

ANU-UPNG Partnership: 2023 Semester 1 Report

24 August 2023

Name of Organisation:	Development Policy Centre, Australian National University
Project title:	ANU-UPNG Partnership
Project objectives:	To help realise a stronger UPNG School of Business and Public Policy, as well as a deeper and lasting relationship with ANU.
Reporting period:	First half of 2023

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Annex 1: ANU-UPNG Summer School Report (separate document)

Annex 2: 2021-23 ANU-UPNG partnership report (separate document)

Implementation progress – first half of 2023

Stream 1: Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience

Teaching

Four ANU lecturers and three ANU-trained lecturers taught ten courses with 281 female and 481 male students and one with disability (764 in total) in Semester 1 and Trimester I. All courses were taught in person. A list of all courses taught is provided below.

No.	Course	Lecturer	Year Level	Students			
				Female	Male	People with a disability	Total
Trimester I (Feb-May)							
1	Quantitative Research Methods	Toan Nguyen	PG1	20	23	0	43
2	Governance and Institutions	Terence Wood	PG1	18	33	1	52
Semester I (Feb-Jun)							
3	Foundation Economics	Andrew A Mako	UG1	132	248	0	380
4	Principles of Microeconomics	Jollanda Mathew	UG2	47	49	0	96
5	Cost Benefit Analysis	Jollanda Mathew	UG4	10	19	0	29
6	Advanced Microeconomics	Bobby Kunda	UG3	12	24	0	36
7	Quantitative Economics I	Kelly Samof	UG3	21	40	0	61
8	International Economics	Kelly Samof	UG3	10	21	0	31
9	Natural Resource Economics	Bobby Kunda	UG4	12	24	0	36
Yearlong course							
10	MEPP research papers	Lawrence Sause and Nematullah Bizhan	PG2				
	TOTAL/AVERAGE			281	481	1	764

Each course was evaluated, with the exception of MEPP Research papers, and the average course and lecturer scores were 4.1 and 4.0, respectively out of 5.

MEPP

The Master of Economics and Public Policy (MEPP) is a major focus of the project. ANU staff teach into the project, supervise research students, and help coordinate the program.

Key progress and challenges:

- Although some students have withdrawn since Trimester I, there were over 40 students enrolled in total for Trimester II and III, beating our 2021 record. This shows increasing and continuing demand since the inception of the program with only nine students in 2017, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years.
- This increasing demand has posed some challenges, especially on lecturers. With the increased teaching load, maintaining the quality of teaching and sustainability of the current format of the program remain a challenge. As in Trimester I, additional tutoring and marking support was provided to lecturers in Trimester II and III as a temporary measure. Despite the challenges faced, the average scores of MEPP course and lecturer evaluations remained high – 4.4 and 4.5 respectively out of 5. The following possible long-term solutions have been discussed with UPNG, however, they are yet to be implemented:

- Limiting the number of students to approximately 40, and
- Introducing an additional merit-based selection process.

As it takes time for UPNG to implement changes, it is importance that the Partnership can continue providing the support for teaching and program coordination in the coming years.

- A research grant of K1,500 was introduced by the Partnership in 2021. For the 2023/2024 round, research proposals from ten students are approved to receive the first instalment (K750) to commence their research. Four more students are yet to submission their final proposals. ANU and UPNG researchers are supervising the students research projects.
- Twenty-six students graduated from the program in 2023, two receiving a postgraduate Diploma in Economics and Public Policy while the rest received Master of Economics and Public Policy. This year we had a record of the MEPP/PGDEPP graduates since its inception, including seven female graduates.



Initiatives to improve teaching

- **Lecturer and tutor guidance:** The returned ANU Scholarship recipients were mentored by ANU lecturers, as were two economics tutors. Informal monthly meetings were held in Semester 1 of 2023 between ANU lecturers, returned ANU Scholarship recipients, young lecturers and tutors that are associated with the Partnership for informal discussions on a range of topics such as teaching and research. This informal event is a useful component of the Partnership's mentorship of young SBPP faculty and will continue in Semester 2.

Improving the student experience

- **Film discussion nights:** UPNG Inspired has been one of the key activities of the Partnership. Each screening during the semester showcases selected films on various issues in PNG. UPNG economics lecturer Kelly Samof continued to lead the coordination of the UPNG Inspired in Semester 1 2023. All screenings were well attended by students and staff.
- **Student associations:** The Partnership provides financial support to the Economics Student Society (ESS) and Public Policy and Management Student Association (PPMSA) up to K5,000 per semester (K2,500 each). Both ESS and PPMSA held their activities in Semester 1 2023 some of which were supported by the Partnership such as Orientation events of ESS and PPMSA.



EES vice president, Rose Edimani speaking at 2023 Orientation event of economics students in Semester 1.

- **Undergraduate Alumni association:** As part of the Partnership’s effort to maintain contact with UPNG alumni, the Partnership is continuing to promote and expand the Partnership’s economics alumni Facebook page for recent graduates. A separate WhatsApp group and LinkedIn page are also being used to further expand this effort. The three channels are used as platforms for sharing information about economic research, job opportunities, and other outreach activities. A motivational/networking event is being planned by the Partnership and ESS to bring in recent graduates to speak to and engage with undergraduate students, including economics in Semester 2 2023.
- **MEPP Alumni Network.** As part of the Partnership’s effort to maintain contact with UPNG MEPP alumni a WhatsApp group and LinkedIn Group have been established. These platforms are used to keep the students connected, informed about opportunities and facilitate exchange of experience and ideas.

Stream 2: Collaborative research and outreach

PNG Central Banking Act Review: second phase

ANU project director, Stephen Howes has been part of the three-person Independent Advisory Group to review the PNG Central Bank Act since 2021. Research support to the review is being provided by both ANU and UPNG economics staff.

The second phase of the review focuses on the financial sector, including the commercial banks and both the superannuation and insurance sectors. The second phase issues paper was published in August 2022 (<https://pngcentralbankactiag.org/wp-content/uploads/Issues-paper-10-August-FINAL.pdf>), and consultations with numerous stakeholders in the financial sector occurred in late 2022. Work on the second phase continued in the first half of 2023 with critical support from Partnership Research Officer Alyssa Leng.

ANU-UPNG seminar series

The monthly seminar series co-hosted by ANU and UPNG was introduced in 2020 to provide a platform for research supported through the Partnership and to invite guest speakers who are also working on issues in PNG. We continued the series in Semester 1, and held four hybrid seminars across two venues – ANU Crawford School of Public Policy and UPNG School of Business and Public Policy. The events were well attended with more than 60 registrations for each seminar. The seminar will continue in Semester 2 of 2023.

In addition, a guest lecture was delivered by Dr Steven Crimp of ANU’s College of Science delivered to the MEPP students.

PNG Project

Research is being pursued under the headings of economics, governance and elections, service delivery and gender.

SBPP librarian

The project continued to fund a UPNG librarian in 2023 to maintain a dedicated library in the SBPP building. Over 3,000 books are now available for more than 500 library membership holders, which include both students and staff.

PNG Databases

During Semester 1, we kept our PNG databases up to date.

- **PNG Budget Database** (<https://devpolicy.crawford.anu.edu.au/png-project/png-budget-database/>): The database was updated with the 2022 Final Budget Outcome.
- **PNG MP Database** (<https://devpolicy.org/pngmps/>): This database has been kept up to date.
- **PNG Elections Database** (<https://devpolicy.org/pngelections/>): To be updated once the PNG Electoral Commission has made the necessary information publicly available for the 2022 elections.
- **PNG Economic Database** (<http://devpolicy.org/pngeconomic/>): The database was updated to include the latest 2021 and 2022 information on the PNG economy.

PhD supervision and examination, and MEPP research supervision

Professor Stephen Howes, Dr Nematullah Bizhan, Dr Grant Walton, Dr Terence Wood, Dr Martin Davies, Dr Toan Nyguen, Dr Melanie Pill are supervising ten MEPP students' research projects. Dr Walton is also supervising a UPNG PhD candidate.

Research workshops and training

- **Reading groups:** This series of reading groups was introduced in 2021 to provide UPNG students and staff members with an opportunity for discussions outside the classroom. Unlike other research workshops, reading groups are small and informal, and aim to have a high level of participation and engagement from attendees. Jollanda Mathew led the coordination of the reading groups, with assistance from Masidah Tonaim, Raymond Dorum and Bobby Kunda. Jollanda and Bobby are both former ANU Scholarship recipients and current UPNG lecturers. Raymond is an Economics tutor at SBPP and is undertaking MEPP, and his studies are sponsored by the Partnership. Masidah is the 2024-25 ANU scholarship recipient, and she will commence studies at ANU's Crawford School to study MIDEDEC in 2024.

Three reading groups were held in person in Semester 1, focusing on a range of socio-economic development issues of PNG. The reading groups were attended by UPNG students and invited ANU researchers. The series is planned to continue in Semester 2 2023.

- **Training:** The **Workshop on research methods and free data sources** has been integrated to the Quantitative Research Methods course of the MEPP.

Outreach

- **The Devpolicy Blog:** Devpolicy.org is the online public outreach portal for the Development Policy Centre at ANU. In Semester 1 2023, Devpolicy.org continued to publish a number of posts related to or directly on PNG. Many of those blogs were authored or co-authored by Papua New Guineans. These blog posts are widely read in PNG, and those focusing on PNG are often republished in PNG newspapers. The Blog Incentive Scheme continued in Semester 1 2023 to encourage blog submissions from UPNG staff and students and other PNG writers (authors are paid K200 per published blog).
- **PNG Project News:** The newsletter provided regular Partnership-related updates every four weeks during Semester 1 and continued to highlight PNG-related research, blogs and events, and currently has over 1,300 subscribers.

Stream 3: Student and faculty exchanges in economics and public policy

Masters' students

- **ANU scholarship:** The scholarship program supports UPNG graduates in economics through postgraduate study of a Master of International and Development Economics (MIDEC) at ANU. Five ANU scholarship recipients have completed their studies at ANU and returned to lecture in economics at UPNG. Four are now working as lecturers; tragically, one died. Three out of four lecturers are now on permanent contracts. The sixth recipient, Kingtau Mambon is into his second year in MIDEC. The two recipients for the 2023/2024 round, David Poka and Anna Kapil, have successfully completed one year of tutoring at UPNG, and safely arrived in Canberra to commence their study at ANU in early January 2023. We have finalised the selection process for the 2024/2025 round, and the ninth recipient, Masidah Tonaim, has started tutoring at UPNG in Semester 1 2023.
- **UPNG MEPP scholarship:** The Partnership started providing this scholarship to tutors in UPNG's Public Policy Management (PPM) Division in 2020 with the aim to build up the teaching capacity in the division. Recipients study the Master of Economics and Public Policy (MEPP) at UPNG, and upon the completion of study, they continue teaching as a lecturer or tutor in the Division. The first two recipients, Kenneth Baliwasa and Moses Sakai, successfully completed the program and graduated in April 2022. They are currently teaching at SBPP. The 2022/2023 recipients, Raymond Dorum and Loretta Dilu, completed the first year successfully. We have finalised the selection process for the 2023/2024 round, and Issabelle Vilau has been selected as the recipient. Issabelle was one of the participants in the 2020 ANU Summer School and she has been tutoring at the PPM Division.

ANU Summer School

The ANU-UPNG Summer School provides an opportunity for five of the best third-year students from the Division of Economics and five of the best third-year students from Public Policy Management each year to attend an intensive program of study at ANU.

The 2023 ANU-UPNG Summer School was the first Summer School to be run since 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related travel restrictions. Between 11 January to 11 February 2023, ten of the best third-year students from the Divisions of Economics and Public Policy Management attended an intensive program of study at the ANU. A new course "Data Analysis for Economics and Public Policy" was introduced and organised on a bespoke basis for students, focusing on data manipulation, visualisation and interpretation skills using data from PNG. The special course "Institutions, Resources and Development" was run again, and students took the academic and digital literacy skills courses within the Crawford School pre-session program for postgraduate students. Beyond the classroom, students met with key stakeholders including the PNG High Commissioner to Australia; the Minister and Office of the Minister for International Development and the Pacific; the World Bank; the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and the Lowy Institute.

The detailed report is attached as Annex 1.

Preparation for the 2024 Summer School is already in progress with the selection of students completed in Semester 1.

Stream 4: Project management

Partnership management arrangements

The new Project Coordinator/Visiting Lecturer Andrew Anton Mako joined the team in September 2022, and fully assumed the responsibility on project coordination, as well as contributed to research and teaching undergraduate courses in Economics at UPNG in Semester 1 2023.

In preparation for an evaluation of the program, a 2021-2023 project report was prepared (annex 2)

Performance

Reporting against partnership objectives

The project judges its progress against several important indicators as set out in each annual plan. Performance against these using a 'traffic light' rating system is summarised below.

INDICATOR	RATING	COMMENTS
Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience		
ANU lecturers in place and teaching at UPNG (in person or virtually)		Four Group 1 ANU staff taught both undergraduate and post-graduate (MEPP) courses in person in Semester 1 & Trimester I.
Online lecturing		No courses were taught online in Semester 1 & Trimester I.
Teaching evaluations		The lecturers and tutors managed to maintain high evaluation scores. Average course score of 4.1 and lecturer score of 4.0.
ANU-UPNG annual exam in economics		The exam was conducted in July 2023 – it will be reported in Semester 2 report of the Partnership.
Induction and mentoring programs		To avoid duplication of efforts, the tutor induction workshop was not held in 2023 as UPNG organised a week-long workshop. However, ANU lecturers continue to provide teaching and mentoring support to young lecturers and tutors at SBPP, including the recent ANU graduates, through an informal monthly meeting, and at any other times when needed.
MEPP		More than 40 students enrolled in Trimester I of 2023, beating the 2021 record. The program is running well. 26 students graduated from the program

		in 2023, two receiving a postgraduate Diploma in Economics and Public Policy while the rest received Master of Economics and Public Policy. This year we had a record of the graduates since its inception, including seven female graduates.
Undergraduate programs		Overall, received positive feedback from course evaluations in Semester 1.
Collaborative Research and Outreach		
Research outputs		A book on <i>State Fragility</i> , which includes a case study on Papua New Guinea was published end of 2022, and launched in PNG at the PNG Update in August. Numerous other research products underway and databases updated.
ANU-UPNG research collaboration		Major research projects, seminar series and other smaller projects show a high level of collaboration.
Seminars/workshops/presentations at ANU/UPNG		Four ANU-UPNG seminars, and one workshop
Student and faculty exchanges in economics and public policy		
ANU scholarships		The two ANU scholarship recipients for the 2023/2024 have completed one year of tutoring at UPNG, and commenced their study at ANU in early January 2023. Another student into second year of study. The 2024/2025 ANU scholarship recipient is currently tutoring economics courses at UPNG, and will take up MIDEAC at Crawford School in early 2024.
Program management		
COVID-19 safety		COVID-19 action successfully implemented.
Adequate M&E and risk management		Timely reporting. Risk management adequate.

Challenges, risks and lessons learnt

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years, the Partnership managed to transition back to its full capacity in 2022, in terms of staff based in PNG and key project activities. Three full-time staff are now based in Port Moresby at any one time, and we have recommenced key activities that were on hold due to COVID-19, including the ANU Scholarship, PNG Update conference, and ANU Summer School.

Building on our experience in the last two years, we have also been able to incorporate online teaching into regular course deliveries, which offers the flexibility needed when teaching is disrupted by unexpected events. We plan to continue to offer the online teaching delivery as needed in Semester 2 2023, even though all courses were taught in person in Semester 1 and Trimester 1 of 2023.

Overall, the project is going well and on track to complete key deliverables. However, some risks and ongoing challenges remain:

UPNG

- MEPP students are progressing well in their study, however, ongoing close attention to the progress of individual students is needed.
- While the increased number of students enrolled in MEPP is positive, the selection process needs to be tightened to maintain the sustainability and quality of the program. Long-term solutions are yet to be implemented.
- Many reforms are needed at UPNG, and they are not happening or not happening fast enough. For example, delays in the salary payments of temporary lecturers cause high levels of stress and undermine morale of lecturers.
- Safety for women, and vulnerability to sexual harassment at UPNG, continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed by university management.

The Partnership

- With Partnership staff returning to PNG in 2023, it has been important to keep updated on the security and safety conditions in Port Moresby. We will continue to maintain good communication with the Abt Security team for support.