



**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**SUB-FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY**

**PROPOSAL FOR A MAJOR IN CATHOLIC STUDIES**

May 25 2005

## **CONSULTATION AND LIAISON REGARDING PROPOSAL**

In light of the proposed revisions to the Bachelor of Education (Primary), extensive discussions were held between the Dean of the Faculty of Education and the Acting Dean and staff in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The focus of these discussions was the number of theology units that primary education students would undertake in the revised program. The following proposal was developed with the support of both Faculties.

### **PROPOSAL**

THAT students entering the revised Bachelor of Education (Primary) be offered two alternative pathways for the study of theology, one of which allows them to complete up to eight units in Catholic Studies, the other to complete three units in Scriptures, Theology and Church Life.

Students who choose the Catholic Studies strand may complete four or more units. A minor in Catholic Studies requires four units; a major in Catholic Studies comprises eight units.

### **RATIONALE**

The rationale for this proposal is that, in the past, primary education students with differing levels of learning and understandings in theology have studied in the same class with students enrolled in the Bachelor of Theology and its dual degrees. This proposal will identify those primary education students who have the potential and interest to undertake more specialist and extended studies in theology while still completing their vocational degree program.

On January 4 2003, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that in 2002, 10,834 students in NSW studied Studies of Religion (1 or 2 units) for the HSC, of whom 859 achieved the highest level of achievement (Band 6 status). The report noted that most Studies of Religion students attend Catholic schools.

In 2004, the number of NSW students who undertook Studies of Religion increased by 11% to 11,488.

Also in 2004, in Victoria, 2,396 students studied Religion and Society in year 12, while in Queensland 4,254 students studied a new subject piloted for year 12 called Religion and Ethics.

QTAC statistics for these latter year 12 students who received an offer to study in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) program at McAuley at Banyo campus in 2005 were analysed. The data indicated that there were 34 such students, of whom 12 (35%) had completed Studies of Religion.

It is proposed that primary education students such as these be offered the pathway option of completing a major/minor in Catholic Studies from 2006. Catholic Studies students will be prepared to take leading roles in contributing to the mission of the Church in Catholic primary schools.

It is also recognised that many students seek to undertake primary teacher education at ACU National in order to develop their understanding of, and their knowledge and skills base, in Catholic theology. Such students want to ensure that their vocational preparation also prepares them for postgraduate study in theology. A minor in Catholic Studies is the minimum needed to achieve this goal. For such students the choice of a major/minor in Catholic studies is an ideal grounding for their future professional and on-going study needs.

The Catholic Studies strand for primary education students must receive wide promotion to students and schools and dioceses. Consultation has commenced with CEOs and dioceses to seek sponsorship for such students by offering targeted scholarships to those who demonstrate excellence in their attributes and achievements.

The offering of a major in Catholic Studies will strengthen ACU's primary education program in a very significant and strategic way.

Similarly, classes designed specifically to meet the needs of students lacking such background will better meet their educational needs. Students in this category who demonstrate high achievement may also apply to enter the Catholic Studies major/minor strand and be given credit for the units already completed.

## **1. Goal of Proposal**

The goal of this proposal is that, by the application of theologically informed discipline studies in Catholic Studies, all students are supported in their preparation to teach in Catholic schools in ways that are relevant, meaningful and challenging.

An important element of this proposal is that the student learning outcomes and sense of self-growth are evaluated on an ongoing basis and that the curriculum is reviewed, as necessary.

In order to achieve these goals two strands of study are proposed:

- Catholic Studies Major/Minor Strand;
- Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand.

## **2. Catholic Studies Major/Minor Strand**

A major/minor in Catholic Studies will be offered to prospective primary education students on all campuses who have achieved solid results in year 12 "Studies in Religion" or the equivalent, and who seek to undertake in-depth studies in theology.

### **Catholic Studies Minor**

A minor in Catholic Studies will provide a recognised sequence of units that serves as the minimum basis for postgraduate study in theology and meets the minimum expectations of the National Catholic Education Commission as the basis for teaching Religious Education. The minor comprises four units as follows:

Two introductory level units:

THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

Plus two advanced level units:

THEO237 Foundations of Christian Ethics  
THEO250 Christian Symbol, Ritual and Sacrament

### **Catholic Studies Major**

The major would comprise eight units as follows:

Four introductory level units:

THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning  
EDRE101 Religious Education I  
EDRE102 Religious Education II

Plus two advanced level units:

THEO237 Foundations of Christian Ethics  
THEO250 Christian Symbol, Ritual and Sacrament

Plus two advanced level electives selected from:

THEO205 Jesus the Christ  
THEO242 Prayer and Spirituality in the Christian Tradition  
THEO246 Humanity, Hope and Salvation  
THEO262 World Religions  
THEO215 The Synoptic Tradition  
PHIL208 Faith and Reason

With the exception of the new units EDRE101 Religious Education I and EDRE102 Religious Education II provided by the Faculty of Education, the units listed above are all existing approved units in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and their brief unit descriptions are listed in Section 6 below.

### **3. Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand**

Students who have no background in Studies of Religion would be required to complete three units drawn from the Graduate Certificate in Catholic Studies. These units were designed specifically to prepare Victorian teachers without such a background to teach in Catholic schools. For primary education students there will be three units, each taught as three-hour units to allow for the necessary discussion and interaction.

THEO162/562 Introducing the Scriptures  
THEO163/563 Introducing Theology  
THEO164/564 Introducing Church Life

The three theology units listed above are all existing approved units in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and their brief unit descriptions are listed in Section 6 below.

In addition these students would also complete the two units EDRE101 Religious Education I and EDRE102 Religious Education II.

### **4. Transfers between Catholic Studies Major and Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand**

Students may transfer from the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand to the Catholic Studies strand after completing either one or two units in the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand. Students wishing to transfer must have achieved a credit grade in the unit(s) that they have completed in the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand. The unit(s) will then be credited towards the Catholic Studies strand.

Students may transfer from the Catholic Studies strand to the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand after completing up to two units in the Catholic Studies strand and will be given credit for the units completed in the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand.

## **5. Other Considerations**

It is intended that the revised Bachelor of Education (Primary) will be offered to commencing students only from 2006. Course enrolment guides and timetabling on all campuses must allow primary education students the option of undertaking either the initial units in the Catholic Studies strand or the units in the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand in the first instance. All campuses must offer all the non-elective theology units listed in the Catholic Studies strand as well as some elective units to primary students wishing to complete the Catholic Studies strand

Additional resources will be required to provide the three units in the Scriptures, Theology and Church Life strand solely to primary education students. However there are cost efficiencies in that the primary education students undertaking the Catholic Studies major will study in classes together with Bachelor of Arts students undertaking a major or minor in theological studies and students studying in the Bachelor of Theology and its dual degrees.

The teaching of the units listed for both strands will be conducted by existing academic staff and sessional staff as required and administrative needs within the relevant Schools will be met by existing staff. There are no additional library or infrastructure requirements arising from the proposal.

## **6. Brief Descriptions for Faculty of Arts and Sciences Units**

### **Catholic Studies Major Strand**

#### **THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible**

##### **Prerequisites** Nil

An introduction to the background, history, culture and narrative literature of Ancient Israel and first century Christianity. The unit will involve a study of selected biblical texts, such as Genesis, Exodus and the Gospel of Mark, and extra-biblical texts.

#### **THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning**

##### **Prerequisites** Nil

In this unit, students will explore questions connected to the search for ultimate meaning, value and human identity in the context of the major religious and philosophical questions affecting the contemporary post-modern world. By developing a critical self-awareness in approaching religious and secular worldviews, students will be enabled to examine a number of core elements of Christian faith and Catholic tradition employing the critical methods and resources of theology.

#### **THEO237 Foundations of Christian Ethics**

##### **Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit introduces students to the major questions, concepts and areas of debate in the field of Christian ethics in the Catholic tradition. It also explores methodological issues in theological ethics focusing on the Catholic tradition.

#### **THEO250 Christian Symbol, Ritual and Sacrament**

##### **Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit treats the fundamental sacramentality of the world, particularly as it is expressed in Church; its relation to the mystery of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It explores a contemporary sacramental theology, and the way in which sacramental-liturgical celebrations express, celebrate and nourish the Christian life and mission for the reign of God.

### **THEO205 Jesus the Christ**

**Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit examines the person and mission of Jesus Christ and the theological significance of his death and resurrection. It studies the biblical, patristic and historical developments that have contributed to the formulation of Christological doctrines and to the formation of Christology itself. It goes on to examine and compare classical and contemporary expressions of Christology and the spiritualities they inspire.

### **THEO242 Prayer and Spirituality in the Christian Tradition**

**Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit introduces students to the tradition of Christian spirituality through the study of selected traditions, models, texts, charisms and ways of prayer. It considers how spiritual concerns and theological themes influence the types of prayers as they occur in early Christian, medieval and contemporary spiritual traditions.

### **THEO246 Humanity, Hope and Salvation**

**Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit explores the mystery of human existence, especially in the light of Christian faith and hope. It invites theological reflection on the different ways of understanding the human, and their influence on such themes as sin, salvation, death, resurrection and universal fulfilment. In this context the social and political forms of Christian hope and its liberating mission will be explored.

### **THEO262 World Religions**

**Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit aims to introduce students to the major religions of the world. Through a phenomenological approach to the study of the foundations of religious belief and practice students will explore the nature and function of religion in different cultural contexts. There is also a focus on the leading teachers, reformers and stages of development in a number of religious traditions. Aboriginal spirituality will also be considered in view of its importance in the Australian context.

### **THEO215 The Synoptic Tradition**

**Prerequisites** THEO113 The World and Literature of the Bible  
THEO128 God, Faith and the Search for Meaning

This unit is an introduction to the Synoptic Gospels. It focuses on the tradition of Jesus in the first three gospels through an exegetical study of selected Synoptic texts. Emphasis will be given to Matthew and Luke in examining the evangelists' portrayals of Jesus in relation to their historical and cultural background.

### **PHIL208 Faith and Reason**

**Prerequisites** One introductory level unit in Philosophy or Theology

This unit is concerned with the philosophical examination of religious belief and practice, and includes topics such as: the concept of faith; norms of rationality; the interpretation of religious experience and the criteria for authenticity; the nature of religious knowledge; religious experience as a source of religious knowledge; the coherence of some basic Judaeo-Christian concepts: spirit, freedom, immortality, God; the grounds for belief in God: selected historical and contemporary approaches; the grounds for atheism, especially the problem of suffering and evil and the diversity of religious beliefs; rationality, truth and faith.

## **Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand**

### **THEO162/562 Introducing the Scriptures**

#### **Prerequisites Nil**

This unit engages students in an introductory exploration of the Bible within its historical and cultural contexts. It introduces students to the principles and processes of Catholic biblical interpretation and provides a foundation for understanding the Scriptures in the life of the Church.

### **THEO 163/563 Introducing Theology**

#### **Prerequisites Nil**

In this unit students will be invited to reflect on the human search for meaning and purpose. Within that context they will examine some of the major beliefs of the Christian faith, particularly as those beliefs have been articulated in Catholic tradition.

### **THEO 164/564 Introducing Church Life**

#### **Prerequisites Nil**

This unit introduces students to the Christian life in its church context. It will consider the moral and sacramental life as essential personal and communal expressions of ecclesial identity, developing an integrated understanding of the Church as a community of discipleship, worship and mission.

## **7. Approved Unit Outlines for Faculty of Arts and Sciences Units**

### **Catholic Studies Major Strand (Attached)**

#### **Scriptures, Theology and Church Life Strand (Attached)**