A Proposal for a Teaming Learning Circle

Authors: Dr. Martijn van der Kamp & Caroline Sanz-Veitch

Teamwork and collaboration are essential in addressing the Challenges of the Age (Impact, 2030 Strategy); Climate Change, Geopolitical Security and Thriving Communities. Collaboration is also explicitly embedded throughout our education, research and engagement strategies.

In this document, we propose to evolve the Teams@Monash project that began in 2022, into a university learning circle focused on teamwork, a Teaming Learning Circle. **The Circle would aim to practise the power of teamwork, collaboration, and co-design to enrich teamwork education and experience for students, educators, researchers, and employers**.

In education, teamwork is an excellent vehicle for transformative learning, the playground of diversity and inclusion, a crucial job-ready skill, and an essential part of the student experience, face-to-face and online. In research, teams are inherent in pursuing programmatic research through local, national, and international collaborations, in engaging transdisciplinary 'tiger-teams' to address the challenges of the age. Through engagement and enterprise, Monash aims to build strong industry partnerships, encourage student participation and support start-ups. The success of which all builds on effective teamwork.

Further, The Australian Universities Accord (2024), stipulates a strong need for 'advanced generic skills' in graduates, with "75% of employers consider[ing] people skills – communication skills, ability to work in a team and demonstrating initiative – to be at least as important as technical skills" (p.83) and suggests teamwork as a crucial element of 'pathway programs' into universities (p.135).

Through our work to date it is evident that teamwork is a challenge for students, educators and researchers. It is within Monash's reach to equip its students with the teaming skills needed to address complex challenges, to catalyse teamwork in our research programs, and to invigorate collaboration amongst staff and within our local and international partnerships.

Altogether, the Teaming Learning Circle will support enjoyable and constructive teamwork across the university to make Monash known for its teaming capability and impact on the Challenges of the Age.

How will the learning circle work?

The mentioned vision is ambitious in scope, so we propose to initially continue our efforts in the Education Portfolio before branching out into research and engagement.

Over 2022-23, Teams@Monash has engaged a community of around 30 educators and learning designers across seven faculties in addressing the barriers that educators experience when teaching teamwork and have devised several directed solutions.

From there, we designed workstreams that set out what is required to develop this University-wide scaffolding and seek to leverage these workstreams as a structured set of

activities to be carried out across the first 12 months of the Learning Circle, starting in 2025. These workstreams are:

1. Establishing concepts of teamwork; e.g. a Student Teamwork Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA) Framework and minimum teamwork standards;
2. Teamwork scaffolding; e.g. guides to scaffold teamwork across units in a program; and
3. Practical, scalable applications to support teamwork education;

The Teaming Learning Circle design has been inspired by the model of distributed educational leadership successfully adopted by our colleagues in the Warwick International Higher Education Academy and the first Learning Circle successfully launched here at Monash by Ari Seligmann.

We suggest a distributed leadership model where learning circle members would come together as a group 2-3 times per semester but then meet in more regular, targeted, and self-organised working groups centred on a particular workstream and deliverable. Learning Circle leads and stream sub-leads will coordinate and keep discussions on track towards deliverables. The learning circle will align with semester dates to make it easier to manage alongside existing commitments. The semester unit delivery could then also serve as a practical testing ground and also facilitate easier engagement with testing in other programs or institutes, such as Lead at Monash (to which we are already contributing).

Workstreams, Outcomes & Deliverables

Our work to date has identified the following work streams that could be used as a starting point for the Learning Circle and can evolve over time with member inputs.

Each workstream has a set of outcomes and deliverables that align with activities. This will help Learning Circle members get on board easily, contribute meaningfully, and learn about teamwork through applied learning. Scalability and broad engagement will be a focus in all work streams.

Workstream 1: Establishing concepts & guidelines of teamwork

Expected outcomes

1. Establish a unified concept(s) for teamwork education across the university
2. More consistent and reliable student experience and inclusive approaches across units and programs

Expected deliverables

- Definition of teamwork
- A teamwork knowledge skills & abilities (KSA) framework
- Set of Graduate attributes + minimum standards
- An organisational/program readiness tool

Workstream 2: Teamwork scaffolding

Expected outcomes

1. Ensure the experience of facilitating and embedding teamwork education is accessible for educators

2. Ensure teamwork approaches are aligned with industry expectations and fit for purpose within education settings

Expected deliverables

- High-level pedagogical guidelines for teamwork
- Team teaching guidelines for modelling teamwork
- Collection and mapping of current educational resources and approaches
- Overview of team assessment alternatives

Workstream 3: Scalable applications for teamwork education

Expected outcomes

1. Develop practical, scalable ways of educating teamwork
2. Reduce the burden on educators through standardised approaches across Monash

Expected deliverables

- A model for scaling teamwork
- A shortlist and diagnostic tool of recommended technology solutions for teamwork

Workstream 4: Monitoring, evaluation & teamwork sustainability

Expected outcomes

1. Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the learning circle
2. Developing a monitoring and evaluation approach for ongoing teamwork education
3. Exploration/coordination of research opportunities that evolve from the learning circle

Expected deliverables

- Baseline assessment of teamwork scaffolding and program readiness
- Case studies presenting user insights that demonstrate an understanding of how the initiatives have impacted the student and educator experience
- A portfolio of research opportunities and overall research strategy for the learning circle