Teaching Related CV

Education

- PhD Candidate (Statistics), University of Sydney (current)
- Bachelor of Commerce & Bachelor of Science (Advanced) Honours I, University of Sydney (2003–2009)

Teaching Awards

- Dean's Citation for Tutoring in ECMT3110 (2010)
- Outstanding Senior Facilitator Award (A national, competitive award across all Australasian PASS programs, 2008)

Conferences Attended

My ongoing commitment to best practice learning and teaching has lead me to a number of conferences to learn from the experts and engage in discussion with like-minded educators.

- Assessment for Learning, University of Sydney (2010)
- Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Business, Economics and Commerce Disciplines Forum, University of Melbourne (2010)
- 16th UniServe Science Conference, University of Sydney (2010)
- PASS National Forums (2008, 2009)

Other Qualifications

- Tutor Development Program sessions, Business School (2009–2010)
- Tutor Development Program, Faculty of Science (2008)
- PASS Peer Facilitator Professional Development, Business School (2005)

Learning and Teaching Roles

Leadership Roles

- Tutor for the Business School and the Faculty of Science (since 2008)
- Senior mentor for the Faculty of Science Tutor Development Program (TDP) (2011)
- Mentor for the Faculty of Science TDP (2010)
- Developed "Knowing Your Students" reports for Business School units of study (since 2010)
- Co-facilitated "Active Learning in Quantitative Units" Business School TDP session (2010)
- Developed and implemented a series of Maths Workshops for the Business School (2010)
- Assisted with PASS peer facilitator professional development (2008–2010)
- PASS inaugural team leader and mentor (2007–2009)

Other Roles

- PASS peer facilitator (2005–2008)

Feedback for Teachers "Teaching In Tutorials" Survey Results

The following aggregated selection of results is presented as evidence of sustained quality performance over two years. 310 students have been surveyed across first year, third year and postgraduate subjects that I have tutored. The sample mean, $\bar{x}$, is calculated by imposing a linear structure on the ordinal categories: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5).

		Agree (%)	$\bar{x}$
Q1	My tutor came to class well-prepared to help me learn.	98	4.50
Q2	I normally received helpful feedback on my learning from my tutor.	82	4.09
Q5	My tutor explained things clearly.	96	4.48
Q7	I felt comfortable asking questions in tutorials.	84	4.13
Q11	My tutor respected each student and responded to individual needs.	93	4.39
Q13	My tutor maintained a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning.	94	4.34
Q14	Overall my tutor effectively supported my learning.	96	4.45

Summary Statement in Support of Application

My Philosophy

My learning and teaching philosophy is based on the fundamental idea that students learn most effectively when they are included in the learning and teaching process.

During my first few years of university, I was indifferent to my university studies. I was *physically at* my lectures and tutorials, but did not feel like I was a *participant in* them. I did not have a voice. I was not encouraged to contribute. Feedback to the lecturer or tutor took the form of the end of semester surveys that had no discernible impact on the quality of my instruction.

I was like a consumer at an Aldi shopping centre – the product (course content) was left on pallets, barely unpacked, and the few employees that haunted the isles were indifferent to my presence. I yearned to be a consumer at an Apple store – greeted at the door by zealous employees, given the full personalised experience with expert guidance, and shown how different products (courses/concepts) work together so that the final purchase (degree) is more than the sum of the parts.

My first learning and teaching experience at the University of Sydney was as a PASS Peer Facilitator, in the 2005 pilot program. The PASS program did not directly improve my learning experience as a student but it did allow me to give the "Apple" treatment to other students. For the first time I was connected to the university on a deeper level, with a real sense of being a part of a learning and teaching community which I was then able to share with my participants. My role as a PASS facilitator was to engage students with their course content, encourage and motivate students to achieve their best and, most importantly, foster the sense of a learning community: "a feeling of fellowship."

I have carried these ideals over to my tutoring: delivering content is not my sole interest and responsibility. I take a more holistic approach to creating a learning environment. As a tutor I endeavour to enhance my students' learning by actively engaging and motivating my students, fostering an appreciation for course content in a "big picture" sense, and encouraging a sense of learning community. To this end, regular feedback is paramount – it gives students a voice and lets them know that that they are not just consumers but are an integral part of the learning and teaching process. As students are empowered to take control of their own learning, they develop skills and resources to facilitate sustained life-long learning and self improvement.

My Results

My approach has lead to high levels of satisfaction from my students. In the 2009 Student Course Experience Questionnaire, across both UG and PG, 49% of students (n=1767) agreed that the teaching staff normally gave helpful feedback on how they are going. With my strong focus on student inclusion, 82% of my students (n=310) agreed that they normally received helpful feedback on their learning from me. I am very proud of this result, however, I am constantly exploring ways improve as I experiment with new feedback techniques.

Of the 310 students I have surveyed over the past two years, 98% agree that I came to class well prepared to learn and 96% agreed that I explained things clearly. Given that I tutor high level, very difficult third year econometrics and postgraduate subjects, these results are quite impressive. Furthermore, 93% agreed that I respected each student and responded to individual needs, which is also quite an accomplishment given that most tutorials in which I operate have 20-30 students.

In Semester 1 2010 I was awarded a Faculty of Economics and Business Dean's Citation for Tutoring for two ECMT3110 tutorials. These are awarded to tutors who achieve 90% or higher in survey questions that relate primarily to the quality of teaching and classroom atmosphere. On average, across all my units of study I achieve higher than 90% success rate for these metrics.

Students have also provided positive written feedback. My nominator for this award commented that "This is the first time in my university life that I have had a tutor like Garth being so responsive to students." Another student wrote to me at the end of semester "You are the best tutor I have seen ever in this university, as an international student who just came here one year ago, I thought you are the most valuable gift for me in my entire university life." He went on to say that "[Garth's] attitude towards academia and [his] detailed feedback and tutorial solutions leaves me with an unforgettable impression." Furthermore, he noted that I helped his studies by highlighting stronger study methods and contributed "more than just the content of ECMT3110."

Statement Addressing the Selection Criteria

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Facilitating student-focused learning experiences to encourage deep approaches to learning

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My philosophy centres on students as active contributors rather than passive consumers. This is particularly difficult in econometrics as too often students enter university with a preconceived notion that they are no good at maths and therefore that econometrics is beyond their capacity. I have developed several conscious strategies to help students overcome these assumptions and achieve in econometrics. The aim is to build their confidence, maintain their interest and engage students with the course content.

- **Create student focus by jointly developing tutorial expectations**

  The first step in the student centred learning process is to establish an understanding what students expect of me and what I expect of them. I developed a "managing expectations" exercise for my first ECMT3110 tutorial where students are given time to individually think about what they expect from tutorials, from me as a tutor, and from themselves. They then share their thoughts with another person before we come together as a class to brainstorm key ideas. The feedback loop is closed when I tell them what my expectations are, and post a summary of the results (across all tutorial groups) on Blackboard. This list of what we expect from each other provides inspiration and motivation across the semester and sets the expectation early that students are a part of the learning and teaching process. This empowers students to ask for what they want later in semester by establishing a foundation for two way communication. This then leads to students becoming more actively engaged and therefore take a deeper approach to learning. As an example, throughout the semester, students often approached me in consultation with additional problems they had attempted from the text book – I would help them solve the question but also build on their initiative by posting the question and solution on Blackboard for everyone to learn from.

- **Relaxed atmosphere and active, stimulating discussion**

  I strive to make the learning environment as comfortable and stimulating as possible for all students. Students comment that there is "Great tutor group collegiality"; the classroom atmosphere was "interactive, lighthearted, challenging"; and "he seemed friendly, relaxed and nonjudgmental, creating a friendly atmosphere." I regularly stimulate interest by engaging the class in active discussion about the concepts and potential applications, often drawing on my own consulting experiences.

  I try to be approachable and encourage any and all questions. I proactively elicit questions from students in whole class discussions, with generous use of wait time,[1] and also on an individual level when students are working on questions independently or in small groups. My approach is summed up nicely by the comment "No question is silly." I use students' names extensively and take an active interest in their progress. One student commented: "Best tutor I've had – no-one else cares." When students know that the tutor is invested and focused on their needs, they take a deeper approach to their studies by engaging more with the tutor to identify gaps in their knowledge.

- **Break down and link concepts to encourage deeper understanding**

  In order to facilitate a deep approach to student learning, I also use probing questions to get students to break concepts down into core components and link each component back to previous knowledge, thereby scaffolding new knowledge onto pre-existing knowledge. In this way I hope to help students build a framework so that they can use to scale their way up from simply remembering concepts, to understanding and applying, with an eventual goal of analysing, synthesising and evaluating[2]. One student commented: "[Garth] was excellent at explaining concepts. Mind-maps and diagrams were helpful for an overall understanding of the topic." This resonates with Biggs' comment that "cognitive growth lies not just in knowing more, but also in the restructuring that occurs when new knowledge becomes connected to what is already known."[3] To return to the Aldi/Apple analogy: I strive to present the content to students in the most accessible and user-friendly with the same zeal as an Apple employee. It is not good enough to just have students copy down the answers by themselves without giving context and helping link it all together.

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[1]Rowe, M. B. (1974). *Wait-time and rewards as instructional variables, their influence on language, logic and fate control: Part one – Wait-time.* Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 11(2), 81-94.

[2]Bloom, B. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals.* D. McKay.

[3]Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university.* (2nd Ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

- **Deliver content with gusto**

  Research suggests that teaching behaviours that exhibit enthusiasm are strongly related with student achievement.[4] One student commented that "Garth made the subject matter more interesting with his enthusiasm." Another commented that they felt motivated to learn because "Garth seemed passionate about the subject which instills passion in you." Another commented: "even though ECMT3110 would probably be one of the hardest and most stressful courses in Econometrics and in this Faculty, Garth brought fun to the classes, which I greatly enjoyed."

- **Student-focused small group learning in consultations**

  I actively encourage my students to come to consultation – particularly in small groups. This emphasises the notion of study groups and peer learning which leads to deeper approaches to learning through learning from others misunderstandings and active discussion about the concepts. As my nominator wrote "[Garth] would spend extra time talking to students during consultation hours and students have benefited significantly." I typically would not leave the consultation room until all the questions had been answered, in busy parts of the semester, this meant staying for an additional hour or two. Some students keep coming back to my consultation in subsequent semesters even when I was not a tutor for that particular subject – this is what it means to be a part of a true learning community, connections do not cut off when the unit ends.

- **Comments from Vasilis Sarafidis, lecturer in ECMT6002**

  "Garth has been a real success in ECMT6002. This unit is compulsory for the Master of Economics...The entry standard is very high and the teaching involves conducting weekly tutorials for about 80 students (in one class), setting and marking tutorial and project work [and] contributing to exam design and marking ...Garth has been 100% reliable. He has been a top all around performer - several students commending him specifically for his teaching ability. This is a real achievement because these students have typically high mathematical ability but no econometrics background. Some will pick up the econometrics easily and indeed will ask challenging and searching questions about statistical theory ...Other students will have much more mundane problems. To teach effectively across this range, one needs to understand the material 100% and also be able to communicate this knowledge ...Furthermore he proved to be an excellent presenter, having prepared outstanding slides for the course."

Provision of timely and worthwhile feedback to students on their learning

Without feedback on their learning progress, students are likely to disengage with their studies and as a consequence learn less. This is how I felt in the early part of my degree. As a tutor focussed on maximising my students' learning outcomes, I have employed various methods to provide my students with timely and worthwhile feedback on their learning.

- **Detailed and innovative feedback on assignments**

  I believe that learning from timely feedback received on assignments is as important as the learning that takes place during the completion of the assignment. I always give two types of feedback: extensive general feedback that is applicable to most of the assignments and individual written feedback appropriate for each assignment. The general feedback is posted on Blackboard within a day or two of the assignments being received – this enables students to reflect on their work in a timely manner, reinforcing the key concepts when it matters most. In semester 2 2010, I experimented with GradeMark in Blackboard. I efficiently and comprehensively provided tailored feedback on 30 group assignments and I set up systems to deliver that feedback back to individual students rather than just the person who submitted the assignment.

  In semester 1 2010, I experimented with a new method of feedback I had never seen done before. I provided solutions to an assignment by (anonymously) compiling exemplary answers from a number of different students into one document. This method of general feedback served to boost the confidence of high achieving students who were "published" and also provided all students with a benchmark for their own work against their peers. Neither of these worthwhile outcomes would have been achieved if I had just posted my own solutions and I will certainly use this method again in the future.

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[4]Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1971). *Research in teacher performance criteria*. In B. O. Smith (Ed.), Research in Teacher Education: A Symposium. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

- **Timely and worthwhile feedback on exams**

  Too often mid-semester exams and quizzes are used primarily as ways to allocate marks to students. However, when exams are reviewed thoroughly, they provide an excellent learning experience for students. In the first tutorial after each mid-semester exam or quiz, I make a point of going through each question in detail, outlining areas where students had issues and what was expected for students to get full marks. Though this can be time consuming, it provides a mechanism for students to see how they are performing relative to the rest of the class and learn from other students mistakes. I do this within a week of the assessment task so the content is still fresh in their minds to maximise students' learning.

- **Regular personalised feedback during tutorials**

  Particularly in first year tutorials, where the focus is more on getting students to work a set of questions in class, I like to spend at least half the time moving around the room and talking to students. I take the initiative and proactively ask if they have any questions and probe their understanding of what they're working on either individually or in small groups. This enables me to gauge how they are performing, and the level of understanding that they are achieving which then shapes my delivery of new content. Furthermore, I am able to provide immediate feedback on their progress. For example, congratulate them if they are doing well or if I find a student is consistently struggling we might have a discussion on their study techniques. This can also lead to referrals to additional resources, either personal such as the counselling service, or content related such as maths workshops or study skills workshop.

- **Feedback on degree/career progression**

  Sometimes students want more than feedback on course content. I have frequently had students ask about career prospects, subject choice and honours. This came up in the ECMT3110 "managing expectations" exercise: students want their tutor to share their experiences. To this end I developed a four page document called "So you're thinking about honours in ECMT? Unofficial guide to ECMT honours." In it I provide links to the relevant honours websites, provide my own reasons for why you might want to do honours, outline the benefits of doing honours and relate numerous comments from current and previous honours students detailing their experiences. Following on from this initiative, anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of students enquiring about honours in econometrics is stronger in 2011 than in previous years.

Appropriate responses to student evaluations of tutoring, and to any other forms of evaluation

Students who are a part of the learning and teaching process give feedback and are encouraged to take charge of their own learning. As a tutor, I am a tool that they can use and manipulate to maximise their learning – and one way they can do that is by providing me with regular feedback.

- **Receptive to feedback from students**

  As mentioned, I ask for feedback in the first tutorial. I follow through by asking students for written feedback on how they are finding the tutorials half way through semester and continually welcome verbal feedback. I use various methods to gather feedback: 1 minute papers, tailor-made online surveys and think-pair-share brainstorm sessions. Just as important as gathering feedback is closing the loop. By collecting feedback during semester, changes can be implemented immediately to enhance students' learning. One example is in ECMT3110 – students were finding the tutorial questions difficult to complete before the tutorial which meant that when we were going through it in class they were spending all their energy on following what was going on rather than developing a deeper understanding of the theory and processes. In response I started posting the solutions just prior to the tutorial so that they could have a set with them in class and be familiar with the particular problem which then enabled them to focus more on the bigger picture and gain a deeper understanding of the concepts by asking more informed questions during the tutorials.

  One of my ECMT3110 students commented, "Garth is the most democratic tutor ever in this Faculty. He listens to us, and makes us learn!" Another student wrote: "Garth is a responsive tutor. Immediately after the mid-semester exam, he emailed all students to complete an online anonymous survey for this course. It was very surprising that he published the results of the survey and gave a detailed analysis of interesting comments by students participating the survey. This enabled me to understand that other students experience similar difficulties in this course. In response, he provided better ways to help students in the course to maximise students' learning."

- **Learning and improving from my peers**

  I have engaged in peer reviews since 2005, often more than once a semester. I continue to learn something new each time. Both of the tutorials I reviewed in semester 2, 2010 involved more formal group-work than I had previously used. Although they were in other disciplines, I was able to take some of their group-work strategies and techniques and implement them in my own tutorials, which I believe improved the delivery of learning outcomes for my students this semester. As an example, I borrowed heavily from an activity from an International Business tutorial that I peer reviewed because it was such a fun activity. I used it just before an 8:30AM quiz to energise the room and wake people up for their quiz!

  Peer feedback on my tutorials also informed my approach and helps me enhance students' learning. One reviewer's comment was to "call on students individually more" particularly when conducting whole group discussions. I had typically shied away from this in the past fearing it would be too confronting for students. However, after I had seen it work well in another tutor's tutorial, I tried it out for myself and it worked quite well. In a number of cases it let me to identify students' lack of understanding or prior knowledge which I was then able to rectify in an timely manner – just before new content was introduced.

  A typical peer review comment is that "[Garth] is able to build and maintain rapport, create a safe and inviting learning environment and role model best practice learning techniques effortlessly."

Recognising and responding appropriately to students at risk

In my opinion, the biggest cause of "students at risk" is a misalignment of the instructors assumed knowledge and the students' actual knowledge. This disconnect can cause students to fall behind very quickly and before long the unit can seem insurmountable. As a tutor, a key part of my role is to check students' understanding and provide feedback to them and the unit coordinator so that the pace and content of lectures and the corresponding level of difficulty in assessment tasks can be adjusted accordingly.

- **Assisting students with their successful transition to sustained independent learning**

  In my tutorials I bridge any knowlege gap by integrating the assumed knowledge with tips about services offered by the university. For example, early in semester I refer my students to the maths workshops, around mid-semester exam time when students are particularly stressed, I draw their attention to the university counselling service. Later in semester, in time for their assignments, I highlight to the referencing page on the library website. In relation to this value adding, one student wrote: "[Garth] provided guidance to students regarding important resources that are useful not just for compulsory course content but also for life-long learning in econometrics, such as statistical software commands and many other things related to the study of this discipline."

  I also provide links to additional resources. This might take the form of an accessible journal article, an illuminating application of a particular concept, a YouTube video clip or even just a Wikipedia page! I encourage life-long learning by stimulating interest in sources that are readily available outside of the university so that students can continue to build on their skills after the completion of their formal studies.

- **Mathematics Workshops**

  One of the biggest hurdles for students to overcome, particularly in econometrics, is insufficient mathematics knowledge. I have been involved in the design and implementation of a series of mathematics workshop within the Business School. The aim of the mathematics workshops is to familiarise students with what is required of them and give them the skills and resources to take control of their own mathematics learning. They have been designed to appeal to Business students – the examples are themed appropriately. I created a diagnostic test, designed the workshop slides and worksheets, mentored the workshop leaders on how best to present the material and am closely involved in refining the whole process and designing systems so that the program is sustainable into the future.

- **Peer Assisted Study Sessions**

  As an ex-PASS facilitator, I know first hand the benefits PASS can have for students. I recommend PASS to all my students and if I identify a student as struggling I will remind them that they can use PASS to consolidate their knowledge, learn from others and establish friendships to build a learning support network. In units without PASS I encourage students to form study groups for peer learning and support.

Ability to work collegially to support excellent tutoring in the School

- **Support for initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Business**

  I have worked on the analysis of a number of projects for Learning and Teaching in Business. I have developed systems to analyse the PASS program's efficacy, identified students at risk through their MASUS scores and IELTS results and used FlexSIS data to generate "Knowing Your Students" demographics reports. A typical comment: "Garth was extraordinary to work with! Not only was he efficient and organised, but his writing skills were exceptional at every level: his work was extremely well organised, cohesively structured and his argument flowed logically. In particular, the quality of the interpretation he offered the reader of the MASUS results was phenomenal. Insightful yet succinctly expressed, it was extremely easy for readers unfamiliar with quantitative data to understand: no easy feat for any writer to accomplish!"

- **Co-facilitated "Active learning in quantitative units" Business School TDP Session**

  I continue to regularly attend Business School Tutor Development Program sessions as a participant because of the high quality, thoroughly researched and relevant presentations by the coordinator, Kellie Morrison, and to share ideas with and learn from my peers. In 2010, I lead the second hour of an "Active learning in quantitative units" TDP session with my own content. This session was designed for tutors in quantitative units to share and develop strategies to maximise students' learning through active learning. The session drew on the theory of David Easdown[5] but maintained a practical bent to identify hurdles that students face and develop actionable strategies to help students overcome those hurdles.

- **Leadership, mentoring and meaningful feedback**

  As the PASS mentor, one of my roles was to conduct coordinator reviews of the sessions. At the end of each review, I provided written and verbal feedback to the facilitator on their performance. Often this task required a significant amount of discretion, tact and care to deliver meaningful and actionable feedback while at the same time encouraging and motivating the facilitator. I have also participated in the training of facilitators for a number of years and seen many facilitators go on to become excellent tutors, with have a genuine student focus and desire to enhance students' learning. One of my colleagues commented that "[Garth] has been a role model and mentor for postgraduate facilitators as part of the [PASS] Postgraduate Leadership Program, and has inspired the Econometrics team, of which he is discipline leader, to achieve at the highest level. In his observations of PASS sessions, he is able to draw on his wealth of experience to provide truly valuable and well thought out feedback . . . Garth, like all true leaders, brings out the best in others. He continually inspires those around him (including myself) through leading by example. "

  A tutor that I recently peer reviewed commented that "The whole [peer review] experience was exceptionally pleasant and uplifting. All comments and feedback exchanged was done so in the upmost friendly manner with considerable thought and effort."

Conclusion

My philosophy has been informed by both my good and bad experiences as a student, my three years of coaxing students to work together to achieve collective understanding as a PASS facilitator, and my two and a half years as a tutor with a strong focus on enhancing my students' learning. I believe students should be active contributors to the learning and teaching process, not just idle consumers. I engage students throughout the semester, seek feedback and implement suggestions at every opportunity, act as a conduit between students and lecturer to bridge the knowledge divide, encourage and motivate students, provide detailed feedback on assessment tasks and learn from peer reviews to maximise my students' learning. I have also contributed to excellence in learning and teaching in the Business School through leadership roles in the Maths workshops, the PASS program and co-facilitation of a TDP session and through supporting roles in various learning and teaching initiatives within the Business School.

My hope is that students feel that they are part of a learning community and establish lasting networks. My hope is that students value their time at university and appreciate how content they have learnt will support their future endeavours. My hope is that students develop a thirst for life long learning.

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[5]Easdown, D. (2006). *Teaching mathematics: the gulf between semantics (meaning) and syntax (form)*, Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Teaching of Mathematics at the Undergraduate Level, Douglas Quinney (ed.), Wiley, Istanbul.

Kellie Morrison
Sessional and PASS Staff Development Manager
Learning and Teaching in Business

31 January 2011

Dear Selection Committee members,

It is with great pleasure that I write in support of Garth Tarr's application for the Excellence in Tutoring Award. I have had the privilege to work with Garth Tarr since 2005, first as his manager in the PASS program, and more recently, collaborating together. Given the number of projects and initiatives that I have managed where Garth has been my employee, or more recently when we have been colleagues working together as co-authors, I have been able to see Garth at work in various contexts. During this time, Garth has without fail gone above and beyond to provide polished outcomes with each and all of his endeavours. I know that he takes this same dedication to his teaching roles—his strong work ethic and genuine interest in students and their learning, means he approaches his tutorial work with constant reflection about how to enhance students' learning. His student feedback and USE results show that students greatly appreciate this constant attention to improving their learning process; his feedback from unit coordinators also attests to this high level of dedication and initiative.

In addition to being very dedicated, Garth is also very likeable, approachable and down-to-earth. Time and time again, I have seen him develop a quick rapport with both students and new team members. He has a gift of helping others feel more comfortable with maths and statistics, which is so important in building students' confidence and reducing their anxiety during the learning of difficult content. I have also read his honours thesis and heard him speak publicly, and I have observed his envious talent of being able to explain and break down complex issues with great clarity, making it easier to understand. His student comments and USE results relating to his communication ability are testament to this gift with communication. It is remarkable that with the high level of international students he has worked with, and the complexity and breadth of the material, that 96% of his students (n=310) believe he explains things clearly and that he effectively supports their learning.

In addition to using superior communication skills, Garth takes a very student-focussed approach to his teaching in order to encourage a deep approach to learning. I have seen him at work in the classroom where he demonstrates this by constantly gauging students' progress and adjusting tasks or explanations appropriately. He creates learning environments where students are engaged and actively participating in the construction of knowledge. I have seen him use various strategies that are likely to encourage students to take a deep approach in their learning. Some of these strategies include helping students see how their studies are relevant; using relevant and interesting examples or analogies to help explain or apply difficult concepts and providing extension questions to create greater challenge for some students, while tactfully advising others about how to access extra help or find more practice questions to help them build their foundational knowledge. In particular, his leadership and initiative in developing the content for our Business School Maths Workshops is an outstanding example of how he has helped not only his own students, but of how he has set up a system (in collaboration with others) to support a very wide range of Business School students, now and in future years, who may be struggling. His other strategies of embedding learning advice tips and resources into his tutorials, encouraging peer learning (both inside and outside his tutorials), and voluntarily holding longer consultation hours (which is unpaid work) are just a few of the other ways in which he devotes attention to support at-risk or struggling students.

For the duration of our time working together (nearly six years), I have always found that Garth is a dedicated team member, often going beyond minimum duties to perform with excellence. Indeed, I have been involved with multiple project teams over the years and he remains one of the most outstanding colleagues I have had the privilege to work with, in terms of his reliability, professionalism, and intellect. Happily, Garth is also a pleasure to work with— bringing humour, diplomacy, insight and an authentic humility to his work. I know he brings the same attributes to his classes. These attributes play out in his teaching particularly in his attention to genuinely listening to students, collecting their feedback, and responding swiftly with relevant responses. Another way that his dedication is evidenced is in his extensive experience with peer review—I know that he values the peer review process both as a way to improve his own tutorials but also as a way to mentor newer colleagues and build a sense of community. This commitment to peer review is demonstrated by his consistent use of peer review across multiple semesters without being prompted. He has also contributed to the Tutor Development Program (TDP), last year independently developing some content and facilitating half of one session himself (i.e., for one hour)—this session was the highest attended single session last semester and was also rated as one of the most valuable. His research for the session was outstanding, the activities he designed were active and engaging, and his contribution was significant.
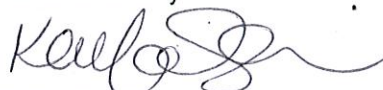
Given my six years in the Business School leading PASS and other programs, I also know several OME academics who have worked with Garth. To my knowledge, Garth is held universally in the highest of esteem. For example, Laurent Pauwels, the coordinator of ECMT3110, explained that Garth is a superior tutor: "The unit I coordinate has a reputation for being the most difficult in the Business School ... It is an outstanding achievement to be considered for this role, given the quality of our tutor pool and the very complex, challenging content—students struggle with both the overall difficulty of the content but particularly the difficulty of the Maths ... [So] it is essential to find a tutor with the right qualifications and communication ability. Garth is perfect. In particular, his level of initiative, feedback and commitment are distinctive. He has taken the lead on tutorial design and we workshop the tutorial content and assessment design together. Each week, Garth gives up an hour at least, to sit with me after the lecture and plan tutorials. I don't pay him for that. It is his initiative and commitment. These conversations are great. I am open to feedback, and Garth is often frank with me about will or will not work well with the students. The quality of his ideas and feedback is excellent. I have worked with Garth now for one year and I am very pleased to work again with him this year. Garth has helped to make this course a success—his work is excellent and he is an outstanding tutor".

Laurent's comments are echoed by Vasilis Sarafidis. Vasilis and Garth first met in 2007 when Vasilis was his lecturer in 2 units of study in econometrics. Since 2008, Garth and Vasilis have been working together as lecturer and tutor for a unit at the postgraduate level. Vasilis explained to me that "Garth is simply an outstanding tutor. He is well organised and always very on top of the material. He knows it thoroughly. Garth also consistently demonstrates high levels of initiative, from independently dealing with small problems or issues without needing to constantly email me about all little details, to providing significant input into the design of course materials. The content material he developed is easily of equal standard to that you would expect from a full time academic Discipline-based colleague. He not only designed effective tutorial activities, and Blackboard contributions, but also provided independent, external material in addition to text book activities—all of which were a very high standard. He uses his depth of knowledge of our Discipline to develop high quality learning experiences for students and teaching material. Plus he is very likeable and the students really like him too. I trust him to apply his own teaching approach in delivering the tutorials, and also to organise group discussions in Blackboard as well as provide feedback to students for assessment. ... Overall, Garth has the experience, depth and maturity, beyond what many tutors bring to their role. His performance is significantly above that of many of his peers".

Garth has also taken the initiative to support many learning and teaching initiatives of which the "Knowing your students" project is a prime example. This project would not have been possible without his technical skill and high-level problem solving skills combined with his intimate knowledge of what unit coordinators would find useful to know about their students. His leadership role is recognised by his co-authorship of the application and an article documenting the initiative. His work has provided invaluable intelligence to unit coordinators across the School. We have evidence that the project has resulted in some improvement to curriculum planning and teaching behaviours. Garth has also responded to several emails from academic staff where he not only answered their technical questions, but also gently and persuasively suggested ways the data could be applied to curriculum or delivery redesign to improve the learning environment. In these subtle ways, he was engaging in academic development. Philip Seltsikas, the Associate Dean (Undergraduate) who was a project team member, commented that Garth's "input was central to the project's success ... [Garth was] able to think through complex problems to find viable, and durable solutions. I highly recommend him." Philip has since invited him to consult on another Business School project to enhance systems, processes and outcomes.

It must be obvious that I (and others) hold Garth in the very highest of regard. I commend him to you as the most outstanding tutor that I have had the privilege to meet in my 16 years working in Higher Education contexts. His high level of expertise in facilitating learning, built from his intellectual acuity, thorough command of his field, and teaching skill, combined with his personal attributes, such as his deep and genuine enjoyment of helping others learn, his exceptional communication ability, approachability, and commitment to always improving what he does, means that he brings an exceptional approach to his teaching. He is very committed to students and to creating outstanding learning experiences. He consistently and generously takes time to participate in Business School learning and teaching initiatives, and to sensitively mentoring junior colleagues. His genuine commitment to enhancing learning and teaching is also evident through his USE results, attendance at relevant conferences, and the level of initiative he displays in tutorial design. I feel that I have learnt much from him during our work together—it is not too great a comment to say that my life has been enriched for having known him. I can only imagine that many of his students must feel precisely the same way.

Yours sincerely

Kellie Morrison

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