

**PRINCIPALS' CONFERENCE****October 5 - 7 2009: an overview**

The third ANZATS conference for Principals took place at Amberley, Melbourne from October 5-7<sup>th</sup>. This paper serves as an index to the papers accompanying it.

The theme - nominated by those present at the previous conference - was 'Managing theological education: finance and compliance'. Four speakers made presentations, mingled with active discussion:

Charles Sherlock                      *Australian theological education: contexts*  
(PDF attached - much of pages 1-3 was taken as read,  
with discussion focussing on the questions)

Richard Cardew                      *Estimating teaching costs in higher education*  
(PDFs attached of his presentation, paper, Excel spreadsheet)

Richard Cardew, formerly of the *Centre for Environmental and Urban Studies* at Macquarie University, and a Director of the Australian College of Theology, was able to be present for the whole of the conference.

Richard's presentation and contributions again and again underscored the importance of adequate financial support for the sustaining of good quality, people-enhancing theological education.

Two interesting conclusions arose from his spreadsheets:

- a) a class size of 20 is where financial factors become most efficient - less than 10 (except in some PG seminars) is pedagogically and resource wasteful;
- b) distance education / flexible delivery, while it might appear to be cheaper, is as costly as face-to-face mode, and savings from using sessional staff are small. The major costs of higher education are overheads: library, buildings (owned or rented), staff oncosts and administration (essential to support sound learning).

Karen Treloar                      *Managing Theological Education: the contributions of the  
Australian Universities Quality Agency*  
(PDF attached of her presentation slides)

Karen is the Audit Director, Non Self-Accrediting Institutions, *Australian University Quality Agency* (AUQA), and has directed several audits of theological institutions.

In discussion, the importance of data gathering to assist planning was stressed. Two Key Performance Indicators which interest government are enrolments, retention and completions (notoriously difficult for theology): typical issues from a college perspective include teaching practice, student satisfaction (the GCA CEQ could be sued more), research activity, financial viability, staff workload / support /relationships and infrastructure.

In response to questions about benchmarking (a mystery to many!), Karen said that this revolves around genuine relationships, not just data: 'Who is doing this best? What can we learn?' – from enrolment procedures to formation outcomes.

The impending establishment of TEQSA raises the issue of 'standards': a letter from AUQA Director David Woodhouse on this issue is included in this package. In general, the formation of a national accreditation body was welcomed, though how will relate to AUQA-style audits is not yet clear.

NB: an excellent paper on this topic was given by Professor Chris Brinks (UK) at the July AUQA Forum: see [www.auqa.edu.au/files/auqf/paper/brinkauqf.pdf](http://www.auqa.edu.au/files/auqf/paper/brinkauqf.pdf).

Shirley Stokes

*Accreditation of Theological Schools – the role of the State*  
(PDF attached of her presentation slides)

Shirley Stokes has recently retired as Manager, *Quality and Regulation Higher Education Directorate*, NSW Department of Education.

Shirley's paper led to lively discussion about what 'faith-based' meant: is any institution free of such? She stressed the importance of bringing 'outside eyes' to governance and review. Asked about multi-streaming, she noted that this was not banned, but that it is only likely to be allowed with explicit approval.

The ESOS review was touched on – copies of the Review paper were made available, to which responses need to be made by October 30<sup>th</sup> (ANZATS will be submitting one).

Also attached is a PDF of the paper I gave at the AUQA Forum in July. In presenting this, the opening sections on history were abbreviated in order to give time to the question of 'spiritual safety'.

In addition, time was given for personal interaction, walking in the delightful grounds of Amberley (on the bank of the Yarra). Overall, I believe that this was a positive and engaging opportunity for all participants.

Charles Sherlock

*Executive Secretary*