

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
Professional Development Policy

1. Overview

The standing of the Australian College of Theology is in large part derived from the excellence and leadership of the academic and general staff of affiliated colleges and of the ACT office.

In accordance with the College's Institutional and Course Approval Criteria, initial and continuing approval to offer ACT awards is dependent on affiliated colleges undertaking and maintaining a robust, accountable program of professional development of its staff that goes, for example, beyond mere attendance at ACT board or committee meetings.

Professional development of staff builds organisational capability and supports the achievement of the affiliated college's and the ACT's primary goals in education and research. The purpose of this Policy is to guide the professional development practices of staff employed by affiliated colleges and by the ACT office in accordance with ACT and affiliated college strategic planning.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all lecturing and administrative staff in affiliated colleges and the staff of the ACT office on continuing and fixed term contracts of greater than 12 months. However, funding should not be regarded as an automatic entitlement.

3. Principles

Each affiliated college will identify the key areas and focus of development to meet its strategic goals in learning, scholarship and research. Staff development will primarily assist academic and general staff to meet the professional, legislative and occupational responsibilities of their employment. Each affiliated college will maintain a process that:

- provides staff members with fair, balanced and constructive evaluation of progress in their roles, and
- facilitates appropriate development opportunity.

Development is also intended to facilitate career development where it supports the affiliated college's goals, to build change capability, and to develop leadership potential.

The Professional Development process will:

- align professional development with the mission, objectives, values and goals of the affiliated college and the ACT;
- take note of the need for academic staff to be engaged in scholarship (as defined by the 2006 National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes), and if employed by a college approved to teach the undergraduate and research degrees of the ACT, to be active in research (as defined by the National Protocols) as well;
- provide feedback on progress during the current five-year ACT approval period (i.e. 2001–2006; 2007–2011);
- identify individual and institutional goals;
- identify the development needs of staff to meet their current and future roles;
- determine indicators to assist evaluation of progress during future staff reviews,
- identify any support requirements;
- promote increased role satisfaction and effectiveness.

4. Access to Development

Opportunities for occupational, professional and scholarly development identified by the affiliated college are accessible to eligible staff.

Professional development activities undertaken by staff in affiliated colleges will be reported to the ACT office by means of the annual report.

Professional development activities undertaken by the staff of the ACT office will be reported in the annual report to the College Council.

5. Funding, Resourcing, and Support

The affiliated college will fund, resource and proactively support professional development in addition to paid study leave. An annual budgetary allocation amounting to at least 2% of total contracted full-time and part-time gross salary expenditure must be set aside for professional development.

The college will promote values that contribute to staff participation in their performance improvement and influence their own development. Staff achievement is to be celebrated and will be held in high regard.

In addition to funding that might be available through affiliated colleges, the ACT's Board of Delegates may award staff development grants to affiliated colleges and individual full-time academic staff in accord with the ACT Grant Policy.

There are two classes of grants under this heading, namely study leave and programs that directly assist the professional development of staff such as courses and seminars designed to foster academic development. Academic development includes teaching and research capability rather than the research itself.

Study leave support

This grant could be designed for people with limited exposure to overseas contexts and whose circumstances might make it difficult to meet the expenses. It would favour staff in early stages of their careers, mostly for their first period of leave. The grant could also meet the cost of later leave periods.

Criteria for award would be based on the professional development benefits of the study leave, rather than necessarily a research project. Colleges could ask for this support to enable them to encourage key staff to take a period of study leave, but there is also merit in the individual learning how to make application.

Professional development

This award would be offered to colleges or individuals to improve their professional capabilities. Grants may be used to conduct ACT seminars to foster pedagogical excellence and the enhancement of teaching competency. Affiliated college applicants must have met the criteria for approval to teach ACT awards for the past three years. It is expected that the seminars would be facilitated by a local tertiary education expert.

In its application the host college should detail the scope and cost of the seminar as well as the qualifications of the facilitator.

Up to \$1,000 would be available for each full day seminar, the cost to cover the input of the facilitator as well as lunch and refreshments.

Successful participation by ACT faculty might contribute towards a college's application or re-application to teach the awards of the ACT. Initial and continuing approval for a college to offer

research degrees, for example, would be contingent upon faculty attending a seminar on the supervision of research candidates.

Seminars could focus on pedagogical and educational issues such as the following—

- assessment methods, setting examination papers, examining research
- the passionate teacher
- students as learners—reluctant, beginning, and adult learners
- learning in relation to ministry preparation
- student evaluations
- matching learning and teaching styles
- teaching in flexible (including distance) mode
- teaching in the light of the ACT's educational philosophy and outcomes statements
- induction of new faculty research supervisors, faculty reviews and career pathways
- use of IT and educational technology in the classroom,
- supervision of research candidates
- field work supervision, and
- negotiating ethics protocols for DMin students

Visiting fellowships

Visiting scholars are an important source of stimulation and often under-used. The incidence of visitors can be a measure of the vibrancy of scholarship in an organisation. Grants can be made colleges to encourage and support visitors. Such visitors should be people of standing and able to make an appropriate contribution to the academic development of the college.

The case could be strengthened where visitors contribute significantly to more than one college.

Colleges would need to demonstrate that the visitor was making direct and substantial contribution to the college by way of teaching, joint research, research supervision, professional development of staff. The grant would not be available to someone simply using the college as a base to conduct research in or visit Australia.

In the absence of a proposal, the Board of Delegates may choose to use the same funds to appoint a visiting fellow to contribute to the affiliated college.

Mark Harding
Dean and CEO
24 November 2006

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