



MACQUARIE CHRISTIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE UNIT OUTLINE

1. Unit Code and Title:

MCSI 133 School Landscapes: Exploring Christian Schools

2. Credit Points:

1 credit point

Contact hours: 1 hour workshop each week plus field component (4 days in-class observation) (For comparison, note that TEP 283 Curriculum and Teaching in the Secondary School II is a 2 credit point unit that requires a 2 hour workshop each week plus 6 days of classroom teaching.)

3. Name of Unit Convenor and Key Teacher/s:

Dr Neil Holm, Dip. Teach (CSU), B.A. (Hons)(UNE), Ph.D., MACE. Academic Director and Senior Lecturer in Education Studies and Christian Formation, Macquarie Christian Studies Institute)

4. Unit Description / Calendar Entry:

When we reflect on a landscape, we consider its appearance, the shapes, forms, colours and elements, and the ways these components combine distinctively in particular localities. In this unit we look at the landscape of schools, especially Christian faith-based schools. We observe the way school policy is expressed through architecture, team teaching, ability grouping etc. We reflect on the climate of schools: their character and tone, their values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, and customs. Students will engage in reflective observation of school practice in a Christian faith based school for 4 days. They will be placed with an experienced teacher who will assist the reflective process. The student is not required to undertake any teaching.

5. Alignment with the MCSI Vision:

This unit helps students to connect Christian faith with an understanding of school processes. It helps students to develop a critical perspective on the complex nature of school life that might inform choices about working in Christian faith-based schools or sending their children to these schools. By increasing understanding of the inner life, it has the potential to empower students to become teachers able to effectively contribute to schools that seek more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world.

6. Pre-requisites / Co-requisites / Exclusions

None

7. **Expected Outcomes:**

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- 7.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the benefits, problems, and techniques of using observation schedules in the school
- 7.2 Describe accurately some aspects of the school landscape and the way in which Christian faith is affirmed or denied
- 7.3 Discuss schooling as an intellectual, emotional and spiritual process
- 7.4 Discuss the relationship between their inner landscape, their own schooling, their faith, other life experiences, and their perceptions of life in schools
- 7.5 Describe the methods and benefits of keeping a professional reflective journal
- 7.6 Reflect thoughtfully on some Christian principles that might influence school processes and the alternative processes that might ensue
- 7.7 Discuss whether teaching in a Christian faith-based school or other school might be a vocation.

8. **Unit Content / Workshop Topics**

- 8.1 Exploring school landscape through observation and reflection
- 8.2 Exploring school climate
- 8.3 Structuring the school for learning (precedes Observation Day 1)
- 8.4 Curriculum breadth and depth, extra-curricular activities, the Board of Studies
- 8.5 Knowing is relational – community building, cultural and other forms of diversity
- 8.6 Nurturing the teacher: ethics and professional induction and development (Precedes Observation Day 2)
- 8.7 Parent and Community-School relationships (Precedes Observation Day 3)
- 8.8 Leadership styles, administrative structures, and decision-making processes for teachers and students (Precedes Observation Day 4).
- 8.9 The place of the school in the educational spectrum: child-care, pre-school, K-12, university and TAFE, adult education
- 8.10 Student presentations

9. **Assessment:**

This unit is graded as pass or fail. A pass grade requires satisfactory completion of all of the following assessment activities:

- 9.1 Reflective Journal: Students will maintain a journal of at least 1,500 words. The journal will detail their reflections on the required readings, observations made in the school, and inferences concerning student learning made from these observations. The reflections will include personal feelings about school situations, as well as professional understandings that relate to these situations.
- 9.2 School Observation: Students will complete an observation schedule for each observation day.
- 9.3 Portfolio: Students will develop a portfolio of relevant school materials e.g. school policies and philosophies child protection processes. A minimum of 8 items is required.
- 9.4 Teacher Report: The classroom teacher will report on how well the student fitted into the school.

10. **Details of Presentation:**

The unit involves a workshop of one hour per week over 13 weeks. Students spend 4 days (28 hours) in a classroom in a Christian faith-based school. With the assistance of an experienced classroom teacher, they engage in structured observations, reflections, and other guided activities.

11. Bibliography:

11.1 Required Text:

Ireland, J., Edlin, R., & Dickens, K. *Pointing the Way*. Blacktown: NICE, 2004
Hill, Brian V. *Choosing the Right School*. Sydney: ATCF Books, 1987

11.2 Additional Reading:

1. Bartsch, Malcolm. *Why a Lutheran School?* Adelaide: Board for Lutheran Schools, 2001.
2. Beare, H., Caldwell, B.J., and Millikan, R.H. *Creating an Excellent School*. London: Routledge, 1991
3. Edlin, R.J. *The Cause of Christian Education*. 3rd ed. Blacktown: National Institute for Christian Education, 1999.
4. Groundwater-Smith, S., Cusworth, R. & Dobbins, R. *Teaching Challenges and Dilemmas*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace, 1998.
5. Holly, M.L. *Keeping a Professional Journal (2nd edition)*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1997.
6. Hunt, Anne and Harms, Graham. *Education: What For?* Theme issue of *Interface*, Vol. 6, No. 1 May 2003.
7. Joyce, Bruce, Calhoun, Emily, and Hopkins, David. *The New Structure of School Improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999.
8. Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998
9. Pollard, Andrew & Triggs, Pat, *Reflective teaching in secondary education: a handbook for schools and colleges*. London: Cassell, 1997.
10. Van Brummelen, H. *Walking with God in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. Seattle: Alta Vista Press, 1998.
11. Whitaker, Patrick. *Primary Schools and the Future*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997.