

# *The Melbourne College of Divinity*

**The AUQA Audit – one year later**

*A Reflection by the Dean*



## Introduction

This Reflection contains the substance of material I used in an address at the *Engaging Leadership Conference* in Brisbane on the 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September, attended by 48 Principals of Theological Institutions and Consortia from Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools. A number of attendees requested that I assemble my notes in a paper and forward it to them. In considering this request, I realized that this was a timely opportunity to reflect on the experience of the Audit by the *Australian University Quality Agency* (AUQA), the preparation for it, and some of its consequence within the MCD. Apart from the practical details implicit in the Audit, what I write is a personal reflection on the experience, which may be of some use to institutions preparing to undergo an audit by AUQA.

### A) Background to the Audit

Some months after I took over as Dean of the MCD in early 2001, I contacted my immediate predecessor, Dr Harold Pidwell, and asked him how his retirement was working out, and if he was missing anything about his former position. Harold replied: “It has taken me all this time **not** to wake up thinking ‘I have to prepare for the AUQA Audit’!”

I understood perfectly what he meant.

When Harold left, I assumed his position under the Sword of Damocles of the AUQA Audit, held up as it was by an increasingly taut and fragile thread. There were many nights in the years preceding the Audit when I awoke in a cold sweat, in what Michael Leunig describes lyrically as *The Hour of the Black Truth*, in which, as a “poor little plankton of the night”, I was regularly swallowed by “the great whale of Doom”. During waking hours, the Audit was (to mix metaphors), the Elephant in the Room. No matter what else was under discussion, and no matter how serious, the Audit was always there in the background, impossible to ignore and growing in substance with every passing day.

There were several reasons for this preoccupation with the Audit, even four and half years ahead of its occurrence. These had to do primarily with the nature of the MCD, and its history to this point.

Firstly, the Melbourne College of Divinity is listed as a Private Self-Regulating Higher Education Institution in the *Higher Education Support Act* 2003, a status it shares with Bond University and the University of Notre Dame.<sup>1</sup> In its history of 95 years as a self-regulating institution, the MCD had not been publicly Audited, and it did not have to have its courses approved by State Parliament every five years, as did other Colleges or Consortia of Theology, all of which are non-self-accrediting institutions. The MCD’s listing initially as a Schedule 1 institution in HESA,<sup>2</sup> and then as a Table B institution in HESA 2003, which resulted in access to research funding from the Federal government, also included the requirement of a five-yearly audit by the *Australian Universities Quality Agency*. The public scrutiny which would result from a thorough, professional and in-depth Audit of the MCD’s quality assurance processes by AUQA was indeed a daunting prospect for an old institution faced with a new, and largely unknown, challenge.

Secondly, the nature of the institution itself presented a challenge, both for the AUQA Auditors and all those at the MCD preparing for it. This challenge was identified in the initial section of the AUQA Report as follows:

*The MCD is one of only four non-university Self-Accrediting Institutions (SAIs) in Australia. As such—because of some aspects of its history in the development of theological education in this country and its unique ‘federated’ organisational structure—it is important to appreciate the*

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<sup>1</sup> The MCD is the oldest of this trio, having been established by an Act of the Victorian Parliament in December 1910. The MCD is the second oldest self-accrediting Higher Education Institution in Victoria, and the sixth in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> The list included all 43 self-accrediting Higher Education Institutions in Australia, primarily public universities, but also three private institutions as well. These private self-accrediting HEIs formed Table B in HESA 2003.

*distinctive nature of the institution itself before considering the effectiveness or otherwise of the arrangements for quality assurance.*<sup>3</sup>

It was the Audit of this ‘federated’ organisational structure that presented the significant challenge.

Unlike a university, the MCD is not a single institution; nor is it a single institution with several campus locations. Rather, the MCD is comprised of a number of autonomous institutions,<sup>4</sup> formerly known as Associated Teaching Institutions (ATIs)<sup>5</sup>, which are associated under the MCD banner, and linked by a central office which administers the self-accrediting procedures of the institution as a whole. Each ATI had its own administrative infrastructure, appointed and employed its own faculty and staff, and was sponsored and supported in the main by its ‘industry partner’—a denominational church or religious orders.

Faculty members of these ATIs taught the courses regulated by the Boards and Committees of the MCD, and supplied personnel for these Boards and Committees, on a voluntary basis.

The AUQA Report of the MCD continued its commentary on the structure of the MCD as follows:

*Note the variety of terms that indicate the organisational arrangements at the various ATIs [Associated Teaching Institutions]: ‘College’, ‘Association’, ‘Faculty’ and ‘Union’. Furthermore, the two Catholic ATIs have only one campus location each, while the other two multi-denominational ATIs themselves consist of a number of college-based entities, and are located on multiple campuses. CTC [Catholic Theological College] and YTU [Yarra Theological Union] are grounded in the life of particular religious communities, but their students are drawn from much wider bases. ETA [Evangelical Theological Association] functions as a cooperative venture between the colleges of two different churches. And as the name implies, UFT [United Faculty of Theology] operates as a ‘united faculty’ who have agreed to teach theology together towards MCD awards. The MCD therefore has a very complex and diverse organisational structure.*<sup>6</sup>

Noting that “the College has a central administration”, the Report explains that:

*The teaching colleges and other bodies, like the faculties of a university, engage in teaching, learning, research and scholarship. Nevertheless, the MCD is unlike most universities insofar as the teaching colleges / ATIs are autonomous (but not degree-granting) bodies. The awards taught by the ATIs are accredited by the College.*<sup>7</sup>

Each teaching college has its own heritage, stakeholders, governance and financial administration, with some being consortia themselves. The MCD administration receives tuition fees, and disburses payments for approved teaching and research, but the colleges are not ‘controlled entities’ or ‘subsidiaries’ of the College. The long-established ethos of the MCD is one of partnership between teaching colleges with their own ethos and commitments, facilitated by the administration as regards academic standards and research programmes. Maintaining a balanced interplay between colleges and College is a core value undergirding the structural realities of the MCD as a whole. However complex the formal structures, a spirit of co-operation reaches across the colleges as the AUQA Report recognised in its Commendations, and further affirmed in listing this cooperative ethos on its Good Practice database.

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Audit of the MCD p.3.

<sup>4</sup> Seven Colleges aligned into four Associated Teaching Institutions.

<sup>5</sup> The past tense is appropriate here as, running parallel with the AUQA Audit preparations was a thorough revision to the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910*, to make it accord with new National Governance Protocols. Following the passage of the *Melbourne College of Divinity (Amendment) Bill 2005*, coincidentally at the exact time the AQUA Audit Panel was visiting the MCD, a structure of Recognized Teaching Institutions (RTIs) replaced the ATI structure. This restructuring allowed for greater flexibility, inclusion and expansion, within and outside the institution. However, although the structure of the MCD changed with the passage of the Act, the federated nature of the MCD remained unchanged.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Audit of the MCD p. 8

<sup>7</sup> Report of the Audit of the MCD p. 8

This system worked well for the 35 years the ATI structure was in place. The problem that arose was this: how is it possible to conduct a quality Audit of an institution described in the previous paragraphs? How could statements be made about the institution as a whole which would be relevant and applicable to its diverse parts?

Given its 'unique federated structure' the Audit had to be carefully planned and carried out, both by the AUQA Auditors and the MCD, working in cooperation.

## **B) Long Term Preparation**

### **1) External Input:**

In November 2001, four years before the Audit took place, three staff members from AUQA addressed MCD faculty at the annual Staff Consultation Day. The AUQA staff offered a Power-point presentation of the AUQA process and responded to questions and concerns about the Audit. This marked the formal beginning of preparation for the Audit.

On April 8<sup>th</sup> 2003, Professor Peter Carpenter, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Australian Catholic University, addressed an open session of the MCD's governing body, the College, on the way ACU had prepared for its Audit by AUQA. Professor Carpenter had been invited to address the College because the multi-campus ACU faced similar problems to the MCD in preparing for its Audit. His preparation for the discussion was meticulous, and his advice, as well as the folder he had assembled for his presentation, proved to be invaluable.

In 2003 and 2004, each of the ATIs of the MCD underwent an AUQA style Audit conducted by external auditors from Australian Catholic University and Ridley College (2003) and the University of Melbourne and Monash University (2004). The Reports from these Audits were presented to the College<sup>8</sup> on their completion. In November 2004, Professor Stuart Macintyre, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, and himself an AUQA Auditor, made a presentation at the Staff Consultation Day, and received questions relating to preparation for the AUQA Audit.

Professor Richard James, Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne, an external auditor of an MCD ATI in 2004, met with the ATI AUQA Representatives<sup>9</sup> on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2004 to offer his impression of the MCD and its quality assurance processes, and identified certain characteristics of the institution, both positive and negative, which he considered should be included in the MCD Performance Portfolio. Dr Rosemary Sheehan of Monash University, also an external auditor of an MCD ATI in 2004, joined Professor James in a follow-up meeting with the ATI AUQA Representatives on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005.

The Dean and Registrar of the MCD attended successive Australian University Quality Forums in 2003 and 2004, which proved to be very beneficial in making contacts, preparing for the Audit and learning about, at deeper levels, a variety of quality assurance processes which had been employed by universities that had been audited by AUQA.

In the months immediately preceding the Audit, the MCD exchanged Performance Portfolios with the University of Melbourne with which the MCD is affiliated,<sup>10</sup> and the Dean of the MCD met on several occasions with Professor Peter McPhee, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic, at the University of Melbourne who was in charge of the University's preparation for the AUQA Audit, and with Professor Stuart Macintyre. These meetings proved to be a formative influence on the MCD Performance Portfolio which was in its final stages of preparation.

A common theme that emanated from these discussions, Audits and consultations was that it was essential to communicate to AUQA that, in order for the Audit of the MCD to be effective, all the ATIs had to be visited, as well as the MCD administration, so that an accurate picture of the distinct

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<sup>8</sup> At that time, the governing body of the MCD.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to Section 2 on the following page

<sup>10</sup> The University of Melbourne underwent an Audit by AUQA a month before the MCD.

institutions which comprised the MCD could be ascertained, together with the whole. This message was conveyed to AUQA by the MCD administration on several occasions.

## **2) Internal input:**

### *Self Review of the ATIs and the MCD*

A year and a half before the AUQA Audit was scheduled to take place, the Dean of the MCD assembled representatives from each ATI and began to prepare corporately for the Audit. This group was designated as the ATI AUQA Representatives. Chaired by the MCD Dean, the group met seven times in the twelve-month period the MCD PP was being written and revised.

Two important decisions were made at the outset of the Self Review of the ATIs and the MCD as a whole, as follows:

- First, that the MCD Performance Portfolio would be as transparent and open as possible regarding the strengths and weakness of the MCD quality assurance processes. This decision was wholeheartedly supported by the ATIs, and is hopefully reflected in the MCD Performance Portfolio itself.
- A parallel decision was made regarding attempting to institute a holistic, inclusive approach to the preparation for the AUQA Audit. Given the complex, federated nature of the MCD, this was admittedly a wild horse to ride, as it entailed attempting to produce a Performance Portfolio that all parts of the MCD could claim as its own. Due to the efforts of the Dean and Registrar of the MCD administration in writing and revising draft after draft of the Performance Portfolio with the critical assistance of administration staff, the ATI AUQA Representatives in producing their own Performance Portfolios and acting as conduits for comment and criticism of the MCD PP, and the MCD constituencies for wholeheartedly responding to the multiple demands of preparing for the Audit, by the time the MCD Performance Portfolio was submitted it was acknowledged as “our” PP by the MCD community.

Returning to the ATI AUQA Representatives group, its charter of responsibilities was identified by the group as follows:

- 1) To prepare Performance Portfolios for each ATI, and to submit these to the Panels conducting Audits of each institution;
- 2) To revise the Performance Portfolios in light of the external audits;
- 3) To ‘share and compare’ the Performance Portfolios with other ATI submissions so that a best practice Performance Portfolio could be drawn up by each ATI;
- 4) To assist in the writing of the MCD Performance Portfolio. Following the audits of the ATIs and the construction and revision to their Performance Portfolios, a draft MCD PP was drawn up by the MCD administration, and was disseminated to the MCD constituencies at the Inter ATI Departmental Day, February 11<sup>th</sup> 2005. ATI AUQA Representative were identified at this meeting, and were nominated to convey comments and criticisms of the MCD PP to the administration. The MCD PP was discussed at meetings in each ATI, a summary of which was drawn up by the ATI AUQA Reps. The ATI AUQA Reps also received comments from individuals about the MCD PP. All of this material was assembled and submitted in a written form to the MCD administration. The MCD PP was rewritten accordingly, and discussed at the ATI AUQA Representatives meeting.
- 5) The ATI AUQA Representatives played a key role in preparing their institutions for the approaching audit, as will be noted below.

## C) Proximate Preparation

As it approached its final form, the Performance Portfolio was distributed to Chairs of Examiners and Chairs of Boards of the MCD for their comments, and copies were sent to Professor James, Dr Sheehan, and Dr Harold Pidwell, who all responded with valuable advice.

An open meeting of the MCD Policy and Strategy Committee, which included the Chairs of Examiners, Chairs of Boards and ATI AUQA Representatives, took place on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2005, for feedback on the Performance Portfolio. The Performance Portfolio was finally revised and taken to the Executive Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> May. It was then prepared for submission to AUQA.

Technically, the MCD Performance Portfolio followed the procedures relating to quality assurance outlined in the AUQA Audit Manual, based on the self-review process described in B 2) above.<sup>11</sup> It contained nine chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: The Melbourne College of Divinity, its constitution, vision, mission, values and context, and a historical overview of the College.

Chapter 2: Governance and Administration

Chapter 3: Planning, Policy and Implementation

Chapter 4: Teaching and Learning

Chapter 5: Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring

Chapter 6: Research and Research Training

Chapter 7: Students, Staff and Faculty of the MCD

Chapter 8: International Activities

Chapter 9: Summary

Conclusion

Index of Supplementary Materials

Acronyms and Abbreviations

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The Performance Portfolio was accompanied by a compartmentalized file-box containing 38 Supplementary Materials.<sup>12</sup>

Enclosed within the plastic sleeve at the front of the Performance Portfolio was a hypertext form of the PP and the Supplementary Materials on CD ROM. References to Supplementary Materials in the main text of the CD ROM were noted to the right of the text, so they that could be accessed immediately by clicking on this reference.

A map of Melbourne with the location of each of the ATIs was also included in the plastic sleeve.

Statements with colour coded headings specifying Areas of Excellence, Immediate Goals, Long Term Goals, and Areas of Improvement were located in the appropriate sections of the text, and the statements under these four headings were group-listed in Chapter 9.

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<sup>11</sup> “The Performance Portfolio should set out the auditee’s objectives, plans, strategies, measures and results. It should include analysis and evaluation, with the consequent identification of which processes are effective and which are deficient. For the last named, it may foreshadow action. For AUQA, the basic requirement is that the Performance Portfolio should initiate for the panel the process of carrying out its role.” *AUQA Audit Manual*, volume 2, pp. 31-32.

<sup>12</sup> A number of these, such as the MCD Policy and Procedural Manual, an Historical Overview of the College, the Regulations of the College, Theological Library Resources in the MCD, the Handbooks and Performance Portfolios of the ATIs and the Research and Research Training Management Report, to name a few, were lengthy and complex documents.

Six copies of the Performance Portfolio in hard copy with the CD ROM, and six of the compartmentalized file boxes of supplementary materials, were delivered to the AUQA offices on time, three months in advance of the Audit.

Following the submission of the MCD PP to AUQA, each ATI was visited once, and in some cases twice by members of the MCD administration to discuss preparation for the Audit, and to respond to questions about the likely process of the Audit.

## **D) The Audit**

The Chair and Director of the Audit Panel visited the MCD administration on August 10<sup>th</sup>, a month in advance of the Audit, to familiarize themselves with the administration team and to respond to any questions about the Audit.

In the six week to a month period prior to the Audit, the MCD administration responded to detailed requests by the Audit Panel for additional information/data required by the Panel to be submitted at three stages:

- at the time of the Preparatory Visit by the Chair and Director,
- a month prior to the Audit;
- at the time of the Audit.

These requests related to each chapter of the MCD Performance Portfolio, and totalled 40 pages. The Audit Panel designated the MCD's Bachelor of Theology, Master of Ministry and Doctor of Theology as a particular focus of the Audit, to be thoroughly detailed and documented.

The Visit Schedule was prepared as a cooperative exercise between the Chair, Director and the MCD administration.<sup>13</sup> It was at this point that the Chair and the Director showed both foresight and a commitment to understanding the complex nature of the MCD by making a decision that, as well as the MCD administration, each ATI would be visited by members of the Audit Panel in order to gain an accurate picture of the MCD and its quality assurance mechanisms, as a whole entity.

The Audit Visit lasted for three days<sup>14</sup>. As noted in the Report of the Audit:

*In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 140 staff during the Audit Visit, including the President of the MCD, administrative support staff, including the Dean, the Registrar and the associate registrars, and their administrative support staff; academic and general staff at each of the ATIs; and undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at each ATI. The Audit Panel also spoke with external members of the Interim Council, and other external stakeholders, such as the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee. Sessions were also available for any member of the MCD community to meet the Audit Panel, but no one took the opportunity to exercise this option.<sup>15</sup>*

After conducting a final meeting with the President and Dean of the MCD in which the Chair outlined the findings of the Visit, the Audit Panel departed the MCD administration on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2005. At this moment, four years of intensive planning came to a (temporary) conclusion

The Audit Panel produced a Definitive Draft Report which was forwarded to the MCD administration on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005 to allow it comment on any perceived errors of fact or emphasis. The Final Report was sent to the MCD on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2005, three months after the completion of the Audit. The Report was posted on the AUQA Website on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

Subsequently, the MCD was invited by AUQA to submit two entries to the AUQA Good Practice Database, which it did.

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<sup>13</sup> The Visit Schedule comprised 17 pages.

<sup>14</sup> September 12-14<sup>th</sup> 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Audit of the MCD p. 1

## E) Reflection on the Audit Process

### 1) Affirmations

- 1) Contrary to expectations, the Sword of Damocles and the Elephant in the Room imagery faded away well in advance of the Audit, as did the “the great whale of Doom”. Their final disappearance coincided with the preliminary visit by the Chair of the AUQA Panel and the AUQA Director. There was no question about the professionalism and capability of these two individuals, and we came to understand very early on that they, and indeed the full Panel of five people who conducted the Audit, were committed as a team to assisting the MCD to understand how it could become a better institution in relation to assuring the quality of its procedures, processes and programmes, while at the same time helping it to identify those areas in which it was performing well. It is no exaggeration to say that the MCD could not have wished for a better, more professional or more capable Chair of the Panel, or Director, or Panel members than the MCD had for the AUQA Audit.
- 2) The AUQA Audit process was a very valuable experience for the MCD on a variety of levels. Generally speaking, given a common task to prepare for, it united the MCD community and instilled a quiet confidence in the institution, not only in regard to its quality assurance processes, but also in its ability to work cooperatively as an ecumenical organization toward a goal that transcended particularized interests and ‘regional’ concerns.
- 3) The Audit afforded the MCD the opportunity to consolidate policy in a wide range of areas and to take notice specifically where more development is needed.
- 4) Correspondingly, the Audit process provided the MCD with a blueprint for developing its Quality Assurance processes, made more valuable by the fact that this blueprint was provided by an external, impartial body of professionals who scrutinized the institution carefully and comprehensively, and gave guidance in areas which, by the institution’s own admission, it is still a ‘work in progress’.
- 5) The Audit instilled an understanding of the importance of benchmarking with similar institutions nationally and internationally in setting, maintaining and monitoring quality assurance processes.
- 6) The Audit emphasised how essential it is to develop a Culture of Quality within the institution, owned and accepted by the institution at every level; and identified a corresponding need to establish a Quality Conscience within the institution, such as an Academic Audit Committee. The MCD has established such a Committee, which has regulated and overseen the continuing cycle of quality Audits within the MCD.<sup>16</sup> (The Terms of Reference of the Committee appear in Appendix 1.)
- 7) In this regard, and perhaps most importantly, the Audit confirmed a realization within the MCD that the AUQA Audit process is not merely a five-yearly event, but is rather one of a series of Audits and quality assurance processes that are ongoing within the institution. It is undoubtedly the most important of these processes. Yet it must be recognized and appreciated as one of a series of Audits that take place in a five-year cycle of Audits, in harmony with the ongoing audits of each of the Recognized Teaching Institutions of the MCD.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Professor Richard James is the inaugural Chair of the Academic Audit Committee.

<sup>17</sup> In 2006, four institutions have undergone Audits by Panels comprising members external and internal to the MCD. Specifically, Whitley College and Church of Christ Theological College have had their RTI status confirmed; The Salvation Army Training College has been audited and subsequently accepted by the Council of the MCD, on the recommendation of the Academic Board, as a Recognized Teaching Institution of the MCD for the purposes of teaching the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Ministry; and the Institute for Christian Spirituality and Pastoral Formation has applied for RTI status and is scheduled for audit on the 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006.

## Reservations

- 1) It is very difficult for smaller institutions and administrations to cope adequately with the preparation for, and undertaking of, an AUQA Audit, as the life of the institution, academically, administratively and managerially, continues apace. It is estimated that 50% of the Dean's, and 50% of the Registrar's time was devoted to preparation for the AUQA Audit a year in advance of the Audit, and 30% in 2003-4. The ATI AUQA Representatives also devoted considerable time to preparing for, and undergoing their internal audits, consulting with their constituencies and preparing their institution's Performance Portfolio, and acting as conduits for comments on the MCD PP. This is in addition to the 'normal' workload of each individual mentioned. The lesson that we at the MCD learned is that it is very beneficial to begin the preparation for the AUQA Audit as early as possible, and to plan carefully so that the preparation process is both inclusive and supportive. (This preparation may include employing specialist advisors on a temporary basis, or at least consulting with key individuals at institutions which have been audit by AUQA.)
- 2) Higher Education Institutions that comprise a federated/consortia model face particular problems in addition to time and load management mentioned in 1) above. For example, assuring common standards and quality assurance practices across the institution, consulting widely, conducting a self-review and producing a corporate Performance Portfolio that is not only acceptable to all but is supported and agreed upon by all, is not an easy or a simple task.
- 3) Although it is excellent value for money, the cost of an AUQA Audit is not inconsiderable for smaller institutions and must be budgeted for well in advance. If possible, the cost should be shared among constituents if a federated/consortia model applies.
- 4) Institutions, particularly smaller institutions, may experience "AUQA fatigue" among their constituents for up to a year following the Audit. Considering 1) to 3) above, this is a normal and natural reaction. However, 6) in the previous section should not be lost sight of in this period of R & R (Relief and Recovery) following the Audit.

## Summary Statement

This paper has not attempted to address quality assurance issues such as course approval processes, curriculum development and review, moderation, educational policies, learning and teaching environment and programmes, teaching and supervisory support, research and research training, flexible learning, library resources and all other matters relating to assuring quality within a higher education institution.

It is merely an account of how one private, self-accrediting, federated higher education institution prepared for, underwent, and learned and benefited significantly from an Audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency.

In conclusion I wish to make a summary statement of what I consider to be the most important reason why an audit by AUQA should be taken as seriously as possible and prepared for, and followed up in a similar manner. This reason is as follows:

**Our students deserve nothing less than the collective and wholehearted effort of an institution to live out and realize the institution's Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, and Objectives through a critical, ongoing process of self-review, appraised by external and internal mechanisms working in harmony with all levels of a formative community of scholars and scholarship to assure, to the best of its ability, fitness for the purpose for which it was founded, and to which it continues to aspire.**

Paul Beirne

Dean

17<sup>th</sup> October 2006

## APPENDIX 1



# *The Melbourne College of Divinity*

## Academic Audit Committee

### Terms of Reference

**Purpose:** The Academic Audit Committee is established to provide a 'quality conscience' for the MCD, and to ensure consistency of attention to academic integrity and quality assurance across the College, including academic audits.

#### **Membership:**

Four persons external to the College, appointed by the Council

One member appointed by the Academic Board

All members are to be persons recognized as having expertise in matters of academic quality assurance.

Officers of the College may, as stipulated in Regulation 1, attend Committee meetings as required, but may be asked to withdraw for specific items.

Persons able to provide additional expertise may be invited to assist the Committee.

#### **Functions:**

The primary functions of the Committee are

To monitor the academic quality assurance processes of the College and its teaching institutions, including the development and implementation of its Teaching and Learning Management Plan;

To advise the Academic Board regarding matters of academic integrity and quality assurance, including the balance of devolved and centralised academic processes;

To assist the MCD in benchmarking its academic performance against similar institutions.

In undertaking its work, the Committee will have concern both for the overall academic welfare of the College as a whole, and for the particular heritage, culture, learning philosophy and religious identity of the teaching bodies within it.

The Committee will meet at least twice each year, and report to the Academic Board following each meeting.

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The following matters may come under consideration by the Committee, but remain the responsibility of the Academic Board:

- Academic staff development and succession planning
- The regular audit cycle of RTIs and courses
- The Research and Research Training Management Plan
- Supervisor and research methods training.