The Collegiate University

Peter Sherlock, 1 January 2017

**Overview**

The University of Divinity is a collegiate University. This model is familiar in Europe and North America but not found elsewhere in Australia. This paper explains collegiate university governance at the University of Divinity, in particular its corporate and academic aspects, and demonstrates its value to the University and its Colleges. References are included to the key Regulations, Policies, Procedures, and Schedules which together give effect to the system.

The strength of the collegiate system is in the intimate scale of the learning communities and in the freedoms and responsibilities it creates. At the University of Divinity, staff expect to get to know each of their students, and to be part of their formation as scholars and graduates. The collegiate structure protects and fosters both academic freedom and theological diversity, giving the University's students, staff, and partners access to a far wider range of disciplines and perspectives than any one College could manage alone. The system allows Colleges to grow new disciplines and to broaden their teaching and research activities by drawing on support from other Colleges with existing strengths in such areas.

**About the University**

The University of Divinity is established by the *University of Divinity Act 1910* of the Parliament of Victoria. The Act was most recently amended in 2016. The Act constitutes and incorporates the University, and empowers it to confer degrees and award diplomas and certificates in Divinity and its associated disciplines.

The University of Divinity appears on the National Register of Higher Education Providers as an Australian University of Specialisation. It is a private University and receives Commonwealth Government funding through its inclusion on Table B of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

The Act provides for a Council as the governing authority of the University and an Academic Board to oversee academic programs and courses of study. Eleven of the sixteen members of Council are appointed by six churches, while a majority of Council members must be external to the University. The Academic Board includes a representative of each College, the Vice-Chancellor, Directors with academic responsibilities, and elected academic staff and student representatives.

The Council appoints a Vice-Chancellor as the CEO of the University, and resources the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to support the Council, Academic Board, and collegiate system.

**Collegiate Agreements**

Using powers under section 21 of the Act and rules set out in Regulation 3: Colleges, the Council may authorise a Collegiate Agreement with an approved institution which thereby becomes a College of the University. The Collegiate Agreement establishes a contractual relationship between that College and University, which entails mutual undertakings. Through this relationship, academic staff and students of the College become members of the University. Once the Collegiate Agreement is signed, the College may apply to the Academic Board for accreditation to offer awards of the University.

**Compacts**

Each College is supported by one or more churches or religious orders. The University signs a Compact with each College and its respective partners to express the common mission of the parties. The Compact fosters engagement between all the supporters of a College, including the University. The Compact therefore creates opportunities for greater cooperation and partnership, such as resourcing mutual needs, and establishing and pursuing shared strategic objectives.

**Colleges**

The University is structured around its Colleges. Each College is a unique learning community where staff and students together engage in a culture of scholarship.

The University's Academic Board accredits academic staff at each College, including teachers and researchers. Applications for such accreditation are made by a College after endorsement by the College's Academic Advisory Committee.

All students enrol in the University's awards through one of its Colleges, though they may take units at other Colleges as part of their course of study.

**Awards**

All awards and the units and courses leading to them are designed to foster the University's five Graduate Attributes.

The requirements of each award are established by the Council through a Regulation acting on the advice of the Academic Board. The detailed requirements of each course of study and each unit leading to an award are approved by the Academic Board.

The awards a College is accredited to offer are determined by Academic Board under Regulation 3: Colleges, which includes specification of whether each award may be offered online or to overseas students, and any conditions on the accreditation such as a partnership with another College or external entity. Academic Board assesses each application for accreditation with reference to the College's academic staff, library resources, technological support, classroom facilities, pedagogical needs, and other relevant educational matters.

Colleges undertake the bulk of the work of development of specific units and sequences of units through their Academic Advisory Committees, which endorses proposals before they are put before the University's Academic Board.

New awards may be proposed by any College, the Academic Board, or the Council. Before recommending to Council the creation of a new award, Academic Board appoints a Course Development Panel and receives a report from it.

Revisions to awards may be proposed by any College,the Academic Board, or Council and must be approved by Academic Board.

All awards are reviewed every five years by a Course Review Panel, including external members, which reports with recommendations to the Academic Board.

**Quality assurance**

The collegiate system strengthens the University's quality assurance structures. Each College has an Academic Advisory Committee to support the maintenance of academic standards and exercise of quality control by Academic Board. Experts from other Colleges and from beyond the University review unit proposals, moderate assessment, and act as examiners for coursework assessment and research essays, and as members of approval panels for higher degree by research students.

Consistency and adherence to the University's standards is ensure by a single learning management system (ARK) and a single set of academic policies governing accreditation, student progress.

Best practice is shared across Colleges through the Academic Board and its committees, and through University-wide professional development activities such as the annual Research Day and the annual Teaching Day.

**Risk management**

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor regularly reviews risk at each College, including corporate and academic aspects. These reviews use a series of Risk Indicators prepared by the Risk Management and Audit Committee, which submits a College Risk Profile for each College annually to the Council together with an overall University Risk Profile.

The University reviews each College at least once every five years. The review is conducted by an independent panel reporting to the Council.

Institutions applying to become a College of the University are subjected to a rigorous audit. Applications are only approved by Council following consultation with its Committees and the Academic Board.

The Collegiate Agreement includes tuition assurance arrangements such that if a College ceases to be part of the University, its students can complete their awards at another College of the University. The Council is able to terminate a Collegiate Agreement, where cause exists and due notice is given to the College.

**College responsibilities and commitments**

Each College undertakes to abide by the regulations, policies and procedures of the University, including academic accreditation of teachers and units.

Each College is expected to contribute to the governance of the University in three ways: participation in Academic Board and its committees, making staff available for leadership roles within the University, and providing course advice and administrative support for the admission of students and monitoring of student progress.

The Collegiate Agreement identifies the library resources that the College brings to the University, which are then made available to all members of the University.

Each College provides staff members for the following offices: a member of Academic Board, a Research Coordinator, a Coursework Coordinator, a Registrar, and a Librarian.

Academic staff are expected to participate in University events, including an annual Research Day and Teaching Day.

**Financial relationships**

Each College pays an Annual Fee of $30,000 to the Council.

Tuition fees are set by the University's Council and are standard for all students in each University award. Fees are collected by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor which then distributes payments to the Colleges.

In the case of tuition fees for coursework awards, 20% is retained by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, 76% is distributed to the Colleges, and 4% to the libraries.

In the case of tuition fees for higher degrees by research, 50% is retained by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, 40% is distributed to the Colleges, and 10% to the libraries.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor provides shared services to the Colleges, including a digital portal to access electronic library resources, a website with details of awards, a learning management system (ARK) and a research repository for use by all Colleges. The Council meets external compliance expenses from its budget without further recourse to the College. The Council's budget reserves sums of money for strategic expenditure such as research acquisition grants, academic staff and research student travel grants.

**Key documents**

a) The *University of Divinity Act 1910* (Victoria)

b) [Regulation 3: Colleges](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/regulation-3-colleges/) and its Determinations

c) [Collegiate Agreement](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/collegiate-agreement/) template

d) [Compact](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/compact/) template

e) [Internal Review of a College](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/internal-review-college/)

f) [Change of Accreditation of Awards offered by a College Procedures](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/change-accreditation-awards-offered-college/)

g) [Application to become a College of the University](http://www.divinity.edu.au/documents/application-become-college-university/)