

16 April 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 'Draft Standards for Course Design and Learning Outcomes'. As the Australian College of Theology's 'Learning and Teaching' specialist, I have been asked to do so.

The response of the ACT to the 'draft standards' is very largely positive.

Question 1

The proposed format is sufficiently clear and therefore workable. The taxonomic structure facilitates easy reference, while the narrative style achieves the intended clarity and definiteness. Repetition and overlap seem to have been avoided.

Question 2

The inclusion of 'reference points' provides a useful tool for purposes of explanation and elaboration.

Question 3

No.

Question 4

The format is acceptable.

Question 4

The ACT does support the proposed standards for course design. The seven standards provide a serviceable checklist of requirements for an adequate process for course generation, implementation, maintenance and review. They reflect current procedures in the ACT and to that extent contribute to the reflection of acceptable 'industry' practice.

Question 5

In *standard 3* I would recommend the omission of 'methods of assessment' – on two grounds.

1. Any statement about methods of assessment at a sufficient level of generalisation would be so vapid as to be almost meaningless. Methods of assessment are best left to individual units and approval by a coursework committee.
2. Specification of assessment methods at this level would have a mandating effect and thereby curb experimentation and innovation in an area where they are desperately needed.

I note that 'assessment' is mentioned several times in draft standards for 'Learning Outcomes'. In my judgment this is the appropriate place for dealing with this matter.

Question 6

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The ACT does support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes. They reflect the methods and aspirations of the Learning Outcomes project I am presently conducting for the ACT under the direction of the Associate Dean and Academic Board.

Question 7

With one qualification, the ACT accepts that the Learning Outcomes standards are appropriate and realistic.

The qualification is that the draft standards appear to accept the view that specifying student centred learning outcomes renders teaching aims for courses and units otiose. While this is a new orthodoxy, the ACT continues to state the intention of each unit as well providing learning outcomes. It does so on the dual grounds that: 1) this is the appropriate point at which to indicate the relevance of a unit to a course; and 2) teaching aims ought to be an important influence on the determination of learning outcomes. These relationships are obfuscated by relying on reflection of purpose in specific learning outcomes. The 'baby' appears to have been 'thrown out with the bath water'. Rather than the prevailing 'either-or' approach, the ACT prefers to include both teaching aims and learning outcomes in its curriculum documents. It recommends the 'both-and' method to the sector.

This could be achieved by expanding *standard 3* to read '... each course and unit of study' and inserting between the present 'c' and 'd' 'course and unit teaching aims' (so that 'd' would become 'e').

Again, the ACT is glad to have been consulted on this matter. It supports the direction the Higher Education Standards Panel is taking.

Yours faithfully

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(Director of Learning and Teaching)