

**AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY**  
**ACN: 127 429 083**

**Library Policy**

After consideration by the former Board of Delegates, which exercised responsibility for the ACT's academic governance, the library criteria of the Institutional Approval Criteria were amended slightly at the end of 2007. These revisions were incorporated into the 2008 Annual Report proforma. They allowed affiliated colleges to satisfy the library criteria in either of two ways: by providing the resource on their own or through arrangements with other providers. Further changes were endorsed by the Board of Directors in 2009. Since then the policy has been considered by the Academic Board and they have endorsed in principle a move to performance criteria supplemented by guidance on expected expenditures (AB meeting Nov 2009)

The proposed policy now includes performance assessment and revised annual reporting criteria. The library policy is in two parts. The first refers to the requirements for colleges seeking affiliation; the second refers to colleges granted affiliation and covers performance criteria and annual reporting of performance and expenditure.

**Colleges seeking affiliation or to expand their approved schedule of awards**

A college seeking approval to deliver awards of the ACT must demonstrate to the Board of Directors that for those awards:

- appropriately qualified academic staff are available to deliver the course content for the period of approval,
- library resources, including information systems, computer terminals and internet access and other services, student support and administration resources are such that the educational outcomes specified for each ACT award will be met,
- the finances of the college are secure for the period of approval sought.

**Library**

Taking account of the award(s) to be delivered, the Academic Board must be satisfied with the following aspects of the library resources of the college that are made readily accessible to students:

1. The location of the resources and the means of access. Colleges may choose to provide resources through their own on-campus facility or by a combination of an on-campus library with an off-campus library with which the college has a long-term arrangement entered into by formal agreement with that library or its owners.
2. The quality and size of the holdings to which it has direct or contractual access
3. The scope of its holdings. The college's library resources would be expected to cover in a balanced way the core areas of study: bible and languages, Christian thought, and ministry and practice. Within these categories social sciences material should be included, particularly where a college emphasises research in ministry and practice. Both classical and contemporary works should be represented in all categories.
4. Colleges approved to deliver degrees with research components (including the DMin) should hold advanced material on research methods in theology and related fields as applicable.
5. The associated information systems, computer terminals, internet access and other services supporting the provision of resources.

6. The capacity to deliver library resources in flexible modes of learning, ie by a combination of traditional and distance methods or by distance alone.
7. Its current and proposed budget for delivering library services (see later for more detail about costs that might be included).
8. The staff that carry responsibility for providing services and guiding students in the recourse to library materials, including their experience and qualifications.
9. Its policies for acquisition, review and operational management.
10. Any special features of their facilities that deliver significant benefits, eg special collections

### **Information for colleges seeking to deliver their library services in association with another library external to the college**

Colleges may choose the means by which they provide access to resources. They can hold resources at the college or enter into arrangements with other institutions to provide the resources or a combination of both. If the main means is an arrangement with another institution such as another theological college or a university, that institution must be nearby. Where an arrangement is entered into with another institution, it must be secured by an agreement that covers the period of approval to deliver ACT courses, though it need not be limited to that period. Such arrangements may involve the payment of a fee to that other organisation.

These arrangements may be a transitional provision which is available to colleges while they establish their own more adequate resources. The arrangements might also be used by colleges seeking to upgrade their approved schedule of awards from, say, undergraduate degree to research awards.

Whichever method of access colleges choose to offer, colleges must provide a designated resources area on campus with electronic access to holdings of its partner organisation, and to a range of material all of which can be accessed electronically at broadband speed. In addition, that facility should provide core and basic reference material as well as copies of theses examined externally including Bachelor honours theses. The person/s responsible for managing that access must be able to guide and advise students about access to library resources and also literature across the humanities and social sciences. The ACT expects a significant contribution to acquisitions and subscriptions.

### **Annual review of library facilities and resources after approval to deliver awards is granted**

Once a college is approved to deliver awards, the performance of the library will be assessed in two ways: first by colleges undertaking checks against performance criteria, including unit evaluations, and second by analysis of student survey data, in the first instance from ITL and CEQ data. The former will be conducted by colleges and reported in the annual reports in the manner outlined in a following section. The latter will be conducted by the ACT. The analysis of student data and annual report data will be reviewed by the AQC and reported to the Academic Board.

The rationale for the performance review will be that colleges carry the primary responsibility for satisfying the learning requirements of students as well as the scholarly and teaching activities of staff. The reporting should be straightforward and cost-effective, but sufficient to expose problems that might warrant college management as well as the ACT concern or action (which includes help).

Colleges are also encouraged to share their experience with assessing performance and more generally the provision of learning and teaching resources. To assist that process, librarians will be represented on the Academic Board and a two-yearly conference for librarians convened and financed by the ACT.

The annual report will also require a measure of expenditure on the provision of library resources to be given. When calculated to include personnel and infrastructure costs as well as acquisitions, subscriptions (whatever format), and arrangements with external libraries, but excluding capital costs of buildings, the cost could be substantial. These costs would incorporate some IT expenditure. Appendix 1 provides a schedule of costs that can be included in the calculation. The question to be asked in the annual report would be:

- How much per EFTSL is spent on costs of provision of library resources including materials, subscriptions, staff and equipment, but excluding buildings. Calculate the value to the nearest \$100 per EFTSL.

### **Performance indicators**

Logical indicators of performance include:

1. Can a student gain prompt access to material specified in unit outlines as both required and recommended reading? In doing so are they offered a reasonable choice of material?
2. Can the student gain prompt access to sufficient material for any research task or assignment set for them and with that material have the possibility of obtaining a distinction? This applies to all languages of instruction.
3. Can any member of staff gain access to sufficient material to enable them to remain at the frontiers of knowledge in the fields in which they teach.
4. Is there access to sufficient material to support the research specialities adopted by the college?

These criteria could be assessed quite easily in a number of ways, some of which are outlined in Appendix 1, eg checking availability of a set of references on a rolling program of units, periodic small sample surveys of students. For the first two years of operation of this policy, affiliated colleges could be left to establish their own ways of measuring their performance and their experience could be shared and reviewed by the Academic Quality Committee. Cost effective means arising from experience could then be proposed for adoption.

The ITL data (2 foundational degree units evaluated each semester across all delivering colleges) and CEQ data (student survey data) would offer external measures that would be reviewed annually by the Academic Quality Committee. Occasionally the AQC could request the Dean to do a spot audit of colleges if concern about library performance became evident.

In line with this proposal the annual report to the ACT would include the questions along the following lines, eg

1. Has the performance met the criteria specified by the indicators that apply to your college (diploma colleges may not be developing research specialisations)? If not, what areas require attention (nominate indicator and comment briefly)? This question is designed to be constructive rather than punitive.
2. What have been the most satisfying improvement made in the past year? In other words, report on what you have done well?

3. What heads the list for development of resources in the forthcoming year/s? In other words flag problems and it may be possible for the ACT centrally to offer help.
4. Outline progress relating to the specialisation/s the college is developing and indicate whether significant interest from people outside the institution occurs, eg from other ACT colleges or beyond.
5. Estimate the equivalent full-time staff required to meet these criteria
6. Estimate the total cost of provision per student to the nearest \$100 per EFTSL

Answers to these questions should include relevant problems and improvements affecting the partner library where contractually arranged and distinguish between the off-campus facility and the on campus facility.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Suggestions for undertaking performance assessment by colleges**

The following text suggests ways to measure performance against criteria. The material should be accessible in or through the on campus library. This allows performance to be satisfied via arrangements with other libraries entered into by the college under a formal agreement.

#### **For indicators 1 - prompt access to material set by unit outline**

Unit evaluations, and the ITL survey, could include similar questions to the CEQ.

Alternatively, or in addition, a person could be asked to spot check a selection of a few units during each semester and ascertain availability. The selected units could be determined on a rolling sequence. We don't need to be exhaustive in the surveys. The work could be done by a casual employee or be a voluntary task by one or more students.

The initial results will force a decision about what might be considered prompt access, and this could be established by discussion at the AQC on the basis of the views of staff.

The implication of the rider to this indicator is that a single item being available would not be a satisfactory measure.

#### **For indicator 2 – access to sufficient material to undertake assignments**

This could be done by taking a selection of assignments over the year and checking availability of materials two weeks and one week before the assignment is due. There is an implicit onus on the student to not leave their work till the last minute.

#### **For indicator 3 – staff access to up-to-date material**

Staff could be asked to nominate two of their units, a core or foundation unit and a specialisation that attracts above average enrolment and for them to report on availability briefly. They could nominate journals, databases, authors and indicate whether they could gain access to the material in sufficient time to revise their unit for the year. And they should limit their report to one page.

#### **For indicator 4 – material to support research specialisation**

An exercise in judgement would occur here. Colleges would need to identify the areas where they would most like to specialise and prepare a brief report, (2 pages or less) that offered their assessment.

Supplementary assessment could be undertaken by staff including library staff asking students and staff additional questions, eg about the level of helpfulness provided by staff in guiding them to gain access, access to computer terminals or wireless access from personal laptops within the college environs etc. The assumption is that a certain amount of monitoring by both teaching and library staff already occurs..

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Schedule of costs that may be included in the calculation of provision of library services**

The intention here is to identify the program cost of providing the library resources to student, staff and others where appropriate, eg casual users. Some charts of accounts are not set up to do this and work on a classification of like items of expenditure, eg salaries, travel, legals etc. But efficient allocation of funds toward the delivery of resources is helped by knowing absolute and relative costs of delivery. It may take some time to obtain reasonably accurate measures of total

cost and a margin for error is provided by seeking a cost to the nearest \$100 per EFTSL. Some costs will need to be approximated and/or imputed.

Possible categories are:

Capital expenditure

- Acquisitions
- Subscriptions that provide for holding of material subscribed for the long term could be included here; temporary holding should be allocated to operating cost
- Data bases

Operating costs

- Payments to external provider of library services (MOU)
- Subscriptions, eg electronic nei
- Document delivery
- Inter-library loans
- Imputed rent for building space
- Imputed rent for infrastructure such as computing services
- Maintenance
- Consumables

Personnel

- Library staff, adjusted for proportion of time spent teaching or other duties
- Pro-rata contribution by IT personnel
- These may be expressed as full-time-equivalent staff and cost calculated on a typical staff cost.

Board of Directors

7 June 2010