Australian Catholic University (ACU) aspires to be Australia’s outstanding Catholic university and a leading international Catholic university. Teaching and researching within the great Catholic intellectual tradition, it is national in its reach, public in its relevance and committed to the common good. Within this context, the University seeks to provide its students and staff with a rich and challenging learning and teaching environment, and with professionally and personally relevant educational programs.

ACU supports the Australian Government’s initiative, Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System. Its Mission-Based Compact commits the University to student-centred education, providing access to students and raising attainment levels of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds through diverse entry pathways. ACU is committed to improving students’ educational experiences and outcomes and preparing them for employment in the professions.

ACU recognises that students enter university through various pathways and experience diverse tertiary preparation. The University seeks to identify students of high academic ability and encourage their preparation for and participation in Honours, Postgraduate and Higher Degree Research programs. The University also recognises that some students will require more academic support than others. The role of all staff in the University in supporting students’ engagement, retention and achievement is required, recognised and valued.

Student success is achieved through the partnership between students and the wider University community. Academic staff members are critical leaders in this partnership. Their commitment to students, knowledge, passion for teaching and willingness to reflect on and refine their teaching practice are essential. Academics within each faculty are supported in this capacity through engagement with the Learning and Teaching Centre.

Student engagement and success are facilitated through strong alignment with the professional bodies and employers associated with the University’s courses, through course content and workplace learning. Career development skills and support are integral to the engagement and orientation of students and the University seeks to embed them in the curriculum.

ACU identifies five themes which focus its efforts in relation to learning and teaching:

1. **Student Engagement in Learning**
2. **Alignment of Courses with the Requirements of Students and the Professions**
3. **Quality of Learning and Teaching**
4. **Learning and Teaching are Informed by Scholarship and Research**
5. **ACU’s Collegial Learning Environment**

These five themes are expanded below.

1. **Student Engagement in Learning**
   ACU prides itself on the provision of a distinctive educational experience. This experience is characterised by individual attention from staff, and curricula that are designed to engage and foster student learning from first year to graduation. Key to ACU curricula is that the University’s Identity and Mission imbue all courses, primarily via the Core Curriculum Project. The provision of intellectual challenge, student research opportunities, flexible study and assessment options designed to embed the University’s graduate attributes, academic skills support, research and work-integrated learning and community engagement activities are central to ACU’s approach of
developing work-ready graduates, with a commitment to the common good. The University also fosters a global perspective in learning and teaching, and encourages its students to engage in study abroad, work placements, internships and community engagement overseas. Minimum English proficiency standards are set for international students in all courses.

ACU operates targeted courses to engage, support and retain students from equity groups, as well as international students; and provides an engaging First Year Experience program, which is supported by transition pedagogy.

2. Alignment of Courses with the Requirement of Students and the Professions
ACU takes the view that its suite of course offerings must remain relevant to prospective students and achieve the confidence of professional stakeholders. In achieving this objective, the University is committed to systematic course and unit development, and ensures that all courses and units meet relevant industry requirements; embed its Mission values; centre on student learning; are accessible; embed graduate attributes and generic skills; reflect transition pedagogy; and remain viable. This is particularly relevant to the University’s framework for professional graduate studies, which is to be developed during the planning cycle 2012-2014.

The University also views equity pathway programs as being integral to ensuring its courses remain accessible to a diverse prospective student community, both domestic and international. This includes partnerships with schools, TAFE and quality private providers and targeted enabling programs.

3. Quality of Learning and Teaching
ACU continuously reviews the quality of learning and teaching across its course profile, including its pedagogical approach to flexible learning and teaching resources, particularly in relation to online supported units and courses.

Part of this commitment includes ensuring professional development programs are in place for new and/or sessional academic staff, and those staff who work with international students. Participation in the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education is encouraged for all teaching staff. The University places particular emphasis on staff understanding of assessment, moderation and evaluation processes, data and outcomes, with benchmarking at unit and course level undertaken across all ACU campuses.

Student feedback is regarded as a key element in the improvement of ACU’s courses and student learning experiences. The student voice is encouraged through student membership of University committees and project teams.

ACU participates in a range of internal and external awards to recognise quality and promote scholarship in learning and teaching.

4. Learning and Teaching are Informed by Scholarship and Research
The University encourages the development, promotion and public dissemination of scholarship and research related to pedagogy in the areas of study offered at ACU and higher education teaching more generally, as well as cooperative research focussing on quality learning, teaching and student engagement between faculties and across the tertiary sector and with secondary school partners. ACU promotes scholarship related to student participation and achievement providing an evidence base for course review and development.
5. **ACU’s Collegial Learning Environment**

ACU prides itself on providing a learning environment which fosters a collegial approach to learning within an environment of physical and virtual, formal and informal learning spaces. Learning and teaching are supported by web-based and digital resources, and an articulated approach to the blend of learning experiences within each unit and course. Learning and teaching spaces within the University are equipped with contemporary learning technologies and appropriate and flexible furniture and are attractive and well maintained.

Underlying this framework is the University’s library system, which continually develops its services, facilities and collections to meet the evolving learning and teaching and research needs of a diverse University community.