

Designing for delight in post-COVID classrooms:

The Online Learning and Technology Consultants (OLTC) program

Executive Summary

Phase I: Overview of Bishop's Pilot Program

Project Description: The global pandemic encouraged us to re-think traditional modes of design and delivery, and in doing so advanced our thinking about student expertise and authority in productive ways. In June 2020, Bishop's University hired 23 university students as Online Learning and Technology Consultants (OLTCs) from all academic disciplines to help support faculty members prepare for Fall 2020.

The OLTC program goals are threefold:

- 1. Offer individualized support for faculty to enhance student learning experiences (through engagement, community-building, and transformative learning) in person and remotely
- 2. Provide students with work-integrated learning (WIL) experiences and future-facing skill development (digital literacy, design thinking, creative problem solving, emotional and social intelligence)
- **3.** Help re-imagine a 21st-century liberal education that engages students as key collaborators in the co-design of their university experience.

The OLTC program is an example of the creative ways that universities can provide opportunities for students to develop key transferable skills, such as

- Social and Emotional Skills (SES)
- Communications and Social Media
- Design Thinking & Project Management
- Digital Literacy & Technology
- Research & Applied Design
- Data Analytics & Reporting

The benefits of these skills reach far beyond the student employee; they have large impacts on the institution, the higher education sector, and conversions around work-integrated learning in Canada and beyond. The OLTC program positions the Maple League to lead conversations about the role of WIL 21st-century liberal education that is transformative, student-centred, and inclusive.

We studied the impact of the program on the students hired as OLTCs and faculty who went through the program. Some of the results are below. We also recently published in the *International Journal of Students as Partners*.



Phase II: As we expand the Online Learning and Technology Consultants (OLTC) program across the four Maple League universities a question that is front of mind for us is "how do we best deliver a 21st-century liberal education in a post-COVID world?"

The current project will expand Phase I pilot project at Bishop's. Phase II will include students from the four Maple League Universities (Acadia, Bishop's, Mount Allison, and St. Francis Xavier) to create a minimum of 130 work-integrated learning (WIL) experiences (30 structured-WILs and 100 micro-WILs) from June 2021 - May 2022.

In order to move into Phase II, we take a two-pronged approach:

- 1. We will **centralize the program coordination and management**. Funded through the Business Higher Education Round Table (BHER) grant, we will hire a full-time Project Coordination and a part-time Project Manager. These two positions will report to the Executive Director of the Maple League as well as the OLTC Advisory team (composed from the original design team, Scott Stoddard, IT Director at Bishop's, and Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfacon, BU '21).
- 2. In addition to the centralization to ensure consistency and quality assurance, we must also **design for localized adaptation**; we therefore plan to embed "design teams" of the OLTCs across the Maple League consortium to focus on alignment with institutional needs and strategic directions.

The OLTC program reframes (and even disrupts) paradigms in a number of areas related to the education of young people for the future of work:

- 1. **The Student-faculty relationship changes:** in higher education the traditional roles of assistant-ships (TAs and RAs) are in many ways hierarchical and have specific power differentiation. This project reframes partnerships that recognize student expertise and mastery in learning environments
- 2. Who qualifies as an Industry Partner: Industry partners are usually outside of higher education; students from PSE are recruited to be placed in governmental, corporate, and not-for-profit organizations. This project argues that PSE is a valuable industry partner for WIL funding
- 3. WIL as a vehicle for reciprocal change: The value of WILis often focussed on the benefits of the intern or WIL student placed in role industry, whereby they develop skills and competencies to add to their CVs, and gain valuable experience for their entry or reentry into the job market. In this project the students transform alongside the professor, classroom, and institution, which reframes the uni-directional benefit of the WIL as mutually transformative





Proof of Concept: Phase I

Impact & Uptake: When the OLTC program launched at Bishop's University July 20, 2020, 37 faculty (86 courses) enrolled in the first week. In the first month, the program included 55 faculty and supported 86 courses. As of September 1, approximately 35% of courses scheduled to run in Fall 2020 were OLTC supported (77 faculty members participated with 132 courses supported).

Evaluation: Efficacy and impact of this program was collected during the pilot to measure student gains in competencies such as social and civic responsibility, and development of social and emotional skills, which employers often feel new graduates are lacking (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018). Adaptive design incorporated regular performance reviews, ongoing critical self-reflection, and exit interviews. We also evaluated impact on course quality and student learning through faculty focus groups, surveys, and student course evaluations.

Snapshot of Engagement:

- The students felt empowered and 100% of OLTCs reported feeling "engaged" to "highly engaged" in the process of designing the OLTC program
- They reported an increased capacity for critical thinking and critical empathy and 100% reported developing key Social and Emotional Skills (SES) that will equip them for success on the job market
- All OLTCs reported that they have improved their social emotional skills (SES) development through the OLTC program
- 100% of OLTCs reported being a little to a lot more hopeful about Fall 2020 after their participation in the program
- They reported developing a greater knowledge and mastery in educational design and delivery
- They revealed that their participation in the program allowed them to better understand the realities that faculty faced before Fall 2020 and will continue to face beyond COVID-19



Qualitative and Quantitative Data

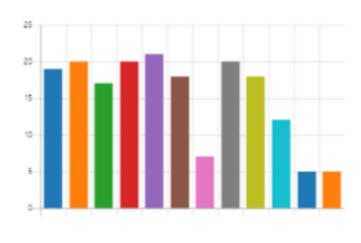
Impact on Students: Results from the Bishop's Pilot OLTCs' exit survey shows that the participating students appreciated their experience, learned several skills and acquired new aptitudes thanks to their involvement in the program. Their answers also indicated that the initial goals were successfully attained:

- The students felt empowered and most OLTCs reported feeling "engaged" to "highly engaged" in the process of designing the OLTC program;
- They reported an increased capacity for critical thinking and critical empathy.
- All OLTCs reported that they have improved their social emotional skills development by working as an OLTC.
- They reported a greater knowledge in educational design and delivery;
- They revealed that their participation in the program allowed them to better understand the situation that faculty members faced before Fall 2020.

The following graphics illustrate the results of some of the answers that the 22 OLTCs provided in the exit survey:

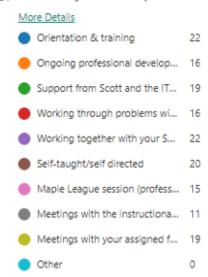
What skills and competencies have you developed?

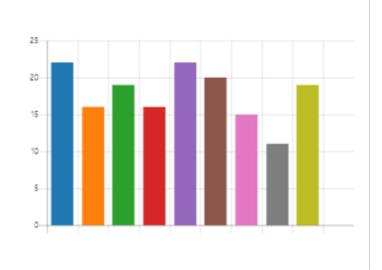






3. How did you develop these skills? (Choose all that apply)





 Empathetic design gave me social and emotional skills (SES) that will help with future collaborations, projects and/or jobs after the OLTC program ends

More Details



 Going through the OLTC program has made me more aware of how pedagogy (learning objectives, assessment, alignment) shapes how I learn

More Details





 Can you navigate fundamental elements of the three platforms supported by Bishop's University (Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Ensemble)

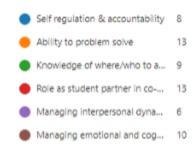


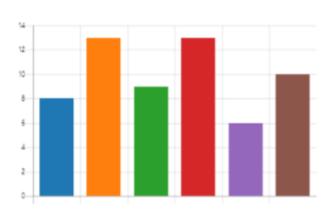




30. Have the following improved during your time with the OLTC? (select all that apply)

More Details





38. Has participating in this process made you more hopeful or cynical, and why?

More Details





Word cloud for "What has been the impact of the OLTC program on your life?"



When the OLTCs are asked directly about the impact of the program on their life, the most common word is "more," followed by "skills" and "future." (Word size is proportional to occurrence)

Testimonials from Past OLTCs

"Engaging in a student as partners position allows for a brighter space for discussion and development without the worry of a power dynamic. The pandemic affected everybody and we, as students, must keep in mind that our professors are learning and growing along with us."

"It has been a great addition to my life. I love my SWG and consider them good friends, I have become closer with multiple faculty, I have learned how to utilize Moodle for specific courses, and I have learned more about myself as a learner. I have enjoyed this job and think it was an amazing resource for faculty and an amazing experience for all the OLTCs"

"The OLTC program absolutely challenged my way of thinking and allowed for me to conceptualize different points of view. My SWG is made up of strong personalities



and creative minds, so there was never a meeting that didn't involve compromising and discussions."

B) Impact on Faculty: The program has also had a positive impact on the faculty members who participated in it as Faculty Mentor Models during the orientation. They reported that the students helped them visualize what their course would look like online, provided them with creative ideas and brought solutions that they wouldn't have considered. Some also reported that positioning themselves as learners and allowing themselves to be vulnerable placed them outside of their usual position of authority, but that the students' enthusiastic support and genuine care helped them overcome their insecurities.

Testimonials from Faculty:

"This [OLTC program] might be the most powerful tool in my toolbox this Fall."

"I highly recommend [the program] [...] and you'll find that they will really expand your mind in terms of what's possible in your classroom this fall and beyond."

"Be enthusiastic [about the Fall]. Don't be afraid to ask. Sometimes it doesn't seem feasible, then you realize that [...] we tend to limit ourselves in terms of what we know, but they know an awful lot more than we know, so don't be afraid to ask!"

C) Institutional Impact: Although it is still too early to collect data on the long-term impact the program will have on Bishop's at large, early feedback has already showed us how it has influenced the quality of course delivery during the Fall 2020 semester. 77 faculty members participated with 132 courses supported.

For instance, some students outside of the OLTC program have reached out to mention that they had noticed a difference in their courses' delivery online.



"I have classes that have been designed in partnership with OLTCs, and some that haven't. I clearly see the difference; is there a way for me to nominate a prof for the OLTCs to reach out to?"

"The first thing my professor said is that they were hoping we were going to like the course and that they had worked really hard with the OLTCs to create something that would be motivating even online. The fact that they asked for help and thought about us this summer during the design really made me feel like they cared."

D. Impact Beyond Bishop's: The program has attracted a great deal of national and international interest. Our work has been cited in reports on innovation in the time of COVID (cf. "Emerging Stronger: Lasting Impact from Crisis Innovation." Gibbs, 2020). We also presented at a virtual convention in collaboration with the University of New South Wales in Australia. Some attendees shared comments after the talk:

"This has been a fabulous presentation! Thank you so much for sharing this amazing and inspirational work." (Dr Christine Linstrom, Lecturer at the School of Physics, UNSW)

"Great session! I will follow this initiative with interest. Particularly interested in the concept of empathetic design." (Dr Anna Rowe, Lecturer in Academic Development Services, UNSW)

"This program is so inspirational. Thank you for sharing! I hope this great work continues and spreads worldwide." (Dr Conor West, Academic Development & Recognition, University of Wollongong)

Additionally, there is a publication forthcoming regarding this project as a case study in the International Journal of Students as Partners (IJSAP).



Expansion Objectives

In agreement with funding partner Business Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) the objective of this expansion is to create at least 130 work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities (30 structured WIL opportunities and 100 micro- WIL opportunities) across the Maple League.

The structured WILs are semester-long placements for students as Online Learning and Technology Consultants (OLTCs) wherein OLTCs aid course instructors in course design and delivery for academic courses, including LMS design (Learning Management System - Moodle), high quality asynchronous content, as well as non-academic learning modules and high impact practices for students.

The Micro-WILs focus on short-term skill-building activities related to online learning and will focus on design thinking and strategic thinking to tackle challenges and opportunities related to high impact practices. These micro-WILS would include immersive professional development sessions that would be "stackable" (i.e. part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway to develop future facing skills and competencies) diverse training modules, design challenges and Hackathons focused around case studies (academic courses, learning modules, particular disciplinary challenges around student engagement, delivery via signature pedagogies, etc).

This program will not only educate students about career opportunities within the post-secondary industry and strengthen the WIL ecosystem within post-secondary institutions via curricular and co-curricular approaches, but also create WIL opportunities that seek to engage underrepresented student communities (specifically, BIPOC, LGBTQ2, first-generation, international students, etc.) and develop partnerships with senior and junior faculty, IT departments, etc. within the 4 Maple League universities that will help expand the awareness of an innovative model of WIL opportunities by treating universities as industry partners.

Ideal outcomes for post-secondary stakeholders are as follows:

- 1. *For students:* improved academic acumen; enhanced professional transferable skills; increased ability to collaborate with others; a deeper understanding of pedagogy; development of digital literacy and technology skills.
- 2. For faculty: support for intentionally designed courses; greater appreciation of virtual learning environments; greater sensitivity to accommodations and accessibility; more alignment between course objectives and learning outcomes in assessment and design;
- **3.** *For institutions:* enhanced student learning outcomes; enhanced professional development for faculty; ensure graduates are part of a more resilient workforce, with an



alumni pool that can easily adapt to changing conditions and demonstrate a mix of skills via a 21st-century liberal education.

4. *For PSE in Canada:* The Maple League's highly collaborative model is uniquely positioned to lead WIL initiatives and high-impact practices (HIPs) to set standards and pathways for other universities and colleges to emulate.

Students who graduate from our four institutions are uniquely equipped to navigate a complex global landscape as citizens and leaders dedicated to the values of a just, civil society. Therefore, the Maple League of Universities is uniquely positioned to become leaders in the delivery of higher education in Canada and internationally. As leaders in PSE we strive to set an example for other academic institutions and elevate the standard of higher education in general. Bold initiatives such as this one are radically disruptive and will encourage the breakdown of structural and systemic barriers that will not only allow our students to gain extraordinary experiences but inspire others to replicate our innovative WIL initiative.

Connecting people from different disciplines and backgrounds is one of the Maple League's long standing, foundational strengths: this model could be implemented across the four institutions but across Canada as well, so a key activity is to mobilize this program through strong communications and outreach over the next two years. Not only is there immense benefit for students who undertake the role of OLTC within the Maple League, but there is a revitalization of the economy and student employment opportunities that directly align with the main sector in their town: higher education. COVID-19 has brought national attention on the significant impact that students have on the rural communities which house their universities.



Implementation

Milestones for this initiative include hiring and training students to consult with faculty (each academic term), supporting the WIL experience for students with professional development opportunities (orientation, performance reviews, and exit interviews), and measuring impact on course quality and student learning (faculty focus groups, student evaluations, etc). The achievement of these milestones and the related improvements in student learning and course quality will be assessed with a mixed methods evaluation approach across student, faculty, and institutional program participants/collaborators. These will include but are not limited to self-report and objective indicators of skill capacity/development, experiential reviews of program participation, measurement of and alignment between course objective and learning outcomes, and integration of accessibility and accommodations.

The program will leverage a Design Team on each of the four campuses (one technology staff member, one faculty champion, and one student leader). The multi-stakeholder design breaks down traditional silos within institutional cultures by embedding the three-person collaboration model already immersed in the institutional culture. The "triumvirate" or "tripod" model of champions, with equal and valued contributions from all three spheres, enables greater breadth and depth in design, delivery, and assessment. Faculty, student, and IT Design Team Champions will work directly as a member of the design team embedded on each of the four campuses and will provide internal support to navigate complex institutional political and social landscapes, act as a voice in advocacy and decision-making, and aid in hiring and communications processes.

In the expansion of the OLTC program, it is imperative to preserve this model of partnership in order to ensure the socialization of the OLTC program on each campus. The design teams will be responsible for collecting frequent feedback from both the OLTCs (students) and faculty, analyze quantitative and qualitative data from testimonials and, after the completion of the program, deliver an OLTC Exit Survey. To measure the program's short-term impact on participants—both the OLTCs and the faculty who participated in the program design, orientation, and delivery - the design teams will collect testimonials via a series of surveys and focus groups. We will also survey faculty about their experiences with the program and will share those results in future publications, reports, and conferences. The coordination of the program ensures that we engage in research, critical reflection, and knowledge mobilization in the design, delivery and assessment. Our evaluation will integrate, where possible, an inclusion analytics lens by which we disaggregate data by demographics and other identity indicators to understand how outcomes and short-term impact differs based on lived experience, especially as it pertains to underrepresented student communities.



Recruitment and Hiring

We have hired a part-time Program Manager who will be responsible for the development of the logistics and project management - including hiring, contracts, invoices, communications

(internal and external) for the OLTC program across the Maple League Universities. They will also be responsible for the administrative needs and external stakeholder management for the OLTC program. The Program Manager will also aid in institutional planning, build governance and structures for the program and help the administration of hiring and job performance assessment. Additionally, they will be responsible for communications, project management, and grant/funding applications and reporting.

There is currently a job posting opening for a Program Coordinator who will be integral in training institutional champions, facilitating OLTC orientation, creating professional development opportunities, developing critical



reflective practice, active data collection and analysis, and reporting to appropriate channels. They will be involved in the day to day operations, organize weekly touch points with all stakeholders, and report to the project leads (Jessica Riddell, Scott Stoddard, and Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfacon) with regular updates.

Once funding is secured to hire student OLTCs, we will distribute a call for student applications to current or eligible-to-graduate Maple League students from any year and program.

Students will be asked to submit the following:

- A copy of their resume
- An application form that will contain the standard application questions
- A two to four-minute video about why they would be the ideal candidate for this role to help prioritize interviews by allowing us to evaluate more efficiently the applicant's personality, non-verbal cues, enthusiasm, engagement, social and emotional skills, and creativity.

This approach will help us employ BIPOC students and members of underrepresented groups and ideally hire a more diverse group than the general student population.



Orientation and Training

In Phase I students participated in 80 hours (two "full-time" weeks) of training and orientation in advance of the official program launch. Orientation was structured as follows:

- <u>Pre-Orientation Preparation</u>: new employees will be assigned video and texts to review before the official training period started, on the subjects of Students as Partners, empathetic design, active learning, as well as a review of the asynchronous resources that had been produced at Bishop's ("Going Online" sites and training videos) and the Maple League (the "Virtual Maple League Resource Guide")
- Ongoing Professional Development: Required attendance and participation in the MLTLC programming on a variety of topics, including classroom design, Moodle, inclusion, accessibility and accommodations, etc.
- <u>Technological Training</u>: Extensive training sessions on the three major technologies supported by ITS and used on campuses (i.e. Moodle, Ensemble Video and Microsoft Teams)
- Online Course Modules: A six-module asynchronous course called "Adapting Your Course for Online Delivery" (developed at Acadia University and available through our membership with the Maple League)
- <u>Faculty Mentorship</u>: A problem-based learning scenario with a Faculty Mentor Model (FMM)
- <u>Critical self-reflection</u>: Employees will engage in critical reflective practice based on a series of thought prompts in daily journal entries
- <u>Final "Capstone" Project</u>: Group presentations in which each Student Working Group (SWG) presents their knowledge of best practices in online student engagement and shares the digital artifacts that they built in consultation with their FMM

During PHASE II orientation, we will also build several smaller information modules covering a variety of subjects, including copyright, accessibility within online platforms, high-impact practices, empathetic design, and more.



(Sample from the first week's schedule of the BU Pilot)

	Monday July 6	Tuesday July 7	Wednesday July 8	Thursday July 9	Friday July 10
9-10	Intro/Welcome/Obje ctives of the program	Group A: Advanced Moodle part 1	SWG meets with FMM program/values/ intentions	Creative Commons & Copyright Session	Open Office hour
10-11	Group A: Moodle Basics	Group B: Intermediate Moodle	Acadia Module 1 (Remote Learning Syllabus and Learning Objectives) + Acadia Module 2 (Creating Community)	Individual work on Acadia Module 3 (Pre-Recorded Lectures and Course Content)	Individual work on Acadia Module 4 (Live Sessions)
11-12	Group B: Microsoft Teams	Better Together Series: Course Planning I	Maple League Student Success Panel High-Impact Practices (HIPs).	Better Together Series: Course Planning II	Accessibility in online and hybrid classes (TBC)
12-1	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
1-2	Group A: Intermediate Moodle	Group A: Advanced Moodle part 2			
2-3	Group B: Moodle Basics	Group B: Advanced Moodle part 1	SWG time - Acadia Modules 1 and 2	SWG time - Acadia Module 3	SWG time - Acadia Module 4
3-4					
4-5	Group A: Microsoft Teams	Group A: Ensemble Video	End of day goal: For the SWG: have three recommendations for the FMM on the things	End of day Goal: For the SWG: have three recommendations for	End of week deliverables: For the SWG: provide the FMM with a Moodle Landing page, welcome video,
	Group B: Ensemble Video	Group B: Advanced Moodle part 2	learned in Module 1 & 2 Individually: Write in learning journal: how are things going for you?	the FMM on the things learned in Module 3	navigation, Moodle set up depending on the needs of the FMM Individually: Write in learning journal: (writing prompt)

One of the program's goals is to empower students to work as partners with the faculty members, not to merely reproduce the traditional student/professor relationship that a teaching assistant or helpdesk employee may offer. Therefore, the OLTCs are encouraged to assume a more consultative role with the faculty members with whom they are partnered. They will be equipped with knowledge on technology and techno-pedagogy and not only be able to suggest the best course of action for a particular class need, but also to identify red flags or things which would otherwise not work well or be clear for the learners in the virtual class. However, it is important to note that these OLTCs are not responsible for content design or delivery. Instead, they are consulting on the technological and pedagogical aspects of design based on a comprehensive needs assessment they develop in one-on-one consultations with each faculty member.

Needs Assessment:

Excerpt from an email sent to BU faculty from Scott Stoddard:

These students are ready to support faculty by:



- Conducting a needs-assessment to determine ways to enhance the online or hybrid delivery of your class
- Building your Moodle site to maximize engagement
- Building elements of your Moodle site you may not have used before (forums, quizzes, assignments, separated group activities, learning journals, asynchronous video content, etc)
- Working with you to show you how to do these things yourself
- And many other possibilities as well!

Dear Colleagues,

We'd like to draw your attention to the OLTC Program (Online Teaching and Technology Consultants), a program we launched in June 2020 to help alleviate some of the pressure of teaching in the time of COVID. Whether you need a Moodle page set up for some new ideas about building virtual learning communities, the OLTC program can provide you individualized support. Once you register, you will be assigned a student working group (SWG). They will go through a needs assessment with you for your course, and then provide a series of recommendations for your consideration. Depending on your time constraints, course objectives, and interest, the SWG will provide three types of recommendations with varying levels of time commitment and pedagogical investment:

- 1. Top ten things that are quick, high impact, and easy to implement
- Professor info: HTML block on Moodle
- Professor photo in Moodle (profile pic)
- Office Hours scheduler on Moodle
- ITS block: central HTML block on Moodle for help with technology
- Migrate resources from old to new Moodle
- Gradebook set up for recording assessment
- Collapsible topics (to ensure clean, simple, easy to navigate)
- Pre-course questionnaire to get to know your students (and for them to get to know one another template questionnaire e.g. time zone, in person/remote, wifi and tech access, private space for attending class, internet speed,
- Ice breaker activities -- where are you from, profile pic, community building questions
- Intro video for the professor introducing the course
- 2. Recommendations (2 3) to enhance student engagement (these might take a few weeks but are high impact and moderate to design)
 - Activity completion features
 - Graphic designed syllabus (visual syllabus augmenting the textual syllabus)
 - Video syllabus & philosophy of assessment
 - RSS feed with applicable resource for the given course



- Additional Community engagement features -- add-ons like e.g. coffee break, padlet, flipgrid (video responses), etc.
- Feedback Forum
- 3. Platform specific tweaks to enhance learning environments (1-2 recommendations are made and these are suggestions only: these require more time investment for the instructor .)
 - Using Perusall
 - Annotating/sharing the screen as you teach (e.g. Mirroring 360)
 - Daily videos by the faculty member
 - Asynchronous micro-lecture videos
 - Asynchronous discussion forums
 - Lightboard (depending on the discipline and time commitment)
 - Video quizzes
 - Moodle quizzes with question banks
 - Gamification: e.g. Staggered access via quizzes
 - Badges and credentials
 - Setting up working groups for problem based/case studies
 - Creating a Resource Book on Moodle
 - Branching option on Moodle as an alternative way to present material (and implement quizzes within the content)

For more information or to sign up for a consultation, please follow this link

For more info go to www.bishopsOLTC.com

OLTCs in the Media

Bishop's Blog:

 $\underline{https://blog.ubishops.ca/designing-for-delight-students-transforming-bishops-fall-2020-courses-amidst-covid-pandemic/}$

OLTC Website & Blog:

https://www.bishopsoltc.com/

Link to our talk at the University of New South Wales (October 6th 2020):

https://ensemble.ubishops.ca/Watch/OLTC-UNSW-Talk