



Report from

Board for Christian Formation



Report

The Board for Christian Formation serves the formation and educational needs of the mission of the church through offering governance and strategic leadership that is responsive, innovative, and diligent. The Board is maturing in its capacity and functions to be more able to serve the church. Trinity College Queensland continues to revitalise its educational philosophy, its formation program, and its course offerings, increasing its reach and engagement across the church.

These are exciting times with significant challenges before us. It has been pleasing to see the development of both Trinity College Queensland as well as the offerings that the Board is developing in service of the wider church and councils.

The future is encouraging with developing partnerships across the Synod with congregations, presbyteries, agencies and schools.

I wish to take this opportunity to give thanks to God's faithfulness and provision of people with the gifts and graces to serve on the Board, Committees and through our College. Thank you to all who have served the purpose of the Board for Christian Formation in the Queensland Synod.

About the Board for Christian Formation

From the Charter of the Board for Christian Formation:

Section 1.1 Purpose

The Board for Christian Formation (the BCF) assists and advises the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) in fulfilling its responsibilities to provide for the effective supervision of theological and ministerial education and Christian formation for lay and ordained within the bounds of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church (the church).

For Regulation 3.1.5(i)(vi), the BCF is designated as the appropriate body to exercise the Ministerial Education Board's responsibilities.

The **Responsibilities** of the Board of Christian Formation are as follows:

The BCF performs an advisory role and acts with delegated authority of the SSC as detailed in this Charter in carrying out its functions, authorities and powers.

The BCF must fulfil its responsibilities, as stated in Regulation 3.7.4.3(c).

The BCF is the body for the purposes of Regulation 2.4.4(a).

The BCF shall have responsibility to:

- (a) make recommendations to the SSC regarding the appointment, or termination of appointment, of the candidate educators of Trinity College Queensland (the College)
- (b) ensure annual performance reviews of the College's academic staff members are conducted
- (c) support the College in the fulfilment of its responsibilities under Regulation 3.7.4.3(c)

- (d) promote the College as a resource for:
 - theological teaching and scholarship
 - continuing education for ministry
 - lay education and education in biblical studies
- (e) oversee the relationship of the College with any universities, colleges and other educational institutions affiliated with the College
- (f) create and resource a network of learning in theology and ministry for the Church and community within the bounds of Synod
- (g) develop strategies for theological, ministerial and lay education within the bounds of Synod;
- (h) ensure adequate staff, facilities and other resources for education and formation for the lay and ordained ministries of the Church, including continuing education for ministry
- (i) maintain a roll of candidates, and as required by the Assembly, provide information contained in the roll to the Assembly
- (j) consult with presbyteries on the ongoing needs for continuing education for ministry of persons involved in the lay and ordained ministries of the Church
- (k) ensure the theological, ministerial and lay education provided by the College meets any standards prescribed by, or requirements of, the Assembly
- (l) approve a policy about the granting of study leave to staff members of the College designated by the SSC to provide theological education to candidates
- (m) at each ordinary meeting of Synod, provide a report on how it is fulfilling its responsibilities;
- (n) provide reports about any aspect of its responsibilities as required by the SSC.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the BCF shall:

- (a) oversee, and be responsible to the SSC for, the College's finances
- (b) ensure an annual budget is prepared for the College in accordance with Synod budget processes
- (c) comply with Synod's financial and accounting policies and requirements.

Focus since the last Synod

The BCF has been focusing on the following key areas of service:

1. Strategic Priority development in the two key domains of
 - a. Lifelong formation for the Christian Life (Discipleship)
 - b. Leadership Formation and ongoing Professional Development for Christian Mission
2. Best practice and fit for purpose Formation for Specified Ministries within the Uniting Church in Australia
3. Enhancing Trinity College Queensland by
 - a. offering best practice in Tertiary Education

- b. improving financial sustainability
 - c. having vital engagement with stakeholders
 - d. extending non-accredited education and formation offerings in service of the mission of the church
 - e. adapting to the Covid 19 environment and mixed-mode service delivery
 - f. developing a Business Plan for Trinity College Queensland
4. Board development through practice improvement

Highlights:

1. Strategic Priority development – The Board has identified the Education and Formation areas of:

- Missional Communities – missional leadership, church revitalisation, church planting, new expressions
- Specified Ministry – Minister of Word; Minister of Deacon; Pastor; Lay Preacher
- Christian Service – Boards, Market Place, Committees and Councils, Vocational Leadership
- Generational Discipleship – Children, Youth, Families, Adults, Seniors and Intergenerational ministry
- Faith Sharing
- Engaging Contextual Worship
- Spiritual Discipline
- Pastoral Care

In each of these we have identified our growth settings

Pastoral Care maintain and optimise	Spiritual Disciplines maintain and optimise	Engaging Contextual Worship grow slowly	Faith Sharing grow slowly
Generational discipleship grow slowly	Christian Service grow slowly	Specified Ministry Education and Formation grow slowly	Missional Communities grow quickly

In giving these areas priorities and growth settings we have been able to oversee and shape content for delivery, give priority to the needs of the Synod, Presbyteries and Congregations in regard to 'Specified Ministries' formation, identify where we have gaps and opportunities.

2. Best practice and fit for purpose Formation for Specified Ministries within the Uniting Church in Australia

The Board, through the work of the Specified Ministries Education and Formation Committee (SMEF) has been consulting with stakeholders (Synod Placements Committee, Presbytery leadership, Congregational Leadership, Agencies and Candidates) to improve the understanding, content and processes for each of the four phases of specified ministry (as outlined in Assembly Standards and Guidelines).

The Board has engaged in consultation across the Synod, Presbyteries, Agencies and Congregations to identify areas for improved practice in supporting and resourcing people through the process. This has included consulting with members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) to improve cultural understandings in these processes.

The Board has identified the need to review the selection process for candidates and to include in the scope of this work the ministry of Pastor and the resourcing of Ministers, Church Councils, Presbyteries and the Synod Selection Secretariat in this process.

Regarding Phase Two of Formation for Ordination, the flexibility of the Assembly Standards means that a range of accredited and non-accredited studies may be configured to fulfill these Standards. The work of the Formation Panels, once a person has been selected for candidature, allows for a customised and contextual pathway for the candidate. Trinity College Queensland with the Board of Christian Formation have matured Phase Two into two stages – (i) Foundational Stage; and (ii) Transitional Stage. Progression to the Transition stage occurs once a decision is made¹ to move the Candidate into a process whereby they commence the exiting of Phase 2.

A Phase Three resource has been developed for Presbyteries to support their oversight of Ministers in this phase of their formation. Phase Three formation is a vital aspect of the newly ordained ministers first three years of placement and is overseen by the ongoing Formation Panel from Phase Two (albeit with different people depending on the Presbytery the person is placed within), reporting to the relevant Presbytery.

The Board, through the Specified Ministry Education and Formation Committee (SMEF), has developed specific resources for (i) the Period of Discernment with attention to those preparing for candidating; (ii) the formation requirements of the ministry of Pastor in either the ‘Placement’ context OR the ‘Ministry Location’ context, which will support the Presbytery in their oversight responsibilities.

¹ The decision is made by the Specified Ministry Education and Formation Committee upon receiving a recommendation from the Candidates Formation Panel

SMEF also is working on the specified ministry of Lay Preacher to re-imagine the way Lay Preachers can be encouraged and resourced within the Synod. This work is being done in consultation with Presbyteries and is still in its early stages.

3. Enhancing Trinity College Queensland by:

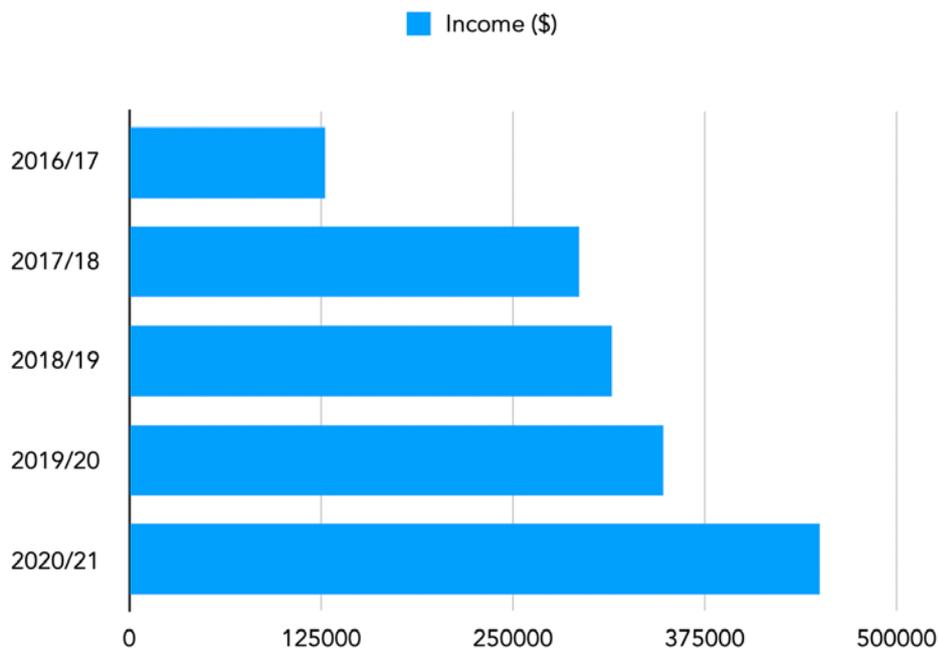
- a. offering best practice in Tertiary Education:** Since the last Synod Trinity College Qld has changed its Higher Education Provider and is now operating within a service agreement with the Australian College of Theology. This arrangement is providing wider administrative and quality assurance for support; it is providing a broader suite of accredited program offerings; a better financial arrangement beneficial to the College; a wider cohort of Colleges and Academic staff engagement; a greater degree of oversight of student applicants. This partnership is allowing the College to shape its strategic direction as a college educating and forming mission-ready graduates.

The faculty and staff of the College are working well together in service of the church. Trinity continues to offer a number of courses, ranging from undergraduate Certificates, Diplomas through to postgraduate Master's degrees. Regarding best practice, the college is in the process of transitioning towards a 'flipped classroom' teaching model in accordance with developments over the past decade in tech-related pedagogy and enquiry-based learning. In 2021, the college intends to begin offering many of its core units online, making educational offerings available to all of Queensland — and beyond.

- b. extending non-accredited education and formation offerings in service of the mission of the church:** In addition to its accredited course offerings, the College continues to provide resources to the whole church in numerous ways, including (i) public events such as Trinity Unplugged; (ii) short courses and workshops related to church identity and reinvigoration, and (iii) through multiple series of 'Trinity on Tap' (podcasts and eBooks). Through these non-accredited offerings, the College seeks as much as possible to respond directly to the expressed needs of church leaders, and to prioritise the missional priorities of the Synod and the BCF (as expressed above).

The forming of missional leaders for lay and ordained ministry remains a primary focus of the College in resourcing the various phases of specified ministry and the lay ministries of Pastor and Lay Preacher. To this end, a more integrated pathway has been created for the development of leaders who can be educated and formed to meet the current and future needs of the church in a post-Christendom world. This includes forming people for planting new faith communities and Congregations as well as regenerating existing Congregations in strategic locations. Therefore, as the College resources the missional leaders that Presbyteries oversee, there is an enhancement of the visible unity evident across the life of the UCA.

- c. improving financial sustainability:** The financial position of the College obviously has a direct correlation with student numbers. The projected income for this financial year (below) is based on increased enrolment numbers in semester 2, 2020, due to Covid 19 and to new course offerings, as well as to anticipated online enrolments for semester 1, 2021.



- d. having vital engagement with stakeholders:** the College Principal continues to engage regularly with Presbytery Ministers and church leaders, Synod’s Senior Leadership Team, the BCF, and key stakeholders from other organisations (e.g. Uniting Care; Scripture Union) to ensure that collaborative partnerships are pursued where possible, and that the College units and courses are well-suited to the needs of partner organisations.

In recent months, the College faculty have also welcomed the opportunity to engage in conversation with local leaders about new initiatives to invigorate and refresh the practices and missional goals of some local congregations. It is our hope that more opportunities like these will arise, as the college continues to seek out meaningful engagement with its stakeholders.

- e. adapting to the Covid 19 environment and mixed-mode service delivery:** In late March, with the announcement of travel restrictions due to Covid 19, Paul Jones and his family returned to Brisbane from study leave in the UK. Within the space of a week, the College staff and faculty adapted all student services and teaching to online environments (zoom), and a comprehensive covid-safe plan was written up and implemented.

Events at the College, such as the Unplugged event featuring Melinda Tankard Reist and addressing pornification, had to be cancelled. Short courses were also temporarily postponed, and the Activate program, which depends largely on social interaction and engagement, has been postponed and is now under review.

Currently (semester 2, 2020), classes are being offered in a blended mode, so that some students are attending classes at the Auchenflower campus while others continue to access class lectures and additional resources from home. The Australian College of Theology (Higher Education Provider) has graciously made several temporary concessions to give

students leeway during this difficult time. In some ways, Covid 19 has posed numerous challenges for college life, but in other ways it has forced the College staff and faculty to make certain adjustments faster, such as the move to online teaching.

- f. **developing a Business Plan for Trinity College Queensland:** In conjunction with the Synod’s Business Development Unit (BDU), the College’s Principal has been working with representatives from the BCF, from marketing and communications, and other senior leaders within the Synod to establish a business strategy for 2020-2025. The working document outlines educational and financial plans and projections for the next five years.

4. Board development through practice improvement

As part of our Board practice improvement a review-feedback process has been instigated into every meeting. We are also reflecting on our own Committee structure to determine a fit for purpose model.

Project Plenty

The Board of Christian Formation and the staff of Trinity College Queensland have engaged with Project Plenty staff in plenary and workshop sessions at each stage of the process. The work of Project Plenty, as it has been communicated, has been integrated into the work of the College as well as the conversations and planning by the BCF.

There has been positive alignment between the emerging themes of Project Plenty (1. Discipleship 2. Transforming communities 3. Fit for purpose and 4. Life together) and the work of the BCF and the College. After the outcomes of this current Synod in Session the BCF will be utilising the content to shape our next strategic directions into 2021-2022.

The BCF and the College will be identifying specific strategies that build into these themes.

Challenges/risks as we progress

Risk/Challenge	Ways to address
1. Financial status of Synod to continue to co-resource the College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an effective Business Plan for the College Improve student numbers Improve income levels Work closely with the Synod to monitor financial status

2. Changing nature of Ministry workforce and placements/roles (economic, cultural, social diversity)	Working on flexible pathways of formation and education that meet the diverse needs of people and placements/roles Work collaboratively with Presbyteries, Agencies and Congregations on their needs regarding formation and education of ministry agents and leaders
3. To broaden the reach of the College beyond the Uniting Church to access a wider 'market' of potential students	Developing a positive reputation of the College beyond the Uniting Church Provide increasing educational products (accredited and non-accredited) that meet the needs of a wider sector of churches and community.

For consideration

The BCF is undertaking a review of the selection process for candidates for ordained ministries with a view to improved processes and developing the capacities of Congregations, Presbyteries and the Synod in this process.

With decreasing full-time placement options in congregations and increasing Ministry Location and Non-Congregational options, the ministry environment is changing and the BCF and the College are working to adapt to the needs of the church. The reality for anyone candidating, is that there is no guarantee of a full-time placement in a congregation after completing Phase Two formation. With pastor placements, part-time and supply placements increasing, people are serving in these roles either while in Phase Two formation or prior to being in the formal formation process. This brings greater responsibility on the Presbyteries to serve (through oversight), the Formation needs/requirements of people in the variety of ministry roles. The BCF and the College are committed to resourcing and serving the Presbyteries in this work. (See Table following for changes in Ministry Agents Workforce)

Congregational & Non-Congregational Positions	July 2016	August 2019	Difference
Congregational Full Time Permanent	114	100	-14
Congregational Part Time Permanent	68	68	0
Congregational Full Time Supply	4	8	+4
Congregational Part Time Supply	34	32	-2
Non-Congregational/Agency FT Permanent	41	45	+4
Non-Congregational/Agency PT Permanent	42	28	-14
Non-Congregational/Agency FT Supply	4	6	+2
Non-Congregational/Agency PT Supply	13	14	+1



While there has been a decline in full-time placements there is also an increasing need in ministry agents with increasing leadership capacities. The BCF and the College are committed to serving this need and in Semester Two 2020 the Master of Missional Leadership commenced with a good take up for this program.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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