

CURRICULUM POLICY

Process

Informal consultation	8 July 2008	√
Initial consultation with Principals, Teaching&Learning Committee, Academic Standards Committee, Office of the Dean, Discipline Coordinators	Sent out 21 st July with responses by August 1 st 2008	√
In principle approval by ASC, Teaching&Learning Ctte and Academic Board	In principle approval from the Acad Board meeting Sept 1 st 2008	√
In principle approval from the Academic Board meeting on Sept 1 however the policy is sent for further refinement and resubmission to the Academic Board	Resubmitted to the Academic Board meeting Oct 13 th 2008	
Submission to Council	Nov 12 th 2008	
Policy reappraisal and review by Academic Board	June 2009 in preparation for 2010 offerings	

All courses and awards of the Sydney College of Divinity are developed in accordance with the SCD Strategic Plan, particularly its Vision, Mission and Values statements.

This particular policy, dealing with the implementation and ongoing development of the curriculum, sits within the ambit of the Learning and Teaching policies of the College

The definition of Curriculum within the Sydney College of Divinity

Within the College curriculum is understood as the content made available to students and their actual learning experiences guided by a lecturer or other teacher.ⁱ Curriculum includes content and process, subject matter and methods. Curriculum is more than the official list of programs, courses, or units of study.

“Curriculum should be understood not as accumulation of courses and other sorts of academic experiences but as an overall process of critical reflection and integration”.ⁱⁱ

It will help students to be able to describe and explain the cultural and corporate aspects of theology and ministry today, to be able to describe and explain the theoretical underpinnings, practices and problematics of the communities they are serving and attempting to transform.ⁱⁱⁱ

Spiritual formation is a dimension of curriculum.

Consequently, **curriculum development** refers to all aspects of the formal curriculum process including review of the current situation; development of aims and objectives; decisions on content,

structure and sequencing; detailing learning activities and teaching methodologies; developing assessment strategies, evaluation and review procedures.

Principles

The principles undergirding the curriculum are:

- Its development is informed by:
 - the most recent scholarship,
 - church and ministry needs,
 - graduate attributes,
 - the contribution of the theological disciplines to society in general,
 - student experience,
 - the provision for life long learning and reflective practice
- Progression through the awards leads to higher levels of scholarship and more independent scholarly research by students
- The curriculum allows for articulation into higher awards
- There is a recognition of and respect for the faith dimension in the study of theology and related disciplines
- There is recognition of and respect for the denominational nature of the study of theology and where applicable related disciplines
- The curriculum accommodates the requirements for adequate ministry training in the particular denominations by ensuring that the overall mission of the Sydney College of Divinity and the particular expression of mission in each Member Institution is given localised expression in the interpretation of the curriculum by each Member Institution.
- All aspects of the curriculum are adequately resourced, including appropriately qualified faculty and fair and even workloads for faculty and students
- Whilst the curriculum is designed to provide maximum flexibility, it demonstrates breadth, depth and coherence of content and process
- Diversity in the student bodies is respected and valued.

Principles Underpinning Course Units included in the Curriculum:

- All course units are available to relevant students from all Member Institutions
- Foundational units as appropriate are taught across Member Institutions
- Each course unit is taught at an equivalent academic standard across the Member Institutions
- There is no unnecessary duplication of coursework units
- Majors and sub-majors show progression through the discipline and cover questions of methodology
- There is opportunity for students to undertake research during coursework programs
- There is sufficient flexibility to take advantage of visiting lecturers, experts and the like

Individual coursework units should:

- Introduce students to the best contemporary scholarship in the field, both denominational and interdenominational where applicable

- Utilise Australian resources and research where possible
- Exemplify a particular methodology/ies while informing students of other methodologies in the field
- Build the research skills of students
- Be named in a way that directly indicates their content and place in the curriculum rather than a name which is designed primarily for marketing purposes.

Disciplines

The documentation for the 2007 Reaccreditation process outlined a set of eleven distinct Disciplines within the theology curriculum, offering a rationale for each. This list of Disciplines reads:

Biblical Studies (BB)
Christian Ethics (ET)
Christian Spirituality (SP)
Church History (HS)
Counselling (CN)
Humanities (AL)
Liturgical Studies (LS)
Missiology (MS)
Pastoral Theology and Practice (PT)
Philosophy (WH)
Theology (TH)

As the College applies the conditions and requirements for reaccreditation there is an ongoing process of re-evaluation of the grouping of these Disciplines along with some shift in the contents and rationale of Humanities as a Discipline. This reorientation will be completed as part of the review of the Curriculum Policy in 2009, providing a clearer rationale for the overall organisation of the Disciplines into groups along with the opportunity to further enunciate the principles of coherence within each Discipline.

Coursework units

The units in the curriculum fall into four categories.

Foundational units are coursework units that are required for further study in a Discipline, as appropriate to the outcomes of the award, and essential for a major or specialization. There is only a limited number of foundational units in the offerings of a Discipline, and normally these would be common where appropriate across the Member Institutions. These units are numbered as 100 level in the Diploma program, as 100 and occasionally 200 level in Bachelor programs and 400 level in postgraduate programs. In some disciplines the set of foundational units will include a methodology unit.

Advanced units are units that develop the study of the Discipline beyond the foundational level as appropriate to the outcomes of the award. These are available to be offered across the Member Institutions. In undergraduate programs they are numbered as 200 and 300 level units, or 500, 600 and 700 level units in postgraduate programs. The most advanced units, at 600 and 700 levels, involve specialized research in a Discipline. In some Disciplines a methodology unit, a requirement for a sub-major, will be at advanced level

Ministerial training units are units that are specifically required by churches and denominations for the training of ministers, yet which may not normally be found within the offerings of a particular Discipline. They are usually pertinent to particular Member Institutions only. Dependent on the nature of the coursework unit and its relationship to other units in the curriculum, ministerial training units may be at foundational and advanced level.

Generic units are advanced coursework units which offer flexibility to the student program, allow for the testing of new units, and provide a vehicle for the teaching of visiting lecturers and specialists. Units that fall under this category are the Advanced Seminars, Issues units, Research Projects, Research Essays, and Independent Guided Studies.

Roles in curriculum development

Curriculum development involves the:

- Academic Board and two of its committees: the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Standards Committee
- Member Institutions
- Academic Faculty Members within their Respective Disciplines
- Director (Coursework)
- Discipline coordinators
- Course unit coordinators

Academic Board and its two committees: the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Standards Committee

Responsibility for the structure, content and development of the curriculum belongs to the Academic Board and its sub-committees, in particular the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Academic Standards Committee, as well as the Distance Education Committee, the Professional Development Committee and Libraries Committee. These committees oversee the structure and development of the curriculum, particularly through the processes of reaccreditation.

With regard to new course units these committees ensure that any new coursework unit:

- does not duplicate current offerings
- makes an ongoing contribution to the offerings within a Discipline or meets ministry training needs
- introduces students to the best contemporary scholarship in the field, both denominational and interdenominational where applicable
- utilizes Australian resources and research where possible
- exemplifies a particular methodology/ies while informing students of other methodologies in the field
- has been appropriately benchmarked

The Member Institutions

The Member Institutions propose new coursework units to the Academic Standards Committee, including the responsibility for appropriate benchmarking through consultation. Any new units should be developed in light of the criteria that will be applied to them by the Academic Standards Committee, and in consultation with the Director (Coursework). Member Institutions have a responsibility to

induct members of the academic faculty into the nature and structure of the curriculum and train them to teach and develop it.

Academic Faculty Members within their Respective Disciplines

The members of the academic faculty teach within the Discipline/s for which they are accredited in light of their qualifications and expertise. As the teachers in the Discipline they have a collective responsibility to uphold the integrity of the curriculum, to maintain the standard of scholarship, to use and develop Australian resources, and to apply denominational and methodological approaches within the broader context of the Discipline as a whole. This responsibility is best met through regular contact and occasional meetings.

Director (Coursework)

The role of the Director (Coursework) is to maintain and enhance the quality of the College's coursework programs. In particular, the Director sits on the Academic Board and its Academic Standards Committee, and, with the assistance of Discipline and Course Unit Coordinators, is to coordinate the development and implementation of the curriculum. The Director also has oversight of the training of faculty in the teaching and development of the curriculum.

Discipline Coordinators

Discipline Coordinators are available to offer advice to the teachers in Member Institutions on the development of new coursework units and the requirements for teaching the curriculum.

Course Unit Coordinators

Course unit coordinators are responsible for ensuring that a particular unit, when taught by different Member Institutions during the one semester, is taught at an equivalent academic standard (outcomes, content, assessment, qualifications of lecturer) by each Member Institution.

Curriculum review

A full curriculum review is undertaken with a view to each reaccreditation. In addition, there are the usual processes of moderation of Disciplines and a continuing review of teaching and learning such that:

- any coursework unit not taught over a three year period is to be reviewed
- any coursework unit not taught over a five year period is to be deleted from the curriculum unless there is a compelling reason to retain it

Integration of the policy

In terms of procedures, the implementation of this policy requires:

- adjustments to the forms for the approval of new course units
 - designation of the unit as foundational, advanced or ministerial
 - evidence for the consultant that there is no duplication with other units already in the curriculum
 - evidence where required of how the units fulfils ministerial requirements
- adjustments to the information provided to students when they enroll in a course unit
 - name of the unit coordinator where applicable
 - information showing how the outcomes and content of the unit are met as it is taught in a particular Member Institution

- training of appropriate personnel in Member Institutions in the revised procedures

In terms of the five year process of reaccreditation, the ongoing implementation of this policy should result in a greatly simplified process of curriculum review for reaccreditation, and the consequent saving of hundreds of hours of time from faculty and external reviewers.

Strategies for implementation

In light of the review process to be implemented in June 2009 the following strategies for implementation are set in place

PROCESS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
1. The current offerings in each Discipline will be 'mapped'	Director (Coursework)	Completed October 2008
2. Review of the structure of Discipline Coordination	Discipline Coordinators and Academic Board	Completed October 2008
3. Faculty in each Discipline will meet to discuss the integrity of the offerings in light of the 'mapping exercise', and in light of the Curriculum Policy make recommendations for changes and improvements	Director (Coursework) and the Discipline Coordinators	Oct 2008 through to March 2009
4. The forms and procedures for the admittance of new units and suites of units will be revised	Academic Standards Committee	November 2008
5. Faculty will be introduced to the Curriculum Policy	Member Institutions	Oct 2008 – Nov 2008
6. June 2009 review of the Curriculum Policy including a review of the Disciplines and the underlying rationale of each	Director (Coursework)	June 2009

Supporting Materials

The Vision, Mission and Values of the Sydney College of Divinity (taken from the Strategic Plan 2008-2012)

Our vision:

A leading Christian theological provider, offering high quality, accredited awards to equip people for effective professional and lay ministry in a rapidly changing environment.

Our Mission:

The Sydney College of Divinity will

- *provide high quality, accredited education in theology and related disciplines from undergraduate to postgraduate levels*
- *encourage theological scholarship and train future theological scholars*
- *prepare leaders and ministers, both ordained and non-ordained, who are well-qualified to build the Church*
- *contribute to the public discussion of issues of faith*
- *encourage a theologically literate membership of the Church.*

Our Values

Given that the Christian Gospel shapes who we are and what we do, the following values characterize the way we operate:

- Mutual respect and support for the mission and ethos of fellow Member Institutions.
- Excellence in quality of teaching and research.
- Lifelong learning and reflective practice.
- Affirming unity in diversity.
- Collegiality and co-operation among faculty.
- Celebration of life in the Spirit and faith in Christ.

REFERENCES

Pazmino, Robert. *Foundational Issues in Christian Education (second edition)*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997

Senior, D and Weber, T. : What is the Character of Curriculum, Formation, and Cultivation of Ministerial Leadership in the Good Theological School?" The Good Theological School. Special Issue of *Theological Education*, Vol XXX, No 2, 1994

ⁱ Pazmino, Robert. *Foundational Issues in Christian Education (second edition)*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997, p. 223-224

ⁱⁱ Slightly adapted from D. Senior and T. Weber, "What is the Character of Curriculum, Formation, and Cultivation of Ministerial Leadership in the Good Theological School?" The Good Theological School. Special Issue of *Theological Education*, Vol XXX, No 2, 1994, p. 22

ⁱⁱⁱ *Idem*.