquing and applying the conjunction of technology and human behaviour (socio-technics) as a principal feature of organisation design and the social architecture of work relations; to improve organisational culture
- demonstrating the capacity to think and reflect with, and to lead others purposefully, in the face of change and uncertainty
- developing skills in the clarification of researching, thinking and writing for communication of systems psychodynamic concepts, through creation of working hypotheses, reasoned analyses and articulating research findings
- demonstrating an understanding of the ethics associated with the application of the discipline, including attention to principles of integrity and honesty.

Application of knowledge and skills

Competency in utilising 'Participatory Action Research' methods for collaborative discovery and problem-solving in work settings.

Course Structure

The course is offered in part-time mode only. In total, completion requires four semesters of part-time involvement, or longer if undertaking one subject only per semester.

In 2022 subjects are taught in live interactive online weekly classes and full day sessions, with onsite opportunities in Melbourne.

Subjects and Progression

Core Units

Year One

MLM1 Organisations and Management through the Art of Metaphor (12 credit points)

MLM2 Unconscious Processes in Groups and Systems (12 credit points)

MLM3 'Through a Cultural Lens': collaborating with the 'other' at work (12 credit points)

MLM8 Leadership and Authority for Role and Task (12 credit points)

Year Two

MLM5 Strategy in Complex Systems (12 credit points)

MLM6 Organisational Role Analysis (12 credit points)

MLM7 Managing Beyond Organisational Boundaries: networks and other Relations (12 credit points)

MLM4 Systems Psychodynamic Consulting (12 credit points)



Subject Outlines

MLM1 – Organisations and Management Through the Art of Metaphor

Subject Content

The subject introduces a breadth of organisation and management theory and practice to support students in coming to understand their own primary 'taken for granted' theories of organisation and to explore alternative theories that may open up options for managing or conceptualising management.

A range of metaphors of organisation (Morgan 2006) are used as the primary vehicle for ordering and communicating organisation and management theory and practice. Each metaphor represents a distinct body of management theories that underpin particular assumptions about managing. Furthering the call of Morgan and other's (Mintzberg 2011; Needham 2014) for understanding and application of multiple perspectives in management practice the study of each metaphor is supplemented with ancillary readings which examine critically the strengths, weaknesses and case application of each perspective.

This design develops an art of metaphorical analysis that combines theory and practice to assist students in working with competing models of organisations as expressed in the management literature, their own experience, and the language of the organisations with which they currently work.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- a range of organisational management theories and practices and their applicability to analysis and design in differing organisational settings;
- the participant's own 'root metaphor' or conceptual frame for making sense of organisational experience, for analysing outcomes, and for design and change in organisations;
- the continuing evolution of systems psychodynamic thinking as an inter-discipline; its relevance (or not) to other organisation theories and application;
- conscious and unconscious work group dynamics and their impact on organisational task, hierarchal and lateral responsibilities.

and **skills** in:

- critiquing a range of organisational management theories
- applying selected organisational theory to design and work with change in organisations;
- organisational analysis using 'metaphor' as the analytical frame;
- writing and verbal communication of knowledge and practice

Assessment

1. A small learning group report, which compares and contrasts assumptions about organisational change as reflected in images/metaphors/narratives that guide the practice of two, selected organisational change agents. 2,500 words +/- 10%
2. Individual essay - An analysis of a case study set in the student's own organisation using a breadth organisational and management theoretical/conceptual underpinnings as the analytical frame. 3,000 words +/- 10%

MLM2 - Unconscious Processes in Groups and Systems

Subject Content

This subject offers intensive exploration of small group dynamics through a 'study group' methodology. Across the semester the student group explore their own conscious and unconscious patterns of small and large group behaviour in the 'here and now' using group/system level analysis. This approach presents students with an in-depth opportunity to experience and analyse small group dynamics with reference to object relations and intersubjective conceptual frames.

Through these experiences, it is anticipated students increase their capacity to identify, analyse and manage workgroup dynamics; to appreciate the emotional labour of work, and to enable constructive leader-follower relations.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- psychodynamic approaches to understanding work group behaviours
- object relations and intersubjective theory applicable to systems thinking
- small and large group dynamics
- their own patterns of role taking in groups
- social defense processes in systems

and **skills** in:

- identification and management of unconscious dynamics in small groups
- working with uncertainty and paradox in groups.
- Identification of dynamics between leaders and followers that support or obstruct task
- performance
- the use of personal experience as data about group dynamics
- qualitative analysis and academic writing

Assessment

1. Individual essay – A Microanalysis of a self-selected experiential group event using object relations and intersubjective theory. 3,500 words +/- 10%
2. Small learning group essay –Analysis of an observation of an organisation work group using object relations and intersubjective theory as the analytical frames. 2,500 words +/- 10%

MLM3 - Through a Cultural Lens: collaborating with the 'other' at work

Subject Content

This subject aims to encourage in-depth learning about the group phenomenon of culture. This is facilitated by an 'inside out' understanding of the complexities of culture and enculturation. To this end students are first encouraged to explore the impact of enculturation on their own work choices and practice and then to explore and analyse the culture developed within the 'here and now' of the class; the intention of these activities is to translate learnings to understanding and working with organisational culture.

A working description of 'culture' is 'that which has been absorbed by us (people like me) as the preferred means and ends for living and dying'. It is taken for granted that aspects of this absorption of culture will be in focus, since it is difficult to understand the cultural aspect of tensions with people who are 'not like us' (diversity) unless we can appreciate something of the social construction of who we, collectively, have become.

In keeping with the program's psychodynamic emphasis, we remind ourselves at times that the boundary between 'me' and 'you'/us' and 'them' is often created unconsciously to defend against internal; threats by attributing undesirable qualities to the 'Other'.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- organisation/management/human resource literature on topics such as culture, diversity and equal opportunity
- the concept of culture as a psycho-social process
- the impact of enculturation on their own work choices and practices
- understanding of conscious and unconscious factors that create and influence culture in organisations

and **skills** in:

- intercultural communication and collaboration
- use of a cultural lens to analyse group and organisation effectiveness
- identification of covert cultural factors that affect organisation outcomes

Assessment

1. Individual essay- 'Who am I culturally, and how does this aspect of my being help and hinder my effectiveness in the workplace?' 3,500 words +/- 10%
2. Small Learning Group Assignment: group essay and class presentation – 'A report of a case study of Australian culture at work and its implications for collaborative management' 2,500 words +/- 10%

MLM4 - Systems Psychodynamic Consulting

Subject Content

The purpose of this subject is to have students explore, understand and clarify varying assumptions about the technique of consulting, whether from a manager or specialist role, internal or external to the organisation, and to practice the skills of systems psychodynamic consultation.

Through its workshop design, the subject provides an intensive practical exploration of systems psychodynamic consulting by having students undertake a 'real-life' consultation to an organisation. Students are able to learn about systems psychodynamic consulting and to discover, through practical application, how much they have learnt from their first year of study.

In small learning groups students undertake a five-day consultation with an organisation, returning to the classroom at predetermined times to explore their experience of entry, contracting, method, client/consultant relations, working as a consultancy team and exit from the organisation. The classroom experience is also considered a 'temporary learning organisation' where internal dynamics are explored as potential data for what might be occurring at a deeper level in the organisation being consulted to.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- consulting practices as an aspect of the manager's role and as a specialist role
- distinctions between various types of consulting practices
- values and ethical issues for consultants, including sustainability and environmental awareness

and **skills** in:

- entry into the organisation, determining and contracting to the central question/s of the consultancy, exiting the organisation
- the use of system psychodynamic method and analysis in consulting to organisations
- identification and management of tensions in the client/consultant relationship

Assessment

1. Individual essay – "Reflect on the efficacy of your consultation efforts and, using appropriate theoretical frameworks, analyse the strengths and weaknesses of your consultancy team's attempt to help the client'. 3,500 words +/- 10%.
2. Consulting team essay analysing parallel ('mirrored') system dynamics between the consulting organisation, the consulting team and the combined class group. 2,000 words +/- 10%

MLM5 - Strategy in Complex Systems

Subject Content

This subject encourages students to critically examine the connections between the internal dynamics of organisations and the external environment their members imagine, respond to and/or create through their work. As such, the subject involves an examination of the concept of 'strategy' by considering it as a representation of the way links are made between the inside and the outside of a work system.

The subject challenges the common conception (in management circles) of the term 'strategy' as a vital descriptor; as in 'strategic planning', 'strategic management', 'strategic mindset', 'strategic marketing', 'strategic change', 'strategic partnerships' etc. Little attention is given in the literature to what the term 'strategic' means to organisation members and how it impacts their sense of purpose and values. What might it represent about the way they feel related to each other in their work, and related to the external 'Other', whether this 'other' is labelled the 'environment', the 'competition', the 'market', 'best practice', the 'forces of globalisation' etc.

Across the semester the subject explores the hypothesis that an unexamined reliance on the idea of strategic planning is a defence against the complexity and uncertainty of managing when the primary task is experienced as unclear, contested or unsustainable and when the 'environment' is experienced as volatile. This hypothesis can be explored through the related ideas of 'judgement' and 'institution': ideas that seem to have less and less currency in the lexicon of 'strategic' management. For the purpose of this subject, the strategy process is considered to be about the way in which the 'inside' of an organisation is connected to its 'outside'; both in the material sense of an organisation transacting with its environment to produce outputs and in the psychic, in-the-mind, sense of people within organisations connecting their desires with the reality of work as they experience it.

Students work on a whole of semester assignment exploring an aspect of the strategic process in their own workplace with respect to ideas stimulated through class discussions and exploration of the subject readings.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- the concept of strategy as explicated in contemporary management literature
- the ecology of organisations and their environment as a dynamic of mutuality
- socio-technical systems theory and complexity science in relation to strategy.
- large group/organisation dynamics

and developed **skills** in:

- observation of individuals and groups in the process of strategy formulation.
- Identification of creative and defensive dynamics in the process of strategising
- influencing task and sentient system dynamics contributing to difficulties in strategic change
- using socio-technical and complexity theory to design interventions and work with change processes in large organisational systems
- methods of strategic enquiry, reflective interviewing, collaborative data analysis and academic writing skills

Assessment

1. Individual essay – "A critical analysis of strategic activity in your workplace from a systems psychodynamic perspective: incorporating complexity and socio-technical theories. Include recommendations for intervention". 3,000 words +/- 10%
2. Small Learning Group Assignment: group essay and class presentation – 'A critique of an ancillary article for its potential contribution to the performance of an organisation (or part thereof)' 2,500 words +/- 10%

MLM6 - Organisational Role Analysis

Subject Content

Opportunities are provided in this subject to study relevant concepts about the interactions between person and system that shape work roles and task; concepts that are central to socio-technical systems theory. The subject aims to equip students, through reading, discussion and practice, with the skills to conduct Work Role Consultation as a specific method for leadership and management development and/or applied research.

Students are guided and assisted in exploring 'role' as a basic unit of the social structure of work organisations. They are then introduced to a methodology of role consultation and are supervised in their practice of this method for improving the management of themselves and others in work roles. Students learn to take responsibility for the management of the consultant/client relationship as they assist their clients to take up responsibility for their work role performance.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- key 'role analysis' concepts of psychological and sociological role, primary task, sentience system, authority, boundary, 'role idea' and 'organisation in the mind' and their relation to leadership, authority and innovation in organisations
- the theory of role tensions in-between subgroup/functional areas in groups and organisations
- the theory and application of role conversation/dialogue and 'role biography'
- systemic challenges to role performance emanating from task-related anxiety
- the role of consultant to organisation dynamics

and developed **skills** in:

- collaborative analysis (with a client) of role confusion or conflict
- the use of role analysis as a tool for coaching, team building, induction and performance management in organisations
- the effective use of work role conversation in managing and leading work groups
- the use of role drawing and role biography to diagnose, understand and impact on role and system dilemmas in organisations
- identifications and management of tensions between self and role in work
- academic writing skills

Assessment

1. Individual essay analysing the student's own work role drawing including: main themes, links to role biography and potential impact of the analysis on work performance 2,500 words +/- 10%
2. An individual report on the Organisational Role Analysis (ORA) covering: ORA literature, consultant role, process, working hypotheses, process critique and method evaluation. 5,000 words +/- 10%

MLM7 - Managing Beyond Organisational Boundaries: Networks and Other Relations

Subject Content

This subject is an introductory study of the relations between organisations, particularly referent organisations and other forms of collaboration to solve large and complex domain level problems.

As the external environment of organisations becomes increasingly complex and problematic 'joined-up' solutions are required. As such this is an aspect of organisation dynamics that has become more important for managers/consultants, for employees/clients and for communities (local and global).

Across the semester students study the dynamics of identity, power, authority and boundary management in actual inter-organisational collaborations, building their intellectual and practical capacities to contribute to the effective management of inter-organisational relations.

The subject encourages students to take up more responsibility for project design – finding connections to inter-organisational relations that are sufficiently interesting and/or important for them to investigate more fully through the assignment. As part of this, students study an inter-organisational collaboration.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- literature pertaining to the dynamics of inter-organisational relations.
- changes in environmental conditions which call forth a need for inter-organisational relations and the unique management challenges these present.
- the existing variety of inter-organisational relations and their appropriateness for particular purposes
- dynamics of managing identity, authority, power and boundaries, 'in-between' systems

and developed **skills** in:

- identification and management of boundary relations and their implications for both intra and inter-organisational settings
- effective management of inter-organisational systems
- methods of observation, interviewing, reflection and data analysis
- academic writing

Assessment

1. Scoping paper for Inter-organisational Enquiry defining the inter-organisational problem/issue under investigation and the enquiry methods to be used. 500 words +/- 10%
2. Individual report – "Report on your experience and findings from the Inter-organisational Enquiry. Critique your findings in terms of current inter-organisational literature". 4,500 words +/- 10%

MLM8 - Leadership and Authority for Role and Task

Subject Content

This subject is offered as a five-day 'Group Relations Conference'. The conference aims to provide opportunities for students to study group, inter-group and organisational dynamics through direct experience. These experiences may be thought about and conceptualised, reacted to or acted upon, accepted or even unconsciously rejected. Students have a choice about how they might work with their experiences. The conference offers an opportunity for students to learn through their own 'reflective practice'. That is, through observing, making decisions, taking up accountability and authority, exploring new roles, reflecting, taking action and through working with others. During the conference, learnings are discussed and linked to 'back-home' work roles through a consultancy and reflection group method.

There are no formal lectures or seminars. Instead, students take part in developing the temporary organisation.

Student Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject students would be expected to attain **knowledge** about and **insight** into:

- group, inter-group and organisational dynamics and one's place in their creation
- the impact of authority and leadership on role and task
- the influence of purpose, value and meaning in human systems
- small, medium and large group dynamics relating to organisational structure, culture, sentience and task
- the integration of key theories and learnings from MLM1-MLM7 to form a coherent base for applied systems psychodynamic work.

and developed **skills** in:

- the capacity to be able to continue to think amidst turbulent dynamics
- using personal experiences as data about group, intra and inter-organisational systems
- translating learnings from the experience of the workshop to the student's own work organisation and other work organisations and integration into their work practice.
- academic writing skills

Assessment

1. Individual annotated bibliography. A review of five articles selected from the readings for the subject. Each annotation is to include a synopsis of the author's main argument, an essential critique of this argument and a comment on its relevance to the workshop experience. 1,500 words +/- 10%
2. Individual essay – 'Examine the dynamics of authority and leadership in relation to role and task within two key incidents at the workshop. Integrate your observations and experience within a framework gained from your reading and make links between these learnings and your work role'. 3,500 words +/- 10%

Program Admission Requirements

Completion of a three year Bachelor degree or equivalent,
and
at least five years of relevant work experience.

Special Entry into the Graduate Diploma of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) may be granted to no more than 10% of the intake in any given year for those who have not completed a three year Bachelor degree or equivalent but who have other tertiary qualifications and relevant work experience or who have extensive relevant work experience.

Students entering this degree are required to have a minimum level of English language proficiency (details of these requirements can be found at www.nioda.org.au/policies).

Enrolment

Application forms are on the NIODA website www.nioda.org.au/academic-programs.

All successful applicants will be made a formal offer of place after which they are able to enrol online.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer

NIODA offers students the opportunity to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning or Credit Transfer. Enquiries about RPL or Credit Transfer need to be made at the time of the application interview. Policies and links to apply at www.nioda.org.au/policies.

Fees

2025 fees are AUD \$3,600 per subject, AUD \$14,400 per part-time year. Fees are invoiced semester by semester. There are no incidental fees charged for the course.

FEE-HELP is available for candidates meeting DESE criteria.
See the <https://www.studyassist.gov.au/help-loans/fee-help> for criteria.

With the exception of those accessing FEE-HELP loan assistance payment for all fees should be by direct deposit or credit card made payable to NIODA.

Fees must be paid in full at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the semester in which the student is enrolled.

A student withdrawing or taking Leave of Absence after the census date of the relevant semester will be charged full fees for that semester.

Fees are subject to a 5% annual increase. Fees are published on the NIODA website by October of the prior year.

Withdrawal or Cancellation

Fees will not be refunded after the census date for that subject.

Application for 'Leave of Absence' must occur prior to the first class in either semester.

Academic and Research Integrity

The National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia (NIODA) values excellence and rigour in delivery and learning that is achieved in an intellectual environment where integrity is highly valued and carefully upheld. All students and staff are required to uphold the highest standards of academic and research integrity. A range of policies addressing these requirements can be found on the NIODA website at www.nioda.org.au/policies.

Student Support Services

NIODA students have access to support services:

- Student Advice
- Student Counselling
- IT Support Services
- Library Support
- Student Resources Information webpage.

Staff

Dean

Professor Wendy Harding, M.Bus, PhD

Master's Course Lead

Thomas Mitchell, MLM(OD)

Academic staff

Dr Brigid Nossal, M.Ed, PhD

Seth Thomasson, M.App.Sci (OD)

Helen McKelvie, MLM(OD)

Rhianna Perkin, MLM(OD)

Kristina Karlsson, MLM(OD)

Administration Lead

Sally Mussared, MLM(OD)

Student Services Lead

Tilly Robertson, B.Paramedicine

See www.nioda.org.au for staff profiles



Further enquiries

Professor Wendy Harding wendy.harding@nioda.org.au

Mr Thomas Mitchell thomas.mitchell@nioda.org.au

Ms Tilly Robertson tilly.robertson@nioda.org.au



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Dynamics Australia Ltd (NIODA)

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Institute of Higher Education no. 14039
ABN 97 897 654 659 ACN 607 032 888