

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of the
Melbourne College of Divinity

December 2005

AUQA Audit Report Number 37

ISBN 1 877090 44 1

© Australian Universities Quality Agency 2005

Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Ph 03 9664 1000
Fax 03 9639 7377

admin@auqa.edu.au

<http://www.auqa.edu.au>

The Australian Universities Quality Agency receives financial support from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT	1
Background	1
The Audit Process	1
CONCLUSIONS.....	3
Introduction to Findings.....	3
Commendations.....	4
Affirmations.....	5
Recommendations.....	5
1 THE MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY.....	7
1.1 MCD in Context — Constitution, Vision, Mission, Values, Objectives	7
1.1.1 Constitution	7
1.1.2 Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives.....	8
1.2 MCD: an Historical Overview	9
1.2.1 Phase 1: 1910–1972, Foundation and Ministry Training	9
1.2.2 Phase 2: 1973–1990, Accredited Teaching of Theology.....	10
1.2.3 Phase 3: 1990–2000, Teaching and Diversification of Mission	10
1.2.4 Phase 4: 2001–2005, Researching and Restructuring.....	10
1.3 MCD: the College and ‘the colleges’	11
2 GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION.....	12
2.1 Governance	12
2.1.1 Pre-2005 Amendment of the <i>Melbourne College of Divinity Act</i>	12
2.1.2 Post-2005 Amendment of the <i>Melbourne College of Divinity Act</i>	12
2.2 Academic Governance	13
2.2.1 Chairs of Examiners	14
2.2.2 The Human Research Ethics Committee.....	14
2.2.3 Library Resources and LIAM.....	14
2.3 The MCD Administration	15
2.4 External Professional Relationships.....	16
2.5 MCD Structural Relationships	17
3 PLANNING, POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION	18
3.1 Organisational Restructuring	18
3.2 Administrative and Academic Restructuring	19
3.3 Ongoing Self-Review and Restructuring	21
4 TEACHING AND LEARNING.....	22
4.1 The Locus of Learning.....	22
4.2 Teaching and Learning Goals	23
4.3 Feedback Structures for Teaching and Learning	24
4.4 Towards an MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan.....	25
5 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING	26
5.1 Cyclic Reviews of ATIs.....	26
5.2 Review of Courses	26
5.3 Approval, Moderation and Review Procedures	27
5.4 External Review.....	28
5.5 Quality Assurance & Performance Monitoring: Improvement.....	28

6 RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING.....	30
6.1 Research and Research Training	30
6.2 Research Funding.....	31
6.3 Research Student Support and Higher Degree by Research Supervision	32
6.4 Planning Goals and Areas of Improvement	33
7 STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY OF THE MCD.....	34
7.1 Student Profile and Student Support	34
7.2 MCD Administration Staff.....	36
7.3 ATI Faculty and Staff.....	36
7.4 Community Engagement.....	38
8 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES	39
8.1 Providing Education to Asia and the Pacific Region	39
8.2 MCD International Institutional Relationships	39
APPENDIX A: MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY	41
APPENDIX B: AUQA’S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VALUES AND VISION.....	43
APPENDIX C: THE MCD AUDIT PANEL	45
APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS.....	46

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In late 2004, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) appointed an Audit Panel to undertake a quality audit of the Melbourne College of Divinity (hereinafter 'MCD' or 'the College').

This Report provides an overview of the Audit, and then details the Audit Panel's findings, recommendations, affirmations and commendations. A brief introduction to the College is given in Appendix A; the mission, values and objectives of AUQA are shown in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel is provided in Appendix C. Appendix D defines abbreviations and technical terms used in this Report. In addition, Section 1 of the Report provides readers with a substantial contextual background on MCD, which is important because of the distinctive nature of this institution in the Australian higher education sector.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits on each organisation's own objectives, together with the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (National Protocols) (http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/mceetya_cop.htm), and other relevant legal requirements or codes to which the organisation is committed. The major aim of the audit is to consider and review the procedures an organisation has in place to monitor and achieve its objectives. Full details of the AUQA audit process are available in the AUQA Audit Manual (<http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/auditmanuals/index.shtml>).

On 6 June 2005, MCD presented its submission (Performance Portfolio) to AUQA, along with 38 Supplementary Materials (37 indexed in the Portfolio, plus a copy of *Pacifica: Journal of Australasian Theological Studies*). The Audit Panel met on 11 July 2005 to consider these materials.

The Audit Panel Chairperson and Audit Director undertook a preparatory visit to the MCD office in Kew on 10 August to review the questions requiring clarification and requests for additional documentation. It was also agreed that, in addition to visiting the MCD administration, the Audit Panel would make visits to each of the Associated Teaching Institutions (ATIs), even though the audit was an audit of the MCD as the accrediting institution (see section 1 for details). While this was requested by the MCD, the Audit Panel had independently reached the same conclusion, namely that, in order to understand the MCD 'federation model' as a whole, the audit would have to investigate the constituent parts of the federation. This approach also enabled the Audit Panel to look more closely for any inconsistencies in QA implementation across the ATIs. This approach required the Audit Panel to divide into sub-panels and hold a higher number of split-panel sessions than is usual for an AUQA audit.

The Audit Visit took place from 12–14 September. On day one, the entire Audit Panel spent the morning at the MCD administration office in Kew and the afternoon at the Catholic Theological College (CTC) in East Melbourne. On the morning of day two, a delegation of the Panel visited the Evangelical Theological Association (ETA) at Whitley College in Parkville, while another panel delegation visited the Yarra Theological Union (YTU) in Box Hill. On the afternoon of day two, the entire Audit Panel reconvened at the United Faculty of Theology (UFT), which is based at Queens College, a residential college at the University of Melbourne. On day three, the Panel held a final session with the Dean of the MCD and provided audit feedback to the Dean and the MCD President.

In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 140 people during the Audit Visit, including the President of the MCD, MCD administration 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.

Ordinarily, an AUQA audit report relates to the situation current at the time of an audit visit, which in this case ended on 14 September, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. However, as explained in section 1 of this Report, the MCD Audit Visit coincided exactly with the gaining of Royal Assent for the revised *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 2005 (Vic)*. This coincidence requires that the Report sometimes differentiates between conditions that applied prior to and during the audit, with those that will come into being as a result of changes made by the passing of the revised legislation.

Therefore, where appropriate this Report includes coverage of both pre- and post-Audit conditions. For example, in the text and the findings there are a number of references to the existing ATIs and to the Recognised Teaching Institutions (RTIs) as they are referred to following passage of the legislation. (The Melbourne College of Divinity (Amendment) Bill 2005 was signed by the Governor on 11 October, appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 13 October, and came into effect on 20 October. The Bill was passed, signed, and came into effect without any amendments.)

The Report records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the MCD as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the College's activities encompassed by the Audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or any shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an unsuitable approach, a faulty deployment, or a lack of success in relation to a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Recommendations indicate matters in need of attention, possibly with suggestions for action. Where such matters have already been identified by the MCD, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. It is acknowledged that recommendations in AUQA audit reports may have resource implications and that this can pose difficulties for institutions. Accordingly, AUQA does not prioritise these recommendations, and recognises that it is the responsibility of the MCD to respond in a manner consistent with its local context.

The Audit Panel has structured this Audit Report to reflect the structure of the College's Performance Portfolio.

Finally, some guidance is provided here on the use of certain terms in this Report. The words 'the College' (with upper case 'C') and 'college' and 'colleges' (lower case) are used quite differently in this Report because of the nature of the organisational arrangements at the MCD. Unless explained otherwise in the text, 'College' refers to the MCD, while 'college(s)' refers to a teaching institution (or institutions) that exist within the federal MCD structure. For further explanation, readers are directed to section 1. Also, the term 'Roman Catholic' is used when referring to the Church of that name, and 'Catholic' when referring to the Catholic Theological College, one of the ATIs.

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other favourable comments and suggestions are mentioned throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

The MCD is one of only four non-university Self-Accrediting Institutions (SAIs) in Australia and as such it has a unique federated organisational structure. Therefore, it is important for readers of this Report who are unfamiliar with the College to first gain an appreciation of the distinctive nature of the institution. Section 1 of the Report provides the necessary organisational context and historical background. The Audit Panel was aware of the coincidence of the timing of the AUQA Audit Visit and the passage of amendments to the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 2005* in the Victorian Parliament. Section 1 concludes with the MCD being commended for the quality of the relationships achieved with and between its constituencies, and for success in fulfilling its mission and goals of ecumenicity and theological education in a social setting.

In relation to governance and administration, noting the changes introduced through the passing of the Melbourne College of Divinity (Amendment) Bill 2005, the Audit Panel affirms the College's decision to introduce a single Academic Board and urges the College to involve the new Board in determining the structure and terms of reference of its subcommittees, and to clarify their relationship with the RTIs including their academic committees, and with other MCD decision-making bodies. The Audit Panel also notes positively the quality of the theological libraries within the existing MCD structure, and affirms the adoption of a regulated growth strategy for the future institution. The Audit Panel also recommends that MCD should attempt to further leverage its existing relationships with universities and establish benchmarking processes to help improve the College's teaching, learning and research performance.

With respect to the planning of policy, and its implementation, the Audit Panel recommends that MCD should adopt a more rigorous strategic planning framework to harmonise the further development of the College's strategic plan with other key institutional plans and affirms the College's own self-review findings that it needs to improve its record-keeping and student administration processes. The Panel also makes certain observations in relation to the development of a single College handbook, and commends the College's decision to use the opening of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 2005* as an opportunity to set new directions for future development.

In teaching and learning, there are what are described as 'bifocal' responsibilities between the College and its administration on the one hand, and the ATIs on the other, for academic quality assurance. The College receives commendation for an online learning initiative in divinity and theological studies at one of its ATIs, and for its strong commitment to the teaching of ecumenical values. The Audit Panel affirms the College's decisions to adopt a standard student evaluation instrument, and to develop a teaching and learning plan, while recommending that more work needs to be done on the development of learning outcomes and their assessment, and to reinstate satisfaction surveys for library users.

In the closely related areas of quality assurance and performance monitoring, the Audit Panel makes a number of findings designed to improve the College's approach to the review of the quality of academic awards and programs, and organisational units, and affirms the need for an Academic Audit Committee of the Academic Board. This section of the Report concludes with a commendation to MCD for the carrying out of an authentic whole-of-institution self-review to improve its quality assurance processes.

As far as the College's research and research training activity is concerned, the audit found that there is a self-acknowledged need to strengthen the MCD research culture, including a need to focus on areas of research concentration, while at the same time exploring research application opportunities in a wider

range of competitive grants, including ARC linkage grants. With respect to research training and supervision, the Audit panel believes this is an area where the MCD administration can take the lead by strengthening the College’s existing relationships with selected institutions and, in particular, with the University of Melbourne, with which the College already has a formal affiliation agreement.

In relation to the students, staff, and faculty of the MCD, the Audit Panel makes a series of commendatory findings in recognition of the positive human relations climate that has been established within MCD, but urges the College to pay more attention to the monitoring of student progress. In recognition of the impact of changing demographics within the theological teaching force, there is a recommendation to address the planning of future staffing needs of the College as a whole.

Finally, with respect to the College’s international activities, in affirming the importance of MCD maintaining the links which it has developed within and to the Asia-Pacific region, the Audit Panel urges the College to examine ways in which it can more effectively benchmark its performance against appropriate international comparators.

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. Note that these are not prioritised by the Audit Panel. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

1. AUQA commends MCD for its success in nurturing the relationship between the MCD and its Associated Teaching Institutions and their various constituencies.11
2. AUQA commends MCD for the way in which the College is fulfilling its mission and goals of ecumenicity and theological education in a social context.11
3. AUQA commends MCD for the quality of the collections at the theological libraries within existing Associated Teaching Institutions; the establishment of the Librarians of Institutions Associated with MCD and their high level of collaboration; and for the quality of reader support services provided by the librarians.15
4. AUQA commends MCD for setting new directions for the College by exercising the decision to invite amendment of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*, in order to achieve improvements in corporate and academic governance, and for efforts to implement a strategic planning approach.....21
5. AUQA commends the initiative at Trinity College to offer courses in Divinity and Theology online, and acknowledges it as an exemplar for the further spread of online learning through MCD.....23
6. AUQA commends MCD for the embedded nature of and widespread commitment to the objective of encouraging ecumenical values in the MCD curriculum.24
7. AUQA commends MCD for the concerted efforts to improve its quality processes as a result of its self-review.....29
8. AUQA commends MCD for achieving a high level of student satisfaction which reflects the very strong commitment of the Associated Teaching Institutions and their Faculty to the teaching and learning process and a commitment to the improvement of the student experience.35
9. AUQA commends MCD for the quality of support it provides for staff new to the institution, including mentoring processes and the provision of support and assistance.36
10. AUQA commends MCD on the use of Inter-ATI days and Staff forum, and advises MCD to increase such opportunities if possible.....37

11. AUQA commends MCD for the high level of collegiality evident among the staff of the Associated Teaching Institutions, and across Associated Teaching Institutions.37

Affirmations

1. AUQA affirms the MCD strategy of aiming for ‘regulated growth’, but urges the College to be conscious of the potential problems posed by rapid growth in the number of Recognised Teaching Institutions.....17
2. AUQA affirms the need for consistent and full use of the Theological Academic Management System by all MCD constituents, and for MCD to fully develop an effective record archiving process.20
3. AUQA affirms the use of a standard student evaluation form for coursework study across all Recognised Teaching Institutions and all fields of study.....25
4. AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to commit to undertake a systematic, cyclic review of units to consolidate the present review processes.27
5. AUQA affirms the MCD decision to review the BTheol with an emphasis on: greater consistency of content; assessment and learning outcomes; and the potential for rationalisation in delivery, especially in the third year of the program.....28
6. AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to adopt a five-year cycle of Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring.29
7. AUQA affirms the need for MCD to establish an Academic Audit Committee.....29
8. AUQA affirms MCD’s efforts to strengthen its research culture and improve research supervision training.....31
9. AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to introduce an audit mechanism for charting a research student’s progress and use of a candidate/supervisor generated report.32
10. AUQA affirms the need for MCD to undertake yearly course completion reports, and to monitor student retention/drop out rates.35
11. AUQA affirms the importance of MCD maintaining links within the Asia-Pacific region, and urges the College to consider ways in which it can more effectively benchmark its international performance through international institutional relationships.40

Recommendations

1. In affirming MCD’s decision to establish a single Academic Board, AUQA recommends that the new Academic Board be responsible for determining the structure and terms of reference for its subcommittees; and that MCD clarify the relationship of these subcommittees to the new Recognised Teaching Institutions and other MCD decision-making bodies, including the relationship between the MCD Academic Board and academic boards (or equivalent) located in the new Recognised Teaching Institutions.....13
2. AUQA recommends that MCD explore opportunities to leverage existing relationships with universities (viz. Australian Catholic University, University of Melbourne, and Monash

University) to access regular and high-level training for research supervisors; professional development for staff; and opportunities for joint research.16

3. AUQA recommends that MCD seek to establish external benchmarking processes in order that objective judgements can be made about the quality of the College’s research, teaching and learning.....17

4. AUQA recommends that MCD adopt a strategic-planning framework which *inter alia* harmonises the development of the MCD Strategic Plan with the development of the MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan, and a new research and research training plan.19

5. Noting the intention to update ‘*Handbook Part II: Bachelor of Theology, Advanced Diploma and Diploma in Ministry*’, AUQA recommends that MCD adopt a single handbook, accessible via the Web and which is regularly updated in consultation with the Associated Teaching Institutions / Recognised Teaching Institutions.20

6. AUQA recommends that MCD seek external guidance on the development of learning outcome statements and their assessment in the context of specific awards, fields of study and units.24

7. AUQA recommends that MCD reinstate student satisfaction surveys about library resources and services.25

8. In affirming the importance of MCD developing a Teaching and Learning Management Plan, AUQA recommends that the Plan identify a set of negotiated teaching and learning outcomes for the College as a whole, which have been developed through a process of consultation with the new Recognised Teaching Institutions; and a related policy on assessment, which makes an explicit statement about assessment requirements across Recognised Teaching Institutions.....25

9. AUQA recommends that Academic Board design a mechanism for the five-yearly review of all awards offered by MCD that preserves the balance between central oversight and local operation.....27

10. AUQA recommends that MCD review areas of research strength to focus in niche areas of specialisation so as to build areas of research concentration.31

11. AUQA recommends that MCD examine opportunities for winning competitive grants from a range of sources including Australian Research Council linkage grants.32

12. AUQA recommends that training for research supervisors at MCD be driven and promoted by the central administration of MCD, and used as an opportunity to build a research culture.33

13. AUQA recommends that MCD examine opportunities to optimise the relationship with the University of Melbourne with a view to improving opportunities for staff to engage in research supervision training and joint research projects, and provide access to relevant workshops for Higher Degree by Research students.....33

14. AUQA recommends that MCD develop a comprehensive staffing plan for the College as a whole that includes such matters as age and gender profile, succession planning, and professional development at each Recognised Teaching Institution.....37

1 THE MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

The Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD) Strategic Plan was only adopted by the College in February 2005. Its development included consideration of the need for:

- *Educational coherence*
- *Efficient administration*
- *Ecumenical commitment, and*
- *Economic viability.*

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following ‘Key Value’ in introducing the MCD:

“Recognition and respect for the traditions of the member churches in an atmosphere of mutuality and ecumenical cooperation” (PF p1)

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 distinctive nature of the institution itself before considering the effectiveness or otherwise of the arrangements for quality assurance at MCD. This context section outlines that distinctive nature.

1.1 *MCD in Context — Constitution, Vision, Mission, Values, Objectives*

Compared to Australian universities, MCD is quite small. In 2005, MCD had a total enrolment of 1108, or a student load of 483.1 EFTS, and a graduating class of 174.

1.1.1 Constitution

MCD was constituted by an Act passed by the Victorian Parliament in December 1910 (see section 1.2). The Act was amended in 1956, 1972, 1979 and 1990 to enable the College to become a more comprehensive body, and teach a wider range of postgraduate degrees.

At the time of the AUQA audit, the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910* was before the State Government for another revision, to bring it into line with the new National Governance Protocols and in fact the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act (Revised) 2005* received Royal Assent on 13 September 2005, the second day of the AUQA Audit Visit.

Prior to the current revision, the MCD’s governing body, ‘the College’, consisted of 27 representatives from Anglican, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and Uniting churches, with two student and four co-opted members. Under the revised *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 2005* this is reduced to a Council of 15.

The 1972 changes to the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act* provided for the first Australian undergraduate theological degree (BTheol), which was taught by Associated Teaching Institutions (ATIs) comprising Anglican, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Roman Catholic and Uniting Church colleges in varied partnerships:

- Catholic Theological College (CTC) in East Melbourne, which is comprised of four seminaries;
- Evangelical Theological Association (ETA), which is comprised of Whitley College (Baptist) in Parkville, and Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave;

- United Faculty of Theology (UFT) in Parkville, which is comprised of the Jesuit Theological College (Roman Catholic), Trinity College Theological School (Anglican) and the Theological Hall of the Uniting Church in Australia (Victorian and Tasmanian Synod); and
- Yarra Theological Union (YTU) in Box Hill, which is comprised of the seminaries of nine Roman Catholic religious orders.

Note the variety of terms that indicate the organisational arrangements at the various ATIs: '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 and YTU are grounded in the life of particular religious communities, but their students are drawn from much wider bases. ETA functions as a cooperative venture between the colleges of two different churches. And as the name implies, UFT 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.

The College has a central administration, but, until the 2005 revision of the Act comes into effect, it had multiple academic boards (or equivalents) whose responsibility was the maintenance of educational standards across the institution. 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 in so far as the teaching colleges/ATIs are autonomous (but not degree-granting) bodies. The awards taught by the ATIs are accredited by the College. In the context of this particular Audit, this consideration is very important, which (although an Audit of the MCD) necessitated the Audit Panel in visiting the ATIs in order to gain a first-hand understanding of the quality assurance arrangements for teaching and research, operating at the level of the teaching colleges. The Audit Panel was particularly concerned at the potential for unacceptable levels of variation between the ATIs, and in teaching colleges within the ATIs, in relation to the maintenance of academic standards, in particular, and more generally in the implementation of the College's generic quality assurance processes. These issues are taken up in the sections that follow, especially in sections 2, 4 and 5.

1.1.2 Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives

The College's vision is to be: "Recognized nationally and internationally, the Melbourne College of Divinity commits itself to pursuing the highest standards in teaching and research in Christian theology and ministry. The College offers scholars and students alike the opportunity to anchor their faith in understanding and in a spirit of dialogue to engage with wider social contexts." (PF p2)

The College's Mission Statement reads:

"The *Melbourne College of Divinity* is an ecumenical provider of tertiary education in theology, with commitment to:

- quality in teaching and research
- understanding of faith in secular contexts, and
- the integrity of the Christian churches." (PF p2)

The following values, which were formally adopted by the College, are also expressions of the College's vision and mission:

- critical enquiry and open dialogue in the exploration of truth
- active engagement with local, national and global social contexts

- recognition and respect for the traditions of the member churches in an atmosphere of mutuality and ecumenical cooperation
- interdependence in the development of all learning activities
- honest professional relationships between students and staff
- freedom from all forms of discrimination
- a climate of respect and openness, and
- enthusiasm, flexibility and innovation.

The objectives of the MCD — formulated in 2004 from its mission, vision and values in the light of the National Governance Protocols — adopted by the College are:

- a) to pursue the highest standards in teaching and research in Divinity and associated disciplines
- b) to offer scholars and students of Divinity the opportunity to anchor their faith in understanding and, in a spirit of dialogue, to engage with wider social contexts
- c) to respect, encourage, challenge and inform students who come to the College to learn
- d) to respond to the academic needs of the churches, and to promote their integrity
- e) to address issues from a sound and reasoned theological viewpoint, and so offer society opportunities for dialogue with traditions and values that have been refined over the centuries
- f) to aid, by research and other appropriate means, the advancement and development of knowledge and its practical application to the churches, to wider academic and community life, and public policy, and
- g) to grant degrees, diplomas and certificates.

In the MCD Performance Portfolio it is stated that, “In seeking to meet these objectives, the MCD functions in two closely interwoven ways:

1. through the teaching offered at the various colleges which constitute the ATIs, and
2. through the central administration, especially in its role of coordinating research and professional studies.

The major responsibility for maintaining objectives a) and g) belongs with the College as a governing body, while objectives c) and d) relate more to the teaching colleges. However, each objective represents a responsibility shared across all facets of the MCD.” (PF p3)

The way that these ‘shared responsibilities’ in relation to the College’s objectives were being managed across the MCD became one of the prime areas of investigation for the Audit Panel. For example, the Panel noted that the College’s approved objectives were not included in the MCD Strategic Plan (2005) and this issue is taken up in section 3 of this Report.

1.2 *MCD: an Historical Overview*

The history of the MCD falls into several reasonably distinct phases, each with a characteristic role being added to earlier ones as the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act* was revised. In the MCD Performance Portfolio these phases were described as follows:

1.2.1 Phase 1: 1910–1972, Foundation and Ministry Training

The MCD emerged in response to a need for an institution to provide academic training for Protestant clergy in Australia. Its founding was facilitated by the support of leaders from all the churches in Victoria, including the Roman Catholic archbishop, and also resulted from a clause in the University of Melbourne’s constitution which excluded the awarding of degrees in Divinity. In this phase, the MCD existed as an examining body. The Bachelor of Divinity (BD) and Diploma in Divinity (LTh) were examined each November in centres across Australia, New

Zealand and beyond. The Doctor of Divinity was awarded for research leading to a thesis. A major conference in 1965 opened the way for major changes not only for the MCD, but in theological education generally in Australasia. The College's postgraduate program developed with the addition of a Master of Theology in 1956 and a Doctor of Theology (DTheol) in 1972.

1.2.2 Phase 2: 1973–1990, Accredited Teaching of Theology

Following revision of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act* in 1972, the Roman Catholic Church was able to appoint representatives to the College. This was a most significant ecumenical development. In this phase, alongside its examining role, the MCD came to function as a federation of accredited colleges teaching a primary degree in theology. Newly instituted Boards of Studies processed the cross-moderation of units, faculty and assessment.

The development of similar Colleges of Divinity in other States and in New Zealand between 1979 and 1985 saw the focus of the MCD become more Melbourne-oriented. This focus was broadened by the introduction of the Advanced Ministry Studies Program in 1990.

1.2.3 Phase 3: 1990–2000, Teaching and Diversification of Mission

In this phase, the teaching work of the ATIs continued to be the main focus of the MCD's educational work. Joint BA/BTheol degrees with the University of Melbourne and Monash University began in 1991 and the College became affiliated with the University of Melbourne in 1993. In 1991 the MCD took over the administration and publication of *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies*, established in 1987 as its official (refereed) journal.

A Master of Ministry degree proceeded from the 1990 revision of the Act. This degree was administered by a Director of Ministry Studies located at the MCD administration. The Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Ministry were accredited in 1994 to provide for the formational needs of the churches.

The Act also empowered the College to offer other postgraduate awards: Ministry Studies added a Graduate Diploma and Doctorate, and a coursework Master of Theological Studies was approved in 1997. Further diversification was represented in the affiliation of centres engaging with special areas of focus: Spirituality, Ecumenism, Education and Gender Studies. In 1999, the Graduate Diploma in Theology and Master of Arts awards were introduced. The Doctor of Philosophy was introduced in 1999.

1.2.4 Phase 4: 2001–2005, Researching and Restructuring

In 2001 the MCD was listed as a Schedule 1 Institution and became eligible to receive Federal funding for research. The MCD became eligible to participate in the Postgraduate Education Loan Scheme (PELS) in 2002. The *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA 2003) listed the MCD as a Table B (private, self-regulating) Higher Education Provider, which allowed MCD students to access federally funded loans under the FEE-HELP scheme. This combination of features made MCD unique in the ranks of theological institutions in Australia.

On 13 July 2004, the Victorian Department of Education and Training approached the MCD, along with the eight Victorian universities, with a view to amending all nine Acts to align them with new National Governance Protocols. The College took the opportunity to review its structures and put desired changes into its Act (see section 2), which included a redefinition of the College to include all persons associated with it (rather than just the 27 Church representatives), and the establishment of a 15-member governing Council and an Academic Board.

In reading the MCD Performance Portfolio and the supporting documentation, the Audit Panel noted comments on the importance of the institution preserving the theological and spiritual

values inherited from its past, and the growing realisation of the need for MCD to embrace new methods and ways of doing things because of the changing educational policy environment in which the College now finds itself. Where appropriate, comment on these issues is made in this Report.

1.3 MCD: the College and ‘the colleges’

The word ‘College’, which was once taken as standing for the institution’s formal governing body, is now understood as referring to the institution as a whole. However, looking at it from within ‘the College’, a clear distinction is made between that part called the ‘MCD administration’ and the constituent teaching bodies, namely the ATIs and teaching colleges.

In the context of the history and philosophy of the MCD and its quite distinctive organisational culture, the Audit Panel came more and more to appreciate the significance of the College’s achievements considering the nature of its federal structure. In particular, the Audit Panel was struck by what was more than once described during the Audit as “a currency of trust and collegiality” that exists between the College and its ATIs, as well as between the ATIs themselves.

It was evident to the Audit Panel that this was based on a reciprocal process of mutual commitment, support and understanding between people drawn from different Christian and spiritual traditions. Without it the MCD would not be able to operate at all (let alone successfully). The Panel formed the view that this achievement was of itself worthy of commendation.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends MCD for its success in nurturing the relationship between the MCD and its Associated Teaching Institutions and their various constituencies.

The Audit Panel concluded that as a theological education and training institution the College has embarked on a challenging enterprise. To enable the various ‘traditions’ to coexist as distinctive social and spiritual entities, a culture of mutual respect and tolerance must be almost perfectly matched by a cohesive philosophy of ecumenism. It is this that binds the ATIs together as mutually supportive parts of the whole — the Melbourne College of Divinity.

Without this balance, the Audit Panel considers that it would not be possible for the College to achieve its educational and organisational mission.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends MCD for the way in which the College is fulfilling its mission and goals of ecumenicity and theological education in a social context.

However, the College is now entering a new period of its development and it will be important for MCD to extend these relationships and achievements into the next phase.

2 GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Strategic Plan (2005) is virtually silent on the matter of governance, taking it as ‘given’ from the 2005 revision of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*, but it includes the following statement with respect to administration:

“Following an extensive review process, new regulations were introduced in 2003, which provide a clearer division between policy making and implementation. This has considerably streamlined administration, but the focus has now turned towards better networks of communication and the closer definition of executive roles. The Five Year Plan will seek to enhance the lines of communication between the central administration and the ATIs.” (p2)

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related ‘Key Value’:

“A climate of respect and openness”. (PF p8)

2.1 Governance

2.1.1 Pre-2005 Amendment of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*

As a self-regulating, private higher-education institution, the MCD was governed by its ruling body, ‘the College’ (in accordance with the terms of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910*) and reported to the Minister for Education and Training through the submission of its Annual Report for tabling in the Victorian Parliament. As noted above, ‘the College’ consisted of 27 members appointed by the churches.

This Act required that ‘College meetings’ took place at least four times per year, chaired by the President, with meetings generally held in rotation at the seven college campuses.

2.1.2 Post-2005 Amendment of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*

As noted, the MCD (Amendment) Bill 2005 was signed by the Governor on 11 October, appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 13 October and came into effect on 20 October. The Bill was passed, signed, and came into effect without any amendments.

The revision required ‘the College’ to include people other than just members of the governing body, and to establish ‘a Council’ of 15 persons — two from each church (one person must be external to the MCD from each church), the Dean, Chair of Academic Board (section 2.2), and three external persons appointed by the Council, ensuring a majority of external members.

The revision also required the establishment of a single Academic Board to have oversight over all academic matters; and that the ATIs will become ‘RTIs’, ‘Recognised Teaching Institutions’, with the definition of ‘recognised’ described as ‘flexible’.

The change of acronym from ATI to RTI, though seemingly insignificant, could have a profound influence on the future of MCD. There is further comment on the significance of the change from ATIs to RTIs at sections 2.2 and 2.5.

At the time of the audit visit MCD had already established an ‘Interim Council’ of 11, consisting of 10 church-appointees and the Dean. It was working closely with the existing Executive Committee of the College, providing interim directions in governance matters.

The Audit Panel also noted that there was a complete set of Draft Regulations in place for the transitional period from the proclamation of the Act to 31 March 2006.

2.2 *Academic Governance*

Prior to the passing of the amended *Melbourne College of Divinity Act 2005*, "... academic affairs of the MCD [were] regulated by three Boards, which [were] responsible for setting and maintaining the College's quality assurance mechanisms." (PF p9) The Boards were:

- the Board of Undergraduate Studies, which administers the Bachelor of Theology (BTheol) and other undergraduate awards
- the Board of Postgraduate Studies, which administers graduate coursework degrees and HDRs. There are also four Committees: Admissions and Credits, Graduate Studies, HDR, and the Advisory Committee on Spirituality and Spiritual Directions, and
- the Board of Ministry Studies, which administers all Ministry-related qualifications.

The Audit Panel found the multiplicity of these boards and committees, each requiring its own terms of reference, membership and reporting processes to be cumbersome and duplicative, especially for an institution the size of MCD, and was therefore interested in the College's intention to replace these Boards with a single Academic Board. In addition, the Audit Panel learned that 'academic boards' and teaching department-based structures with quality assurance responsibilities existed within the ATIs/teaching colleges, but observed that the relationship between these bodies and the MCD Boards listed above was indistinct. The Audit Panel therefore requested information about the expected impact of the amendment of the Act and was advised: "Academic governance structures would be simpler, with no more than three 'levels' of delegation: the Council, Academic Board and Committees. It is not unlikely that the present Boards of Studies and their Committees will become Committees of the Academic Board, but the precise shape of MCD academic delegations remains open." (MCD: AUQA Audit 2005 — Further Information Section 1A: Questions for Clarification, p10)

Given the interim nature of the academic governance responsibilities, a certain lack of precision on these matters is understandable. However, the Audit Panel believes that it is imperative for the new Academic Board to be squarely involved in determining its own operating arrangements, and that the decision-making and reporting paths to Council and the Office of the Dean be clarified, so it is absolutely clear whether the Academic Board is an autonomous decision-making body or a body that makes recommendations to other bodies for approval.

Furthermore, given the likely existence of a greater number of RTIs, some with existing academic boards or equivalent, and with greater variation of their academic profiles than the current ATIs, it is important that the roles and relationships between the new MCD Academic Board and its committees, and these new RTI bodies, be determined with respect to responsibilities for quality assurance.

Recommendation 1

In affirming MCD's decision to establish a single Academic Board, AUQA recommends that the new Academic Board be responsible for determining the structure and terms of reference for its subcommittees; and that MCD clarify the relationship of these subcommittees to the new Recognised Teaching Institutions and other MCD decision-making bodies, including the relationship between the MCD Academic Board and academic boards (or equivalent) located in the new Recognised Teaching Institutions.

With respect to the need for another specific committee of the Academic Board, readers are also referred to affirmation 9 in section 5 of this Report.

2.2.1 Chairs of Examiners

In terms of academic quality assurance, a critically important body is the 'Chairs of Examiners' which in the Performance Portfolio is described in the following terms: "Chairs (and Deputy Chairs) of Examiners are appointed annually by the College for each of the four Fields, and for Ministry Studies, on the recommendation of the relevant Board. They are charged with regulating all examinations and Examination Boards, whether by coursework or research ... and report annually to the College through the Registrar." (PF p10)

Further comment is made on the quality assurance role of the Board of Examiners in section 5 of this Report.

2.2.2 The Human Research Ethics Committee

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) oversees the ethical aspects of research at MCD. The HREC was established in 2000. It is chaired by a respected university-based academic and is made up primarily of professionals and private citizens not connected to the College in other ways. The HREC submits an annual written report to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and has also been required to report to the College (ie governing body). The Audit Panel questions whether this practice will continue under the new Council or whether the HREC should report to the new Academic Board, and urges that this issue be considered in the context of recommendation 1 of this Report.

2.2.3 Library Resources and LIAM

There are in total twelve libraries that belong to or are operated by the teaching colleges of the MCD, in support of the College's educational mission. These libraries provide facilities and resources to meet the educational and research needs of faculty, students and community members, and are mostly managed by professional librarians.

The Portfolio states that: "The MCD-related libraries contain significant collections of theological material acquired over many years, covering biblical studies, philosophy, theology, church history, missiology, spirituality, pastoral studies and related areas." (PF p11) In addition, it states that, "all are seeking to keep abreast of current technology: most collections are automated, with bibliographic access ... online public access catalogues ... [some] accessible remotely via internet, and many subscribe to online serials and databases." (PF p11)

Another College initiative was the establishment of Librarians of Institutions Associated with the MCD (LIAM), which was formed to explore "the possibility and/or desirability of further cooperation ... between theological libraries in Melbourne which are available to students of the College, both undergraduate and postgraduate." (PF p11)

The MCD is extremely proud of these libraries and the LIAM initiative, identifying them in their self-review as 'an area of excellence', and in the following terms, as: "*The most substantial and accessible network of theological libraries in the southern hemisphere.*" (PF p12)

To test this claim, in addition to a member of the Audit Panel meeting with members of LIAM, the Audit Panel requested that the AUQA Information Manager (herself a qualified librarian), visit four of the MCD libraries, including the Joint Theological Library located in the grounds of Ormond College at the University of Melbourne, to report her observations. The library visits left her with a very positive impression of staff providing one-to-one professional service to their constituency and with collections and facilities well maintained; though dependent on the financial resources available to them.

The Audit Panel also questioned both postgraduate and undergraduate students about their experience of using MCD libraries, especially when it was learned that undergraduate students

were generally denied reciprocal borrowing rights across libraries, but this proved not to be an issue with the undergraduate students interviewed.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends MCD for the quality of the collections at the theological libraries within existing Associated Teaching Institutions; the establishment of the Librarians of Institutions Associated with MCD and their high level of collaboration; and for the quality of reader support services provided by the librarians.

However, it was noted that recent feedback from library users was not available, and this is considered in section 4.3 under Teaching and Learning.

2.3 The MCD Administration

At the time of the Audit Visit the 'MCD administration' comprised an establishment of 7.9 EFT positions (filled by nine persons):

- The Dean — CEO of the MCD, exercising general oversight of the educational and administrative affairs of the College
- The Registrar — the Secretary of the College, responsible for its records, finances, administrative services, property and publications
- Executive Assistant to the Dean and Registrar — a part-time, fractional appointment
- The Director of Ministry Studies (a position also occupied by the Registrar) — responsible for the only part of the MCD curriculum taught outside the ATI structure;
- The Associate Registrar (Coursework) — responsible for the coursework PG and UG programs (excluding Ministry studies)
- Administrative Assistant to the Associate Registrar (Coursework) and the Director of Ministry Studies
- The Associate Registrar (Research) — responsible for coordinating and promoting research across MCD, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) reporting on research matters, and working with the Board and committees that deal with MCD research agenda
- Executive Assistant (Finance) — a part-time, fractional appointment
- Administrative assistant (Finance and Research) — a part-time, fractional appointment, and
- Receptionist — a part-time, fractional appointment.

All other 'MCD staff' are either teaching faculty or general staff employed by the ATIs, and usually located within the teaching colleges. In addition, there is considerable reliance on voluntarism, which is partly if not mainly due to the involvement of members of religious orders in the delivery of MCD accredited programs.

The MCD administration has doubled since 2000, primarily as a result of the growth of the College's research agenda and increased financial accounting and DEST reporting responsibilities, and this growth had raised some fears within the ATIs of a growing centralising tendency.

One of the most significant recent administrative initiatives for the MCD has been the adoption of 'TAMS' (the MCD Theological Academic Management System, also known as MCDTAMS). There is further comment on TAMS in section 3 of this Report.

2.4 *External Professional Relationships*

The Performance Portfolio focuses almost exclusively on the existence of the Joint MCD/University of Melbourne Committee under this heading. The MCD was formally affiliated with the University in 1993, but links between the two institutions go back much further than that. Indeed, it can be argued that the MCD came into being because: “The 1890 University of Melbourne Act, composed in a climate of sectarian disputes over schooling and growing anti-religious sentiment in learned circles, authorized the University to confer degrees ‘in any Faculty except Divinity’.” (The MCD — An Historical Overview, Supplementary Materials 1.4, p2) This decision by the University ultimately led to the adoption of an Act by the Victorian State Parliament, establishing the MCD as a provider of studies in Divinity in 1910.

The 1993 affiliation agreement focuses primarily on ‘promoting and encouraging’ opportunities for cooperation and resource sharing between the two institutions, in areas such as research and teaching.

However, the Audit Panel noted that the Report of the 2004 Quality Assurance Audit (trial audit) found that: “The role of the MCD-University of Melbourne Committee ... is not clear to us. There may be some potential for this Committee to contribute to quality assurance in an indirect way.” (Supplementary Materials 5.12, pp 18–19)

From the Performance Portfolio, and also from interview sessions during the visits to the ATIs, the Audit Panel also learned of various links that MCD had with Monash University and the Australian Catholic University (ACU). The Panel noted the relatively undeveloped nature of the relationships that MCD appears to have with these institutions in terms of active collaborations. The Panel formed the view that even with its ‘affiliate’, the University of Melbourne, much more could be done to help MCD improve its quality assurance mechanisms and, through this, improve the quality of teaching, learning and research outcomes.

These observations led the Audit Panel to make two linked recommendations. The first of these is aimed at lifting the level of active collaboration by MCD with other providers of higher education (HE) programs in sympathetic areas of activity and related fields of study, with which it has already established links.

Recommendation 2

AUQA recommends that MCD explore opportunities to leverage existing relationships with universities (viz. Australian Catholic University, University of Melbourne, and Monash University) to access regular and high-level training for research supervisors; professional development for staff; and opportunities for joint research.

There is also a comment in relation to the specific opportunities afforded by the affiliation agreement with the University of Melbourne in the Research and Research Training section of this Report (section 6).

The second of these recommendations, however, is aimed more at the opportunities that collaboration with other institutions on quality assurance matters may provide MCD in benchmarking its performance. This includes other providers of theological and divinity education and training programs, both universities and non self-accrediting theological institutions.

Recommendation 3

AUQA recommends that MCD seek to establish external benchmarking processes in order that objective judgements can be made about the quality of the College's research, teaching and learning.

See also affirmation 11 in section 8 of this Report.

2.5 MCD Structural Relationships

As a result of the passing of the Melbourne College of Divinity (Amendment) Bill 2005, the College again finds itself in a new phase of development.

During the course of the Audit, the Audit Panel asked both the MCD administration and the ATIs for information about their expectations and vision for the future of the College. In the Performance Portfolio, it was described in these terms: "The revision of the Act in Autumn 2005 marks the entry of the MCD into the next phase of its existence. This phase is likely to be characterized externally by increasing interface with the government and the wider Higher Education sector, and internally by an overall tightening of the 'federation' model ... This dual development will inevitably result in tension and possible conflict of interest, and call for new patterns of partnership between MCD administration and the teaching colleges." (PF p7)

This was followed in the Portfolio by an "Immediate Goal ... (as the MCD moves toward its Centenary in 2010): *Fostering regulated growth within the MCD.*" (PF p7)

In response to a request for further information about what this actually meant, the Audit Panel was advised: "Contingent on the MCD (Amendment) Bill 2005 receiving Royal assent, the term and functions of the ATIs will be replaced by 'Recognized Teaching Institutions'. One effect of this change is that teaching institutions not presently part of MCD may be recognized to teach particular MCD awards, rather than the full range of awards currently offered by the ATIs ... Consequently, new and more diverse types of partnership are expected to emerge following the revision to the Act ..." (MCD: AUQA Audit 2005 — Further Information, Section 1A: Questions for Clarification, p5)

The Audit Panel also learned that one of the existing ATIs had signalled its intention to dissolve and its constituent teaching colleges seek direct recognition by MCD as RTIs in 2006, and also that interest had already been expressed by some institutions outside of the MCD in gaining RTI status. In this context the Audit Panel confirms that the goal of seeking 'regulated growth' is appropriate, and urges the College to consider identifying clear evaluation criteria for the joining of RTIs, including consideration of the possible effects on institutional ethos, teaching and research profiles, and financial viability and sustainability.

Affirmation 1

AUQA affirms the MCD strategy of aiming for 'regulated growth', but urges the College to be conscious of the potential problems posed by rapid growth in the number of Recognised Teaching Institutions.

3 PLANNING, POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The MCD Strategic Plan (2005) includes the following statement with respect to planning, policy and implementation:

“Following an extensive review process, new regulations were introduced in 2003, which provide a clearer division between policy making and implementation. This has considerably streamlined administration, but the focus has now turned towards better networks of communication and the closer definition of executive roles. The Five Year Plan will seek to enhance the lines of communication between the central administration and the ATIs.” (SP p2)

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related ‘Key Value’:

“Enthusiasm, flexibility and innovation”. (PF p16)

3.1 Organisational Restructuring

The Performance Portfolio sets out what is described as an “extensive eight-year review process”, involving a series of milestone events:

- ‘Towards 2010’ (MCD’s centenary) — the development of a key planning document followed by a conference of that name in 1997, which culminated in the establishment of a ‘Task Force’ and its report (bearing the same title) delivered to the College in 1999
- the Policy & Development Committee — a key recommendation of the ‘Towards 2010’ report. Once established, the Committee was charged with ‘bringing to the College recommendations for developing a strategic plan’
- the ‘Green Paper’ (2000) — which posited the adoption of a centralised administration with the colleges operating as campuses of this central administration, which was not favourably received by several of the ATIs
- the ‘White Paper’ (2002/3) — which reversed much of the Green Paper’s thrust for centralisation by emphasising the “relative autonomy of each ATI ... and that there was the need to engage ATI representatives more fully in the resolution of policy and procedural initiatives” (PF p18), but which put in place the current administrative framework of the MCD
- the Open Meeting of the Policy & Development Committee (30 August 2002), which resulted in a series of resolutions adopted by the College in November 2002 that gave expression to “the widely felt need to simplify administrative complexities”, [the] principle of drawing a clear distinction between policy and implementation, [and that] the Boards and Committees define their policies and procedures in these terms and identify and empower appropriate officers to implement policy” (PF p18), and finally,
- ‘Vision day’ meeting with the Executive Committee (22 November 2003) — a strategic planning day that culminated in the adoption by the College of the resulting Vision, Mission, Values, and Context Statements (see section 1) in June 2004. A draft Strategic Plan was circulated in combination with these statements and the Strategic Plan was adopted by the Executive Committee and the College in February 2005. (PF p19)

The Audit Panel reviewed the MCD Strategic Plan (2005) and found it to be an unconventional document when compared to the strategic plans typical of those found in Australian universities, in that it contains: ‘statements’ rather than explicit, clearly identifiable strategic goals or objectives; few prioritised implementation strategies; no measures of success, performance indicators, or explicit target dates for completion; and limited explicit allocation of responsibilities for implementation (except to the Registrar and associate registrars). Nor is there any indication of how the ‘Five-Year’ and ‘Two-Year’ Plan components are integrated with each

other, and with any other MCD plans, and nor does the plan make any reference to the need for ongoing performance monitoring and review processes that are necessary to make a plan a living document.

The MCD Strategic Plan also neither includes nor even refers to the College's existing Vision, Mission, Values and Context statements; nor does it include the College's approved Objectives — all of which are referred to in section 1 of this Report. However, as noted above, it does attempt to allocate some executive roles and responsibilities, and refers to the need for financial implications to be considered.

The Audit Panel noted that the MCD Performance Portfolio 'Immediate Goal 5' was to "Establish an MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan" and that this was "clearly a high priority for MCD in the immediate future." (PF p31) (See also section 4.4.) However, there were no commitments to develop any other plans for strategically important areas of activity, such as a new research, research training plan and human resources.

The Audit Panel concluded that though an historic achievement for an institution of the nature of the MCD, the College's approach to strategic planning is still relatively underdeveloped. It would benefit from the adoption of a more structured approach — in which the Strategic Plan provides a framework from which institution-wide and area plans would cascade — such as for teaching, learning, research and research training. It should also be linked with functional plans, such as for human resource and financial management planning, and for the planning of international activities.

Recommendation 4

AUQA recommends that MCD adopt a strategic-planning framework which *inter alia* harmonises the development of the MCD Strategic Plan with the development of the MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan, and a new research and research training plan.

There is also a need to consider how these MCD-wide plans will relate to plans to be developed by the new RTIs for the exercise of their devolved responsibilities for policy implementation. With respect to adopting a more clearly institutional 'mission/vision' driven approach to strategic planning, the Audit Panel believes that these and other institutional 'strategic direction statements' should be fully incorporated into the plan, rather than merely accompanying it.

In addition to the College's approved objectives, the 'Immediate Goals', 'Long Term Goals' and the 'Areas of Improvement' identified by the College could provide a good starting point for identifying the sort of strategic goals, objectives and strategies that need to be included in future iterations of the MCD Strategic Plan.

3.2 *Administrative and Academic Restructuring*

The Audit Panel noted that in making the transition from being purely an examinations body for the Ministry to an institution based on teaching and scholarship, the need to rationalise the MCD fee structure had been recognised. Consequently, steps were taken between 2002 and 2005 to achieve consistency in relation to all MCD fees, based on effective full-time student load assessments.

On the other hand, the Audit Panel also noted the following statements in the Performance Portfolio indicating that the systems required for effective student administration and record-keeping were in need of concerted attention:

- “Exact figures on the social and ethnic background of MCD students are difficult to calculate, particularly at an undergraduate level, as data for these students is maintained by ATIs, which traditionally have not been required to record such information.” (PF p47)
- “Reliable statistics on student numbers across MCD prior to 2004 are difficult to establish due to the distinctive history and nature of the MCD. Records for centrally-examined [sic] awards (notably the BD) are available, but records for undergraduate awards are kept by the ATIs.” (PF p47)

Another instance of the systems’ shortcomings was found in the section dealing with international students at MCD: “Other international students are currently studying towards the BTheol, but details on these countries are not available because the present details relating to these students were held in ATI offices, and this information was not required to be collected.” (PF p57)

The response by MCD to these shortcomings was the introduction of TAMS in mid-2003, coming into full operation in 2005. This is described in the Portfolio in the following terms: “A prime factor driving this development was the need to simplify the enrolment processes across the MCD, and the subsequent maintenance of students’ records. The aim is to dispense with a system of dual record keeping, at ATI level and at the MCD administration ... However, full utilization of MCD TAMS by all parties involved in record keeping is required to ensure efficiency, consistency and accountability.” (PF p21)

The Audit Panel noted that the MCDTAMS had been written into the Five Year Plan of the MCD Strategic Plan (2005), but was still concerned that the inability of MCD to systematically gather information of this nature was actually an impediment to achieving those objectives that require the College “... to engage in wider social contexts” and “to respect, encourage, challenge and inform students who come to the College to learn”. (PF pp2–3)

After confirming details with administrative staff across the ATIs, it was clear from the treatment given above that MCD had identified these activities as areas drastically in need of improvement, prompting the following affirmation.

Affirmation 2

AUQA affirms the need for consistent and full use of the Theological Academic Management System by all MCD constituents, and for MCD to fully develop an effective record archiving process.

However, a particular and related concern that was expressed at one of the ATIs was the way in which the rules for course level requirements for various units in moral theology and philosophy in the BTheol were not clearly defined in the MCD *Handbook Part II*, which was last printed in 2001. In this respect the Audit Panel noted that MCD had identified the need to review the BTheol and update the relevant handbook for the BTheol as ‘areas of improvement’.

The Audit Panel also noted that in the Strategic Plan (2005) MCD had identified the need for “a common MCD Handbook”, with the objective that “by the end of the two-year period, there should be no need for each ATI to print its own handbook ...” (MCD Strategic Plan 2005, p4) However, this particular objective had *not* been included as either an immediate or long term goal, or as an area of improvement in the MCD Performance Portfolio. The extent, therefore, to which MCD is committed to this initiative and to addressing issues, such as the one raised by an ATI noted above, was unclear.

Recommendation 5

Noting the intention to update ‘*Handbook Part II: Bachelor of Theology, Advanced Diploma and Diploma in Ministry*’, AUQA recommends that MCD

adopt a single handbook, accessible via the Web and which is regularly updated in consultation with the Associated Teaching Institutions / Recognised Teaching Institutions.

3.3 *Ongoing Self-Review and Restructuring*

Reference has already been made to the fact that MCD was not obliged to open its 1910 Act in order to address the national governance protocols. It chose to do so because the College saw the advantages of using it as an opportunity to improve both corporate and academic governance, and to usher in arrangements for a new phase of its development. Comment of a positive nature has already been made to the way the College embraced the AUQA Audit as an opportunity to improve its quality assurance processes. The Audit Panel also wishes to acknowledge the College's initiative of adopting a nascent strategic management approach, even though there is room for considerable improvement in its implementation.

Commendation 4

AUQA commends MCD for setting new directions for the College by exercising the decision to invite amendment of the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*, in order to achieve improvements in corporate and academic governance, and for efforts to implement a strategic planning approach.

Clearly, one of the major areas for improvement in the planning and policy area at MCD is the implementation of a more clearly focused performance review and improvement approach. In this respect, the Audit Panel affirms the intent of the College's self-review finding of the need to compile course completion and attrition rates on an annual basis, and there are further comments on implementation aspects of this in sections 5 and 7 of this Report.

4 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The MCD Strategic Plan (2005) includes the following statements with respect to Teaching and Learning:

“Curriculum Development

“In the shorter term, it is proposed that Field meetings (perhaps twice per year) include all MCD faculty who teach in the Field, shaping teaching and learning proposals across the whole MCD... These Field meetings would focus on planning, rather than processes for accreditation, since the appropriate Boards must maintain responsibility for recommending accreditation to the College...

“The four Fields would be divided as follows:

- *Humanities*
- *Biblical Studies*
- *Systematic Theology*
- *Practical Theology*”. (p4)

“Specialized Areas of Learning

“The College will explore ways in which streams of thematically focused learning and research can be advanced. New programs would not draw faculty and resources out of the ATIs, but rather, work with the MCD to provide flexible processes for co-operative ventures.” (p4)

“Library Resources

“The Libraries in Association with the Melbourne College of Divinity (LIAM) will continue to be supported financially from the central administration according to formulae approved by the Finance and Development Committee. LIAM will be encouraged to continue the development of a unified electronic catalogue, and beyond that, a unified library system.” (p5)

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related ‘Key Value’:

“Interdependence in the development of all learning activities”. (PF p25)

And the following ‘Key Objective’:

“to offer scholars and students of Divinity the opportunity to anchor faith in understanding, and in a spirit of dialogue to engage with wider social contexts”. (PF p25)

4.1 *The Locus of Learning*

‘The locus of learning’ is described in the Performance Portfolio in these terms: “Within the MCD, the location of teaching and learning is a combination of central oversight and local operation ... This bifocal arrangement imbues the MCD with a character distinct from the more unified structures of teaching and learning in public universities”. (PF p25)

The Portfolio then goes on to say: “There are distinct disadvantages to the MCD’s current structure: for example, many students have little sense of belonging to the MCD as a whole, and may not experience its ecumenical character as fully as could otherwise be possible, because their studies mainly take place at one ATI”. (PF p25)

With the exception of postgraduate/masters studies in Ministry based at the MCD administration in Kew, the locus of the *delivery* of teaching and learning activity at MCD is clearly within the

ATIs/teaching colleges, where the academic staff members are employed or volunteer to teach, and where the library facilities are located.

One possible exception that was brought to the attention of the Audit Panel is the 'Theology Online' initiative at Trinity College, a teaching college of the United Faculty of Theology. Trinity College offers the following MCD awards online:

- Diploma in Ministry
- Graduate Diploma in Theology (in partnership with UFT), and
- Master of Divinity (also in partnership with UFT).

These courses are described as "accompanied online learning ... 'virtual classes' that are offered during the regular timeframes of Trinity College Theological School semesters". (*Trinity College Theology Handbook 2005*, p8)

The Audit Panel took the opportunity to review the online delivery arrangements for the Master of Divinity and observes that the adoption of a flexible delivery approach across the MCD may help to overcome the 'tyranny of location' disadvantage noted above, whereby students located at any future RTI may be able to study units offered by another RTI, remotely via online learning.

Commendation 5

AUQA commends the initiative at Trinity College to offer courses in Divinity and Theology online, and acknowledges it as an exemplar for the further spread of online learning through MCD.

The Audit Panel noted that there are now uniform fees across MCD for all undergraduates, including fees for 'exchange' students (those taking units away from their home college). In this respect, the question of how to manage the lending rights of 'exchange' students is currently under discussion by LIAM. (Response to AUQA Request for Further Information, Section A1, p12)

4.2 Teaching and Learning Goals

The MCD has developed a draft statement of learning outcomes within the BTheol for Fields/Disciplines and Levels as a result of curriculum development across the ATIs at the Inter-ATI Departmental Day in February 2005.

Prior to this, no specific learning outcomes for the BTheol or its units were included in the original BTheol Regulation, but were introduced following the adoption of a standard Unit Description pro forma in 2002, leading to the development of a revised Credit Policy in 2004.

The Audit panel noted that "it was envisaged that these changes would be taken up into the review of undergraduate awards in 2005–2006", and that Area of Improvement IV identified in the self-review process was to: "Frame unit learning outcomes in the context of broader discipline and level specific outcomes as identified in the draft Statement of Learning Outcomes — MCD Fields/Disciplines/Levels, and Graduate Outcomes for MCD Awards". (PF p26) As it is far and away MCD's biggest program, there is also further comment on the review of the BTheol in section 5.3.

The Audit Panel had an opportunity to review the work being done on learning outcomes and observed that the adoption of year level outcomes is not a particularly useful way of proceeding in the light of MCD having a number of double and even triple-coded units. In view of the importance of learning outcomes and their assessment for the further development of the MCD curriculum in general, and for the designated fields of specialisation in particular (e.g. Systematic

Theology), the College could benefit from gaining expert external guidance on how to proceed with their further development (see also recommendation 8 in section 4.4).

Recommendation 6

AUQA recommends that MCD seek external guidance on the development of learning outcome statements and their assessment in the context of specific awards, fields of study and units.

Notwithstanding this specific recommendation, the Audit Panel was struck by the opportunities afforded for critical theological enquiry across the traditions, characterised by an openness of dialogue, and a collaborative approach to ecumenical education. The Audit Panel considered this to be a distinctive feature of the MCD curriculum and worthy of commendation.

Commendation 6

AUQA commends MCD for the embedded nature of and widespread commitment to the objective of encouraging ecumenical values in the MCD curriculum.

4.3 Feedback Structures for Teaching and Learning

In line with the ‘locus of learning’ argument outlined above, the success or otherwise of any ‘bifocal’ responsibility for quality assurance of teaching and learning rests on there being an appropriate balance between “central oversight and local operation”. This is perhaps best illustrated in the decision-making involved to use either a single, common system, or multiple systems to gather ‘explicit feedback’ from MCD students on the quality of their teaching and learning across the various ATIs.

In the record of the MCD Staff Consultation Day held in November 2004, the Dean reported that: “Student evaluations should be conducted by the central administration of the MCD, rather than on an ATI level.” (SM 4.8, p4)

In the Portfolio this issue is described in the following terms: “Explicitly, evaluation and response forms are used in each ATI to allow students to critique, anonymously and voluntarily, the teaching and assessment of units ... Evaluation forms are received and processed by ATI Deans in three of the four ATIs ... The process of explicit evaluation carried out at Catholic Theological College differs from this process. At CTC, a report charting student feedback is prepared by an outside agent and is received by the Master of the College rather than the Academic Dean.” (PF pp29–30)

The Audit Panel initially thought this issue had been resolved since it was then stated that: “The ATI Deans in 2004 recognised that a common form for use across the MCD should be developed”. And that: “The ATI Deans indicated in 2005 that the ACU procedure used by CTC is a model which could be used to great effect across the MCD as a whole.” This was followed by Area of Improvement VII to “Utilize a standardized student evaluation process across all ATIs similar to the one used by CTC.” (PF p30)

However, during the visits to the ATIs it emerged that although there was general support for the principle of having a common MCD student evaluation/feedback process, there was not yet clear endorsement of a particular system or a common form. This is one quality assurance practice where the balance should lean more towards central oversight than local operation, and a standard ‘core’ student evaluation instrument should be adopted for coursework study. The evaluation items and the possibilities for customised add-on options should be developed in consultation with the new RTIs.

Affirmation 3

AUQA affirms the use of a standard student evaluation form for coursework study across all Recognised Teaching Institutions and all fields of study.

Adoption of a standardised evaluation instrument is only a first step, and what follows in terms of implementing an evaluative review process and implementing actions in response to review findings is what lies at the heart of a systematic approach to performance review. The Audit Panel anticipates that the adoption of a standard approach to the evaluation of teaching across the new RTIs will be linked with staff performance review more generally at MCD (section 7).

Another former quality feedback practice was the Library Perceptions Surveys administered by the Joint Theological Library in 1995 and 1997. These had gathered useful information on how to target limited resources to gain improvements in the quality of services and resources in the areas that mattered most to the users. The Audit Panel noted that no such surveys appeared to have been administered in the last eight years and, given the importance of the quality of networked libraries to the MCD, the Panel recommends that this practice be revived.

Recommendation 7

AUQA recommends that MCD reinstate student satisfaction surveys about library resources and services.

4.4 *Towards an MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan*

The Teaching and Learning section of the Portfolio concludes with the following forthright statement: “The MCD has for most of its 95 years operated without a formal Teaching and Learning Plan. However, it is not true to conclude that no strategy for its educational ministry has been in place. Quite apart from the AUQA audit process, the significant developments of Phases 3 and 4 [see section 1.2], point to the evolution of an implicit teaching plan.

“However, the shaping of a formal Teaching and Learning Plan is clearly a high priority for the MCD in the immediate future.” (PF p31)

As already noted in section 3, this statement was followed by “Immediate Goal 5 – Establish an MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan.” (PF p31)

The need for MCD to adopt a strategic-planning framework which *inter alia* harmonises with the development of the MCD Teaching and Learning Management Plan has already been stated in section 3. The Audit Panel recommends that this initiative should be considered with respect to recommendation 6 above, in relation to the further development of learning outcome and assessment statements for MCD. Any future initiative of this kind must work closely with the Field and discipline experts in the new RTIs.

Recommendation 8

In affirming the importance of MCD developing a Teaching and Learning Management Plan, AUQA recommends that the Plan identify a set of negotiated teaching and learning outcomes for the College as a whole, which have been developed through a process of consultation with the new Recognised Teaching Institutions; and a related policy on assessment, which makes an explicit statement about assessment requirements across Recognised Teaching Institutions.

The Audit Panel suggests that there could be value in the College obtaining support in this process from experienced teaching and learning officers at universities.

5 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Preamble to the MCD Strategic Plan (2005) commences with the following statement:

“In enhancing the quality of the MCD’s educational services, there is a need to streamline the administration, while at the same time benchmarking educational outcomes in national/international contexts, to ensure a consistency of standards across the whole consortium.”

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related ‘Key Value’:

“[C]ritical enquiry and open dialogue in the exploration of truth”. (PF p32)

The MCD Performance Portfolio also nominates the following ‘Key Objectives’:

“[T]o pursue the highest standards in teaching and research in Divinity and associated disciplines”. (PF p32)

And:

“Quality assurance at MCD involves ongoing review processes of teaching colleges, courses, units and faculty, as well as external reviews necessitated by legislation”. (PF p32)

5.1 Cyclic Reviews of ATIs

The Portfolio indicates that the ATIs are reviewed in a cyclic process: one is ‘audited’ per year, while the others “[have] their academic processes moderated”. (PF p32) Prior to 2001, the ‘cyclic reviews’ focused on the moderation of units, with only a brief review of the ATI as a whole. In 2001, all units in one field were moderated across all ATIs, and in subsequent years whole-of-institution ‘site visits’ took place, including a look at quality assurance mechanisms: CTC in 2002; and ETA in 2003, including the production of an ETA performance portfolio.

In 2004, the three other ATIs were audited: CTC, UFT, and YTU. Each ATI also prepared an AUQA-style performance portfolio. The MCD Performance Portfolio states: “The overall aim of the internal auditing process was to consider the questions posed in the AUQA Audit Manual... ‘what are our internal quality procedures?’, ‘Are they appropriate?’, ‘Are they effective?’ and ‘How do we know?’ The audits served as an integral part of the MCD self-review, and were instrumental in the composition of the MCD Performance Portfolio.” (PF p33)

See subsection 5.5 for an Audit finding in relation to this self-review activity.

5.2 Review of Courses

As noted elsewhere in this Report, quality assurance of teaching and learning rests on there being an appropriate balance struck between central oversight and local operation.

If cyclic review of the ATIs by MCD administration provides the central oversight, there is still a need to review operations at the locus of learning and this involves the review of courses and units of study. Arrangements for the review of courses at MCD are as follows (arrangements for units are covered in the following subsection).

The Portfolio provides an extended account of the review of Divinity courses and various postgraduate and undergraduate awards, culminating in the following summary statement: “The

reviews and proposed reviews described above have been motivated by the perceived need at Board level for revision of awards in order to ensure consistency amongst degrees at similar level (Undergraduate, Grad Dip, Masters, Doctoral), closer compliance with the AQF ...

“The review and changes arose out of a quality assurance mechanism, driven by Boards of Studies ... to evaluate the extent to which they were meeting internal and external requirements and standards. The awards and regulations governing them were revised where these requirements were perceived as not being met.” (PF p35)

With the decision made to establish a single Academic Board, responsibility to maintain the balance between central oversight and local operation should pass to that body. As with the views of ATIs described above, cyclic review at the course level should cover all MCD awards.

Recommendation 9

AUQA recommends that Academic Board design a mechanism for the five-yearly review of all awards offered by MCD that preserves the balance between central oversight and local operation.

5.3 Approval, Moderation and Review Procedures

At the unit-of-study, field or subject expertise is more likely to reside at the local operational level. However, even here, MCD recognises the need to preserve some balance between the centre and the periphery. Take for example the following: “No unit or subject can be taught or examined for an MCD award unless it has been approved by the College following a Board recommendation. Before a new unit appears on a Board agenda it must have been approved by the faculty of the ATI proposing it ... and by two academics in the applicable Field, one of whom is external to the teaching institution concerned.” (PF p35)

The Audit Panel considers that this approach is sound, and confirms that it should continue under the new academic governance arrangements.

Affirmation 4

AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to commit to undertake a systematic, cyclic review of units to consolidate the present review processes.

The Portfolio also covers the role of the Chairs of Examiners in the assessment and examination processes, and describes the moderation processes for coursework assessment and the moderation of theses. As noted above in section 2 of this Report, the Chairs of Examiners are charged with regulating all examinations and Examination Boards, whether by coursework or research, and they report annually to the College through the Registrar. The Audit Panel questioned the current reporting arrangements via the Registrar and was advised that this would not continue once the new Academic Board and its committee structure was in place.

Also, (as mentioned in section 4.2) the Audit Panel noted the following statement with respect to the BTheol:

“Concern has been expressed by two ATIs that current requirements of the BTheol do not stipulate sufficient units in Systematic Theology to be undertaken. They point out that it is possible for a student to graduate with a BTheol having undertaken only two units in Systematic Theology. A review of the BTheol must address this issue.” (PF p26)

Not only does the Audit Panel support this self-review finding, it believes that the proposed review of the BTheol should provide an opportunity to bring forward a number of the issues mentioned in other sections of this Report in order to rationalise and enhance certain aspects of

MCD curriculum offerings. For example, this statement from the Teaching and Learning section of the MCD Performance Portfolio: “The distinct denominational heritage of each teaching college also means that *different approaches are taken to units which appear similar. Nevertheless, duplication does take place in unit offerings across the MCD.*” (PFp25: text in italics is AUQA’s emphasis)

In the context of other decisions already made by MCD (and endorsed by this Audit Panel) — such as the commitment to further develop and codify learning outcomes, and the decision to issue a common handbook — this observation suggests that MCD should conduct a comprehensive review of the BTheol to address issues already identified by the College in its self-review.

Affirmation 5

AUQA affirms the MCD decision to review the BTheol with an emphasis on: greater consistency of content; assessment and learning outcomes; and the potential for rationalisation in delivery, especially in the third year of the program.

The Audit Panel suggests that it would be useful for students seeking information from various RTIs to have a common standard for the expression of unit descriptors, objectives/learning outcomes, and assessment requirements (see also recommendations 6 and 8 above).

5.4 External Review

At the whole-of-institution level, MCD is required to report annually to the Department of Education, Science, and Training (DEST) in a number of ways; for example, research outputs and student completions. Reporting to DEST was a factor in the development of the MCDTAMS web-based student records database. As a self-accrediting institution, MCD is also subject to cyclical audits by AUQA.

In addition, MCD is involved with a number of external, national and international theological and discipline-based consortia, such as:

- The Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS)
- The Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia (CDTC), and
- Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS).

There is comment on the opportunities for benchmarking afforded by involvement in international consortia in section 8.

5.5 Quality Assurance & Performance Monitoring: Improvement

The Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring chapter of the Portfolio concludes with the following statement:

“This chapter has sought to survey the processes of assuring that appropriate standards are reviewed and maintained in the teaching, learning and examination processes of MCD. The series of reviews, both academic and administrative, conducted in Phases 3 and 4 [of MCD’s history], and the ongoing system of academic moderation, give evidence of concern of the MCD in this regard.” (PF p40)

The Portfolio then lists a series of Immediate and Long-Term Goals as self-review findings, and there is commentary by the Audit Panel on two of these immediately below (the other two having already been commented on above).

Firstly, in order to maintain the balance between central oversight and local operation, there is a need to gear the continuing review of the RTIs with the cyclical AUQA audits of MCD as a whole.

Affirmation 6

AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to adopt a five-year cycle of Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring.

The Portfolio states that “An essential part of the Teaching and Learning Management Plan will be to make *explicit*, to direct and to review the quality assurance and performance monitoring procedures that have been *implicit in MCD operations in the past several decades...*” (PF p 40: text in italics is AUQA’s emphasis)

AUQA affirms that the new Academic Board will need an expert, dedicated subcommittee to *explicitly* take on this responsibility on its behalf (see also affirmation 1 and recommendation 1 in section 2 of this Report, with respect to audit findings which relate to the new Academic Board).

Affirmation 7

AUQA affirms the need for MCD to establish an Academic Audit Committee.

Secondly, with respect to the findings of the trial audit performed as part of the MCD self-review to prepare for the current AUQA Audit, the Audit Panel noted the following statement (itself quoted from one of the ATI Performance Portfolios): “For Quality Management, what is now needed is a more *explicit* self-aware system rather than unexamined continuation of assumed quality practices of the past which may no longer serve (the ATI) as it moves into a new era in tertiary education”. (SM 4.8, p6: text in italics is AUQA’s emphasis)

The finding of the trial audit then concluded: “A key question for quality assurance, then, is the way in which stronger processes for quality assurance can be embedded across the MCD to ensure greater consistency in quality, while protecting the important individual character of the ATIs”. (SM 4.8, p6)

Taking into account the number of self-review findings that are affirmed by the Audit Panel, especially those relating to Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring, the Audit Panel considers that the College has committed itself to undertaking an authentic self-review in order to achieve the quality assurance challenge outlined by the Auditors above. It deserves commendation for the results it has achieved. This is particularly so with respect to how the MCD self-review and AUQA audit have contributed to the “overall tightening of the ‘federation model’” (PF p7) in this new phase of the College’s development.

Commendation 7

AUQA commends MCD for the concerted efforts to improve its quality processes as a result of its self-review.

6 RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

The MCD Strategic Plan (2005) is virtually silent with respect to specifying goals for research and research training, except for the following statement that relates to the appointment of an:

“Associate Registrar (Research), who would oversee the academic administration of all research training in support of the Board of Postgraduate Studies and its ‘Higher Degree by Research’ Committee. The Associate Registrar (Research) would work with the ‘Research Policy’ Committee and the ‘Scholarship and Grants’ Committee to administer the distribution of research funding, and would be responsible for promoting research within the MCD, as well as submitting the required academic and financial reports to the Department of Education, Science and Training.” (p2)

The MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related ‘Key Value’:

“Critical enquiry and open dialogue in the exploration of truth.” (PF p41)

And the following ‘Key Objective’:

“[T]o aid, by research and other appropriate means, the advancement and development of knowledge and its practical application to the churches, to wider academic and community life, and to public policy.” (PF p41)

6.1 Research and Research Training

The College’s goals for research and research training are set out in the “MCD Research and Research Training Report 2003” (PF p41), which, the Audit Panel noted, is elsewhere referred to in the Portfolio as a ‘Plan’. Over 2004–2005 these goals were:

- becoming eligible to access DEST ‘small institution’ category funding — achieved by MCD in December 2004
- removal of the DEST funding cap — MCD claimed that it was “severely disadvantaged from the operation of the funding cap on RTS and IGS funding in 2002–4 ... and was (therefore) delighted to see the cap lifted in 2005” (PF p41), and
- raising the profile of a research culture in the MCD.

The College argues that because MCD has its roots in a “‘seminary culture’ ... which regarded the training of candidates for the ordained ministry as its main goal”, this had “sidelined research as a legitimate activity for faculty, who focussed instead on excellence in teaching”. (PF p41) This made “[p]romoting a research culture ... an ongoing task ... but [one that] has already born fruit in [*inter alia*] rapidly increasing applications for small grants...and in an increasing number of ARC [Australian Research Council] applications from faculty.” (PF p41)

As evidence of its success in promoting the research agenda, the College points to the relatively high proportion of Higher Degree by Research students; the work of the well-developed set of research-related committees; and as noted above, establishment of the position of Associate Registrar (Research), with a specific mandate for promoting research within the MCD. In addition, the Audit Panel noted that there are plans to establish a Research Studies program, while MCD plays a leading role in the publication of *Pacifica*, the scholarly journal for the theologians of Australasia and the West Pacific Basin.

The Audit Panel spoke: with a number of ATI-based faculty; to Higher Degree Research (HDR) students; to both internal and external members of the Research Policy Committee, and the

Human Research Ethics Committee; as well as to the Associate Registrar (Research). It formed the view that, in the context of the introduction of the Research Quality Framework (RQF) it is now appropriate for the College to redouble its efforts to raise its research and research training profile.

Affirmation 8

AUQA affirms MCD's efforts to strengthen its research culture and improve research supervision training.

However, in affirming this intention, the Audit Panel is fully conscious that academic appointments are made by the ATIs/RTIs and not by the College. Therefore, it will be crucial for MCD to develop a more strategic approach to developing the research profile, and the recommendations and observations that follow are designed to assist the development of such an approach.

The Audit Panel noted in the *MCD Research and Research Training Report* for 2004 that MCD had identified for itself a very broad range of 'existing' and 'emergent' areas of research strength, accompanied by a rather vaguely worded statement to the effect that the College would "enhance where possible, existing and emergent strengths". (p8) There was also a slightly more emphatic undertaking that "the RPC will refine or expand the list where necessary in future years, with a particular view to locating areas that should attract future strategic funding." (p8)

With respect to the likely impact of the introduction of the RQF with its focus on research competitiveness and impact, the Audit Panel sought to identify audit participants with notable research strength across the different ATIs. However, the Panel received mixed messages on what pockets of expertise are located across the MCD. A couple of ATIs were characterised as 'stronger in teaching than research', one as 'weak' in research, and another as 'strong' in research. In general terms there appears to be good potential for concentration in research effort in at least the following areas: Philosophy, Church History, Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Spirituality, Social Justice, and Bioethics.

The Audit Panel concluded that just as the new RTIs "may be recognised to teach particular MCD awards, rather than the full range of awards currently offered across the ATIs" (see section 2.5) the College should determine which research areas it wishes to develop and concentrate on.

Recommendation 10

AUQA recommends that MCD review areas of research strength to focus in niche areas of specialisation so as to build areas of research concentration.

Also, in the context of the introduction of the RQF, it will be necessary for the College to have criteria for measuring its research strength and to develop policy around developing research strengths, such as how to build sustainable numbers of HDR students and staff in particular areas, and the teaching–research nexus.

6.2 Research Funding

Prior to 2001 all MCD research funding was in essence 'industry' funding, being wholly sourced from MCD's 'industry partners' — the churches. In 2001, the federal government made MCD, along with some other previously ineligible institutions, eligible for 'contestable and infrastructure government research funds'.

The Portfolio states that: "The MCD currently qualifies for RTS and IGS funding and is awarded APAs and IPRSs. The MCD is also eligible for RIBG funding, but has not received any to date,

having not yet accessed research funding from a body listed in the Australian Government's Competitive Grants Register." (PF pp41–42)

The Audit Panel noted that MCD had received a steadily increasing amount of funding since 2002, effectively achieving 100% increase over two years. However, the Audit Panel noted that the self-review had identified the making of a successful ARC funding grant as an immediate goal, on the following grounds: "This would not only provide a considerable increase in research infrastructure funding, but would testify internally and externally to the value of research being conducted by the MCD". (PF p44)

While not disagreeing with this contention, the Audit Panel believes that to focus only on achieving an ARC grant is to severely limit the chances of being successful in this strategy and urges the College to broaden its applications and seek to win other competitive research grants. In this context, it may even be worth exploring opportunities for making joint applications with partner universities in selected areas (see also recommendation 13).

Recommendation 11

AUQA recommends that MCD examine opportunities for winning competitive grants from a range of sources including Australian Research Council linkage grants.

6.3 Research Student Support and Higher Degree by Research Supervision

Research students at MCD are supported by their local research supervisor and by research coordinators located at the ATI level. In addition, the recently established Associate Registrar (Research) position helps provide 'central oversight' and coordination of support at the College level.

To ensure quality control in terms of their eligibility to supervise and carry out the tasks required of them, the Board of Postgraduate Studies governs the appointment and duties of HDR supervisors. The suitability of each supervisor is examined by the HDR Committee of the Board of Postgraduate Studies.

With respect to the reporting of research candidate progress, in the Portfolio it states: "Supervisors of students undertaking research projects are required to report annually to the Associate Registrar (research), using a *pro forma* which requires an update on the candidate's progress and includes a recommendation regarding continuation of candidature. These forms are currently submitted only by supervisors." (PF p28)

The Portfolio then goes on to identify a proposal whereby, in future, the reports will be signed by the candidate and that a system of 'auditing' will be introduced to chart a research student's progress. The Audit Panel supports the proposed change in procedure.

Affirmation 9

AUQA affirms the decision by MCD to introduce an audit mechanism for charting a research student's progress and use of a candidate/supervisor generated report.

Noting the importance given to the role of the Associate Registrar (Research) to build a research culture at MCD and to the supervisors in these arrangements, the Audit Panel became aware that although the need for improved training in research supervision was widely acknowledged across the College, there had been little recent progress in this area. Even recognising that it is necessary to retain a balance between central oversight and local initiative, the Audit Panel took the view

that this was one area where the MCD administration needed to exercise leadership to bring research supervisors together in order to build the research structure.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that training for research supervisors at MCD be driven and promoted by the central administration of MCD, and used as an opportunity to build a research culture.

This recommendation should also be considered in association with recommendation 13.

6.4 Planning Goals and Areas of Improvement

The Portfolio contained a number of Immediate and Long Term Goals and Areas of Improvement for research and research training, most of which have been commented on above, and during the Audit Visit the Audit Panel learned of the College's intention to appoint a 'Senior Research Scholar' whose role it will be to act as 'a research animator'.

Section 2 of this Report refers to the opportunities available to MCD through its existing relationships with several local universities. Of these, the closest and longest-lasting relationship is with the University of Melbourne. The Audit Panel noted that there had been a range of different types of collaborative ventures in the past, and that *inter alia* negotiations were underway to provide access to 'Grant Shepherds' for early career researchers. However, the Audit Panel agrees totally with the view expressed in the College's 2004 Quality Assurance Audit report that "(t)he role of the MCD-University of Melbourne Committee...is not clear to us." (Supplementary Material 5.12, pp 18-19. See also page 16 of this Report)

The Audit Panel considered that the existing MCD/University of Melbourne affiliation agreement provides a perfect foundation for MCD to investigate grounds for closer collaboration between the two institutions for the future, specifically with respect to research and research training activity and productivity.

Recommendation 13

AUQA recommends that MCD examine opportunities to optimise the relationship with the University of Melbourne with a view to improving opportunities for staff to engage in research supervision training and joint research projects, and provide access to relevant workshops for Higher Degree by Research students.

The Audit Panel notes that this recommendation is consistent with, but goes further than the 'Area of Improvement' identified by the College in its self-review to: "*Review the system of selection and performance monitoring of supervisors, in addition to providing regular supervisor training and supervisor in-service workshops.*" (PF p28)

It should provide the conduit for MCD to learn what research-intensive universities do to foster the development of a robust research culture. The appointment of a suitably experienced and highly regarded Senior Research Scholar should also provide a focal point for a number of the necessary developments in research and research training.

7 STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY OF THE MCD

The MCD Strategic Plan (2005) includes the following statements with respect to Staff and Faculty:

“Executive Roles

In the next five years, a more unified system of administration will be developed, re-defining staff roles and implementing a centralised database.” (p2)

“Academic Roles

The constituent colleges of the ATIs will maintain their own system of faculty appointments, duly accredited by the MCD, and will work with the central administration to reconcile any inconsistencies across the consortium in relation to the use of academic titles. In the next five years, the central administration will develop a process for recognizing academic rank, making use of the frameworks and nomenclature available in the unified national system. The first priority will be the establishment of MCD ‘Professors’.” (p3)

There is no reference to students in the MCD Strategic Plan. However, the MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following ‘Key Values’ in this section:

*“Honest professional relationships between students and staff.
Interdependence in the development of all learning activities.
A climate of respect and openness.” (PF p46)*

And the following ‘Key Objectives’:

*“To respect, encourage, challenge and inform students who come to the College to learn.
To respond to the academic needs of the churches, and to promote their integrity.
To address issues from a sound and reasoned theological viewpoint, and so offer society opportunities for dialogue with traditions and values that have been refined over the centuries.” (PF p46)*

7.1 Student Profile and Student Support

As this section of the Portfolio points out, students associated with the MCD are quite different in profile to those attending public universities: “These differences can be seen in two main ways — age range and gender balance, and level of prior experience and learning.” (PF p46)

The average age of MCD graduate students in 2004 was 46 years (44 for males and 46 for females), with spread from the mid-20s to the mid-60s, and with the under-25s accounting for only about 5% of total. As regards gender balance, the proportion of 52/48 in favour of males is also opposite the higher education sector overall. Examination of MCD enrolment records indicates that approximately two-thirds of undergraduate students already hold a tertiary qualification, with many being at the postgraduate level.

The Portfolio then makes the following observation about the pedagogical / adult learning implications of this profile: “One consequence of this age grouping and high level of prior learning is that lecturers frequently experience themselves engaging with students whose academic background and life experience are equal to their own.” (PF p47)

In the Teaching and Learning Chapter of the Portfolio, the Audit panel also noted the following statements:

“As all MCD students pay full fees, the vast majority from their own resources, they come to the MCD with an expectation that the level of teaching and learning will be high. Almost all are mature adults who have chosen to study theology with little ‘job prospect’ motivation: theological students generally expect their studies to facilitate learning about themselves, their communities, and the wider world of which they are a part.

“These factors, together with small class sizes means that MCD students are generally highly motivated as regards their own learning, and faculty and ATI administration staff alike comment that students readily compliment lecturers whom they hold in high regard, and just as readily critique poor teaching if and when it occurs ... Put simply, if MCD students choose at their own expense to study the various disciplines of theology not for career advancement but for their personal enrichment and for the good of society as a whole, they will cease to do so if their goals are not met, or will transfer to an institution where students consider their goals will be met.” (PF pp30–31)

On the basis of meeting with a cross-section of students at the ATIs, the Audit Panel supports these observations. In interview sessions, the panel sought to establish whether recognition of prior learning or advanced standing were issues, but it was apparent that these particular students are actually more interested in learning about the areas of study they had chosen than in gaining exemptions.

However, to verify the claims made and support the above observations, the Audit Panel checked MCD graduate Course Experience Questionnaire results and found them to be impressively positive.

Commendation 8

AUQA commends MCD for achieving a high level of student satisfaction which reflects the very strong commitment of the Associated Teaching Institutions and their Faculty to the teaching and learning process and a commitment to the improvement of the student experience.

Having said that, from a quality assurance or ‘quality systems’ perspective, it is important that any provider of education and training is able to provide more than selective or anecdotal evidence to support claims of high-quality teaching and learning. In this respect, the Audit Panel affirms Immediate Goal 4 from the self-review.

Affirmation 10

AUQA affirms the need for MCD to undertake yearly course completion reports, and to monitor student retention/drop out rates.

This is to assist MCD to be able to answer the quality assurance question ‘How do we know?’ with a greater degree of certainty than it can now. In this particular instance, the question that needs to be answered is: ‘Do we know with certainty how many of our students complete or decide to leave each year — and why?’

As already noted in the section 4.3, the Audit Panel also supports the introduction of a common system for the student evaluation of teaching in units of study on an MCD-wide basis.

The final part of the relevant subsection of the MCD Performance Portfolio (PF p50) also describes particular categories of students who study for MCD awards, and the various support mechanisms available to them, i.e.:

- candidates for ministry — now represent a ‘significant minority’ at most ATIs. Ministry candidates are usually in close communication with their church

- Indigenous students — very few in number, though indigenous issues feature in parts of the MCD curriculum
- overseas students — the Audit Panel requested additional information about support programs available for overseas students at each ATI and was satisfied with the information received, and
- Non-metropolitan students — apart from the religious orders, the Audit Panel noted that only limited residential capacity is available except through university-linked halls of residence (see also comment on ‘Theology Online’ in section 4).

7.2 *MCD Administration Staff*

Executive and support staff members of the MCD administration are employed by the College on a contractual basis for a period of three years, with a probationary period of three months, which is renewable by mutual agreement.

All staff members of MCD administration undergo yearly performance appraisal by the Dean, in which a written report is prepared and a response given by the staff member. Staff development is also linked with performance review considerations. The Dean undergoes more extensive appraisal on a three-year basis by the MCD Appointment and Remuneration Committee.

7.3 *ATI Faculty and Staff*

Teaching faculty are employed by the teaching colleges, and ‘accredited’ for academic purposes by the appropriate MCD Board of Studies. Full lists of faculty, their qualifications and areas of teaching were supplied to the Audit Panel for review and found to be satisfactory.

Conditions of employment, induction processes, support structures and performance appraisal procedures are all the responsibility of the college concerned. The Audit Panel questioned recently appointed and junior staff about their experience and the level of support available to them and noted the overwhelmingly positive responses given by staff from across the ATIs, especially with respect to quality-related issues. For example, new teaching staff assessments of work are cross-marked by experienced markers to ensure consistency of standards.

Commendation 9

AUQA commends MCD for the quality of support it provides for staff new to the institution, including mentoring processes and the provision of support and assistance.

With respect to performance appraisal however, the Audit Panel noted that one of the ATIs did not yet have a formal performance appraisal/review process in place, but the matter was currently under discussion. As already noted in section 4, the Audit Panel observes that the introduction of a common student evaluation of teaching system should be linked with local performance appraisal processes at all new RTIs.

The annual Staff Consultation Day held at the end of the academic year and the ‘Inter-ATI Departmental Day’ at the beginning of the academic year provide an opportunity for faculty members to meet within their Fields across the ATIs (PF p29). This enables them to review their teaching, and to suggest areas which they consider require attention. The Audit Panel noted that recent subjects for discussion related to formulation of generic learning outcomes for Fields and the rationalisation of units across ATIs, both issues which the Audit Panel has commented on from a course and unit quality assurance perspective earlier in this Report.

During the audit visits to the ATIs, faculty spoke enthusiastically about the benefits that flowed from these meetings, both to them as individual academics and to the College. Staff expressed considerable interest in MCD organising more meetings and, if possible, more frequently.

Commendation 10

AUQA commends MCD on the use of Inter-ATI days and Staff forum, and advises MCD to increase such opportunities if possible.

The Audit Panel was positive in its assessment of its interactions with teaching staff across the full range of the ATIs, and especially of the high level of collegiality they demonstrated on common teaching, learning, and research quality issues across the College.

Commendation 11

AUQA commends MCD for the high level of collegiality evident among the staff of the Associated Teaching Institutions, and across Associated Teaching Institutions.

However, as already noted, MCD is in part dependent upon 'voluntarism' to deliver its curriculum, especially in those ATIs which draw their teaching faculty members from the religious orders. The Portfolio put aspects of this issue into these terms: "Participants in Board and Committee meetings offer their services voluntarily, a contribution which has become increasingly onerous as the MCD becomes a *more complex* institution." (PF p13: AUQA emphasis in italics)

During the course of the visits to the ATIs, it also became increasingly clear to the Audit Panel that the future of MCD was in large part dependent upon it being able to successfully recruit sufficient high-quality academic staff with an appropriate scholastic and theological background and interest. This is because age profiles indicate there may be a 'greying staff' crisis looming. An interviewee at one of the ATIs expressed it in these words: "it appears that the days of the priest-scholar are numbered".

Indeed, in reviewing the ATI Performance Portfolios, the Audit Panel noted with interest that in 2002 one ATI had gone to some lengths to "establish strategies for consolidation and cooperation as YTU continues to develop as a tertiary teaching institution". (YTU Performance Portfolio, p16) This involved the running of an "Action Plan Scenarios" planning exercise that looked at three possible future scenarios for the ATI: "Consolidation; Cooperation; and Closure." (YTU planning document)

In order for the whole College to ensure its survival as it enters this '*more complex*' phase of institutional development, the Audit Panel believes that MCD needs to develop a more strategic and planned approach to human resources management than the collegial approach that has served it well in the past. It especially needs to address the demographic issues noted above.

Recommendation 14

AUQA recommends that MCD develop a comprehensive staffing plan for the College as a whole that includes such matters as age and gender profile, succession planning, and professional development at each Recognised Teaching Institution.

As already noted at Recommendation 4 in section 3, the Audit Panel believes that a staffing plan should be one part of an integrated strategic planning framework for MCD.

7.4 *Community Engagement*

The Portfolio states: “In serving the churches, the MCD believes that it serves the wider good of the human community, locally, nationally and globally. This is the main form of community engagement for MCD-related people, offered with discernment, consistently and often for a lifetime.” (PF p55)

However, over and beyond this form of engagement, the Portfolio also claims: “The most distinctive community engagement offered by MCD personnel, however, is less obvious: the commitment to ongoing reflection on Christian faith, the perennial questions of human life, and the more immediate political, social and ethical issues of the day.” (PF p55)

Indeed, in its self-review, the College identified “Community engagement on a wide and diverse scale by faculty, staff and students” as one of its areas of excellence. (PF p55)

The Audit Panel considered that, given the nature of the College’s Vision and Mission statements, involvement in community engagement activity is an implicit characteristic of the MCD. (See section 8 for an account of how this engagement is expressed in International Activities.)

8 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The MCD Strategic Plan (2005) is silent with respect to the planning of International Activities. However, the MCD Performance Portfolio nominates the following related 'Key Value':

"Active engagement with local, national [and] global social contexts." (PF p56)

And also nominates the following 'Key Objective':

"To offer scholars and students of Divinity the opportunity to anchor faith in understanding, and in a spirit of dialogue to engage with wider contexts." (PF p56)

8.1 *Providing Education to Asia and the Pacific Region*

The Portfolio indicates that "MCD has provided theological education for students in the Asia-Pacific region for decades." There was, for example, an MCD Registrar in New Zealand, and at one stage the Auckland Consortium of Theological Education was actually an ATI. (PF p56)

Figures provided by the College also indicate that in 2004, MCD had a total of 62 international students enrolled, with 33 from countries in Asia and 24 from the Pacific region.

In addition, it was noted that the Theology Online initiative had attracted some international students to enrol. As noted in section 4 above, the Audit Panel identified this initiative as an exemplar for further forays into flexible delivery of MCD programs, including offshore.

8.2 *MCD International Institutional Relationships*

During the audit it was noted that MCD had established links with several institutions involved in theological education and training in the Asia-Pacific region, and more broadly in other parts of Asia, and in the US. Institutional links mentioned in the Portfolio were with: New Zealand's Otago University; Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Korean Baptist Theological University/Seminary; and the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, India.

A link that the Audit Panel investigated more fully was the affiliation between the YTU and the National Catholic Institute of Theology (NCIT) located in Karachi, Pakistan, whereby NCIT students can study the MCD BTheol degree offshore. In November 2004, YTU and MCD signed a "Memorandum of Understanding, establishing guidelines for the enrolment of NCIT students in the BTheol degree, including quality assurance and risk management requirements relating to the teaching, administering and awarding of the degree." (PF p58) It was also noted that YTU and NCIT had also signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the same time and that 15 NCIT students had initially been enrolled.

The Audit Panel requested further information about the partnership quality assurance arrangements in order to decide whether an offshore audit visit was warranted because of the triangular relationship between MCD as the course accrediting body; YTU as the provider with delegated responsibilities for quality assurance at the course level, and NCIT as providing the teaching.

The documentation included a report of a visit to NCIT by the Academic Dean of YTU as recently as June 2005, and responses to a series of questions from the Audit Panel about the quality assurance arrangements involved in the delivery of the BTheol offshore. The Audit Panel learned from these responses that only three NCIT students were still enrolled; that the NCIT staff involved in teaching the BTheol had been formally approved by MCD (a requirement that also applies for all ATI academic staff); and that "all papers and examinations carried out by

NCIT for 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 are reviewed by the YTU faculty to ensure that the assessment is at the level and quality demanded by the MCD.” (Responses to AUQA about the NCIT)

On these grounds, the Audit Panel decided that a visit to NCIT was not warranted and, because of the focus on quality assurance for the assessment of learning outcomes, concluded that the quality assurance arrangements were satisfactory.

Finally, with respect to its International Activities, MCD has identified a ‘Long Term Goal’ from its self-review for AUQA to (*inter alia*): “Continue to establish formal links with theological colleges and theological consortia in the Asia Pacific region ... and consulting in relation to quality assurance mechanisms appropriate to the sector.” (PF p59)

While fully supporting the intention of this finding, the Audit Panel would go further, and urges MCD to use its links with international partners to actively benchmark itself, as part of a more comprehensive strategic planning and quality benchmarking framework. The Audit Panel confirms that this is appropriate for the current new phase of the College’s development as a self-accrediting institution.

Affirmation 11

AUQA affirms the importance of MCD maintaining links within the Asia-Pacific region, and urges the College to consider ways in which it can more effectively benchmark its international performance through international institutional relationships.

For another audit finding in relation to benchmarking activity, see also recommendation 3 in section 2 of this Report.

APPENDIX A: MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

History and Location

The Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD) was constituted by an Act passed by the Victorian Parliament in December 1910, the *Melbourne College of Divinity Act*. The Act was amended in 1956, 1972, 1979, 1990, and in 2005 underwent a significant revision to enable it to accord with the new National Governance Protocols. Under the revised Act, the MCD is governed by a 15-member council, a majority of whom are appointed by the churches that sponsor the seven constituent colleges of the MCD, namely the Anglican, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Roman Catholic and Uniting churches.

The seven colleges of the MCD, and their locations, are:

- Catholic Theological College in East Melbourne, which is comprised of four affiliated seminaries
- Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave
- Jesuit Theological College (Roman Catholic) in Parkville
- Trinity College Theological School (Anglican) in Parkville)
- Uniting Church Theological College (Uniting Church, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania) in Parkville
- Whitley College (Baptist) in Parkville, and
- Yarra Theological Union (Roman Catholic) in Box Hill.

Three of the colleges — Jesuit Theological College, Trinity College Theological School and Uniting Church Theological College — combine to form the United Faculty of Theology. The United Faculty of Theology and the other four colleges listed above are now all designated as Recognised Teaching Institutions of the MCD. The MCD administration centre is located in Kew.

Academic Profile

The MCD teaches three undergraduate (Bachelor of Theology, Diploma of Ministry and Advanced Diploma in Ministry), seven graduate (Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, Graduate Diploma in Theology, Graduate Diploma in Ministry, Graduate Diploma in Counselling, Graduate Certificate in Theology and Bachelor of Divinity) and six postgraduate awards (Doctor of Theology, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Ministry Studies, Master of Theology, Master of Arts and Master of Ministry) across four fields of theological study, each with its associated subdisciplines:

- Field A – Humanities and Languages
- Field B – Biblical Studies (New Testament and Old Testament)
- Field C – Church History and Systematic Theology, and
- Field D – Practical Theology.

The MCD identifies four broad areas of international research strength:

- Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics
- Ethics, Bioethics and Social Justice
- Ministry Studies, and
- Missiology.

Key Statistics 2004

Total Student Enrolments (calculated from units):		1064
Research Student Enrolments:		148
International Student Enrolments:		75
Total Student Teaching Load:		457.33
Total Staff FTE (not including casual staff):	Academic:	57.1
	General:	18.9
	Total:	76.0
Total Operating Revenues (2004 — MCD Kew-based finances, which exclude academic and some general salaries):		1,185,412
Total Operating Expenses (2004 — as above):		1,175,609

APPENDIX B: AUQA'S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VALUES AND VISION

Mission

By means of quality audits of universities and accrediting agencies, and otherwise, AUQA will provide public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and will assist in improving the academic quality of these institutions.

Objectives

- Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of quality assurance arrangements relating to the activities of Australian universities, other self-accrediting institutions and state and territory higher education accreditation bodies.
- Monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on quality assurance arrangements in self-accrediting institutions, and on processes and procedures of state and territory accreditation authorities, and on the impact of those processes on quality of programs.
- Report on the criteria for the accreditation of new universities and non-university higher education courses as a result of information obtained during the audit of institutions and state and territory accreditation processes.
- Report on the relative standards of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes, including their international standing, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.

Values

AUQA will be:

- *Thorough*: AUQA carries out all its audits as thoroughly as possible.
- *Supportive*: recognising institutional autonomy in setting objectives and implementing processes to achieve them, AUQA acts to facilitate and support this.
- *Flexible*: AUQA operates flexibly, in order to acknowledge and reinforce institutional diversity.
- *Cooperative*: recognising that the achievement of quality in any organisation depends on a commitment to quality within the organisation itself, AUQA operates as unobtrusively as is consistent with effectiveness and rigour.
- *Collaborative*: as a quality assurance agency, AUQA works collaboratively with the accrediting agencies (in addition to its audit role with respect to these agencies).
- *Transparent*: AUQA's audit procedures, and its own quality assurance system are open to public scrutiny.
- *Economical*: AUQA operates cost-effectively and keeps as low as possible the demands it places on institutions and agencies.
- *Open*: AUQA reports publicly and clearly on its findings in relation to institutions, agencies and the sector.

Vision

- AUQA's judgements will be widely recognised as objective, fair, accurate, perceptive, rigorous and useful: AUQA has established detailed and effective procedures for audit, that include auditor appointment and training, extensive and thorough investigation, and consistent implementation.
- AUQA will work in partnership with institutions and accrediting agencies to add value to their activities: AUQA audit is based on self-review, acknowledges the characteristics of the institution or agency being audited, and accepts comment from the auditee on the best way of expressing the audit findings.
- AUQA's advice will be sought on matters related to quality assurance in higher education: AUQA will carry out consulting activities, including workshops, publications, and advising, and will publish and maintain a database of good practice.
- AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency: AUQA will build international links to learn from and provide leadership to other agencies, and will work with other agencies to the benefit of Australian institutions.

APPENDIX C: THE MCD AUDIT PANEL

Mr Rob Carmichael, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency, Melbourne, Vic

Professor Gareth Jones CNZM, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International); Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand (Chair)

Mr Harwood Lockton, Associate Vice-President Academic Administration, Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW

Professor Robyn Quin, Executive Dean, Faculty of Communications and Creative Industries; Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Teaching & Learning, Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA

Mr Kenneth Window, Vice-President and Registrar, Central Queensland University, North Rockhampton, Qld

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following abbreviations and definitions are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

ACU.....	Australian Catholic University
ANZATS.....	Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools
ATI(s).....	Associated Teaching Institution(s)
AUQA.....	Australian Universities Quality Agency
BD.....	Bachelor of Divinity
BTheol.....	Bachelor of Theology
CDTC.....	Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia
CEQ.....	Course Experience Questionnaire
CHASS.....	Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
CTC.....	Catholic Theological College
DEST.....	(Australian) Department of Education, Science, and Training
DTheol.....	Doctor of Theology
EFTSU.....	equivalent full-time student unit
ETA.....	Evangelical Theological Association
FTE.....	full-time equivalent
HDR.....	Higher Degree by Research
HE.....	higher education
HREC.....	Human Research Ethics Committee
IGS.....	Institutional Grants Scheme
LIAM.....	Librarians of Institutions Associated with MCD
LTh.....	Diploma in Divinity (Licentiate in Theology)
MCDTAMS.....	MCD (qv) Theological Academic Management System (see also TAMS)
MCD.....	Melbourne College of Divinity
MCEETYA.....	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
National Protocols.....	National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes
NCIT.....	National Catholic Institute of Theology (Pakistan)
NHMRC.....	National Health and Medical Research Council
PF p.....	Performance Portfolio page reference
PG.....	postgraduate
Portfolio.....	Performance Portfolio
QA.....	quality assurance
RQF.....	Research Quality Framework
RTI(s).....	Recognised Teaching Institution(s)
RTS.....	Research Training Scheme
SAI(s).....	Self-Accrediting Institution(s)

TAMS.....Theological Academic Management System (see also MCDTAMS)
TLMP.....Teaching and Learning Management Plan
UFTUnited Faculty of Theology
UGundergraduate
YTU.....Yarra Theological Union

