

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
Distance Delivery Processes

Criteria for Distance Mode Delivery

For several years the ACT has permitted colleges to allow an individual student—who for one reason or another is unable to attend an ACT member college—to complete up to the last four semester units of his or her degree externally. Under these circumstances the college would maintain close links with the student, set and mark assignments, facilitate the borrowing of library books, and provide lecture notes as well as advice and feedback. This arrangement has been only infrequently used, but remains a means by which individual students might *complete* a course of study having completed the bulk of it in attendance mode. In such cases the set of criteria below do not apply.

A member college, or colleges acting together, wishing to be permitted to offer some units of the BTh (up to 33%) or some or all of the Associate Degree in Theology, Bachelor of Ministries, Bachelor of Christian Studies and the Graduate Diplomas in distance mode will firstly seek approval from the Board of Delegates as a Distance Education Provider. Once approval has been given, units to be offered must be approved by the Flexible Education Committee, comprising the Dean (Chair), Lyn Scott (Morling), Bruce Dipple (SMBC), Tony McCarthy (OTEN) and Geoff Treloar (University of New South Wales).

The Australian College of Theology is prepared to secure a ACT-wide licence to use existing materials from another educational provider deemed to support substantially the outcomes of any ACT unit, provided that any licence fees and ACT costs will be met by the requesting institution.

All approved units will be moderated in the same way as units offered in attendance mode.

There should be a common “look” about all units approved by the Committee. This is to be achieved chiefly by means of the format of the Study Guide.

Institutional Approval

An institution(s) seeking approval as a distance education provider must—

- Indicate the scope of the units and the extent of the ACT award proposed to be delivered in distance mode (e.g., foundational level units only).
- Include in the application the recorded decision of the institution or co-operating institutions; the proposed delivery method for each unit (including the use of intensives); the staff member(s) to be involved in the preparation of the program; the names and qualifications of any mentors or tutors supporting the program; the distance mode coordinator for the institution or co-operating institutions; the likely number of students to access the delivery; and the period for which approval is sought (no more than five [5] years).
- Supply a certified copy of the institution’s membership of Copyright Agency Limited as part of meeting requirements of The Copyright Act 1968 with respect to statutory licence provisions for educational copying.
- Warrant that for all third party materials quoted in learning materials to be supplied to students enrolled through the institution or supplied under licence to students of other institutions approved by the College there is a licence for reproduction; or details have been recorded consistent with the requirements of the statutory licence for educational copying.
- Warrant that all persons involved in the writing, compilation and editing of distance mode materials have signed an appropriate undertaking to observe all copyright and intellectual

property obligations, noting that there are different copyright obligations and restrictions for different media that might be used.

- Provide details of the preparation of lecturers for the demands of delivering in distance mode through satisfactory completion, for instance, of the Open Learning Education Network course “Basic Methods of External Teaching”.
- Agree to admit, on request from the Principal of another approved affiliated college, a student who, through relocation or some other significant circumstance, may wish to complete a unit to conclude the program. Tuition fees to be paid by the student will at least be those of the distance mode provider.
- Provide details of the existence of copies of significant references required for the unit, supplementary to any textbooks required to be purchased by students, to enable students studying in distance mode to borrow one or more by mail. Part of this requirement will be deemed to have been met if, in addition to multiple copies available for students, arrangements are made with other libraries with postal borrowing facilities for enrolled students. Enrolled students will meet all such postal costs.
- Assure the Delegates that students studying in distance mode will be provided with a copy of written procedures for postal borrowing and indicate to any accreditation team how library provisions have been established and maintained to support distance mode students: staffing; procedures; any special student reserve; extra materials purchased exclusively or primarily for distance mode students and so on.
- Agree to maintain a current copy of all materials prepared for distance delivery to be made available for inspection by ACT approval teams.
- Agree to charge students studying in distance mode at least the same tuition fees for units as internal students.

Approval of units

1. Once the Board of Delegates is satisfied that a college has met the conditions for institutional approval as a distance education deliverer, the Board expects the ACT Flexible Education Committee to exercise its responsibility to ensure that each unit proposed to be offered in distance mode, whether at diploma or degree level, accords with the following criteria before final endorsement to deliver is granted:
2. Once [institutional] approval from the Delegates has been given, the college should apply to the Flexible Education Committee for approval of specific unit materials. Units should be complete at the time of submission. The Committee strongly recommends that submissions be made 12 months before scheduled delivery, and must be approved no later than three months before delivery.
3. The decisions of the Committee will be reported to the Coursework Awards Board and the Board of Delegates. The application should contain—
 - A statement showing how the materials that have been prepared support the overall intention of the award; how the intentions, outcomes, objectives or competencies proposed for the unit might be realised; how the learning materials conform to the assessment specifications for the unit; and how the materials overall might assist the learning of the off-campus students. A unit outline for internal students and audiotapes of class lectures, for example, should not be considered as intentionally designed distance mode materials. The institution (or institutions) is to provide details concerning regular

interaction between students and their peers and teacher(s) and the intensive (for guidelines, see p. 35 of the 2007 Undergraduate Handbook or the policy section on the ACT website) in which students will take part unless an intensive is deemed unnecessary.

- The unit materials:

The Flexible Education Committee is particularly concerned that

- i. the layout of the materials and the language used promote the stated educational outcomes,
- ii. the cycle of assessments are appropriate to the mode of delivery, and to the level and the award,
- iii. the content adequately covers the stated ACT syllabus, and
- iv. the technology proposed to be used in the delivery actually works.

- A Study Guide which should:

- i. introduce the module and its place in the ACT course,
- ii. introduce the unit preparer,
- iii. introduce the lecturer and provide contact details,
- iv. introduce the ethos of the delivering institution,
- v. detail the workload expectations,
- vi. stipulate the assessment events and their due dates,
- vii. detail the ACT learning outcomes and aim of the module,
- viii. explain the marking scale and the expectations for each letter grade,
- ix. explain the moderation process of the ACT,
- x. provide the text of the ACT's academic misconduct policy,
- xi. provide the text of the ACT's academic appeals policy,
- xii. list the topics to be covered in the module outline,
- xiii. include the supporting commentary and advisory notes for each topic, with questions and issues to be considered,
- xiv. provide a bibliography and references to the reading required for the topic.

Should on-line tutorials be provided, the Study Guide should provide all the necessary information for accessing these.

Readers should comprise chapters from books, dictionary articles, and journal articles designed to lead the student deeper in each topic, and provide reading to help with the essay assessments.

Handbooks developed for distance education students should contain the following policies required under the Higher Education Support Act (2003) and by the Department of Education, Science and Training for Higher Education Provider status:

- Academic Grievance
- Non-academic Grievance
- Re-crediting FEE-HELP Balance
- Cross-institutional Enrolment

4. Each CD, hard copy or on-line presentation of the unit materials should carry the following information:

- (i) (if a CD) On the case of the disk—

“This unit is offered as part of an accredited award of the Australian College of Theology”

- (ii) In the introductory content of each unit—

(The following wording is taken from the website www.goingtouni.com.au)

“The Australian College of Theology (ACT) is a national provider of state accredited higher education courses in theology. The College was established under the auspices of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia in 1891. It is now an ecumenical consortium of some 2,000 students enrolled in 20 Bible and theological colleges approved to teach the awards of the College. These awards range from two-year diplomas, three-year undergraduate and coursework masters degrees to masters and doctoral research degrees.

The ACT has a centrally devised and managed curriculum and quality assurance process that is applied across the whole network of affiliated colleges. The day-to-day educational system is managed by the Dean from the ACT office in Sydney. Three academic boards share this responsibility. The Boards oversee policy, regulation, unit review and course structure for research, coursework and diploma awards.

The Boards are mostly comprised of principals or senior faculty members of affiliated colleges. A number of senior university academics also sit on the Research and Coursework Awards Boards to help ensure that ACT practice (especially in the outcome of the consideration of research examiner’s reports and general academic policy) remains in line with best practice in the university sector.

The College is governed by a Council. Its members are drawn from the General Synod, affiliated colleges, graduates and members of the public”.

Mark Harding
Dean
24 January 2007

policies/distance education