

The Inaugural Graduate Program in Catholic Leadership  
at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

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Abstract

How can the practical application by graduate students of Catholic social teaching be demonstrated in not-for-profit organisations wishing to develop future leaders as they cope with managing change?

UNDA collaborated with the two largest not-for-profit organisations in Western Australia in designing – at their request - a curriculum for a program on leadership from the perspective of the Catholic intellectual tradition. Among the aims of the program was the graduation of students with the capacity to “critically apply their knowledge ...” and to “apply leadership and management practices to enable the effective functioning of service-oriented Catholic organisations.”

The curriculum included work on contemporary ideas on leadership and change management examined through selected principles including the common good, human dignity, participation subsidiarity and stewardship. Case studies were an important part of the pedagogy; a personal development plan to be retained by students and a gap analysis which simulated an analysis of an organisation’s application of Catholic social teaching were other important elements of the curriculum design. Students were assessed through presentations and written assignments.

This paper sets out the background for the establishment of the inaugural program, its aims, curriculum design, inter-disciplinary co-operation, enrolments, assessment, program delivery, student feedback and the immersion course. It concludes with proposals to expand the roles of employers in curriculum design and assessing the practical application of Catholic social teaching.

Though the stakeholders placed an emphasis on the application of leadership and management practices in a Catholic context, no provision was made to assess if students could demonstrate this capacity. Can and should such an assessment be expected? How might it be done? As such, stakeholder interviews were conducted as part of this research, and the analysis of these interviews is presented in this paper.

In addition, a co-author drew on her experience as a graduate of the program, and in discussion with other graduates, considers in this paper how students could be assessed in their application of Catholic social teaching.