Core Curriculum Information for Staff:
Rationale, Methodology, Process:

Rationale

The two common University Core Curriculum Units have their *rationale in the University Mission Statement*:

- UNCC100: "[The University's] ideal graduates will be highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good";
- UNCC300: The University "is guided by a fundamental concern for justice and equity, and for the dignity of all human beings."

The units focus very explicitly on the *development of the University graduate attributes*, and offer substantial resources to scaffold student development of a number of these attributes.

Methodology

The units are interdisciplinary in nature and are designed to enable students to reflect critically on their chosen disciplinary and professional studies.

Both make use of a *methodology* adapted from the social analysis of Holland and Henriot: contemporary issues give rise to an investigation drawing from a range of theoretical perspectives, including the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, to prompt a new synthesis of theory and action.[1]

Process

Students are expected to complete 150 hours of focused learning for each unit—10 hours in face-to-face tutorials, and the rest using highly developed learning materials and activities in LEO.

Assessment involves short, weekly class tests as well as a major project due two weeks after the end of the face-to-face sessions.

There is no community engagement component in these units. (Students undertake community engagement as well as two other Core Curriculum Units delivered by their home faculty; these are specific to each undergraduate degree program.)

Given that various cohorts of students are away from the University for professional experience practica at different times of the semester, there are different streams running on different timetables on any single campus.

University Core Curriculum Unit enrolments for 2013: Approximately 1200 students in semester 1, and an anticipated 8,000+ students in semester 2.

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[1] Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Orbis, 1983).

Core Curriculum Information for Staff:
UNCC300 Understanding Self and Society: Contemporary Perspectives

The first of the University Core Units, **UNCC100**, focuses on **the common good.**

The second University Core unit, **UNCC300** focuses on **the dignity of the human person**, within the context of broader society. Students explore what it means to be a human being, how we can understand human worth, or value, and how this understanding can be applied to various contemporary issues.

Module 1: Why is Human Dignity Important?   1 week

As David McCabe points out, "most discussions of important moral and political issues, along with our everyday reflections on how others should be treated, occur against a background assumption of human dignity."[1] In module 1, students explore the notion of human dignity, and how it has shaped our society.

What is dignity?
We begin with a very broad definition of the term 'dignity', as "the quality of being worthy or honourable."[2] In this way, we introduce *human* dignity, as being about human worth, or value.

How has the concept of human dignity shaped our society?
Students are presented with an introductory overview of the significance gained by the concept of human dignity in the twentieth century. They briefly investigate the horrors of WWII and the response of the world in the development of key human rights documents, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The civil rights movements of the United States, South Africa and Australia are discussed, along with contemporary presentations of the concept in Australian Law and professional practice.

Module 2: Module 2: What is Human Dignity?   2 ½ weeks

Module 2 explores the question, '*What is it that gives a human being dignity*?' The various bases on which people mount arguments when appealing to human dignity can cause problems for ethical discourse. Here, students explore the various understandings of human dignity and the way in which these might come into play when discussing contemporary issues.

What is human dignity?
One of the major difficulties with the concept of human dignity is that people think about the basis of human dignity in a number of very different ways. In this section of the module, students are introduced to two main categories and two further subcategories on which people base their understandings of human dignity. These are:

Dignity humans already have:	Dignity humans can acquire (or lose):
…By being a member of the human species	…Through a sense of self-worth
…Based on possession of one or more human capacities	…Through moral/immoral behaviour

As the students explore some examples of these approaches to grounding human dignity, they begin to understand how and when they might come into play in discussions of contemporary issues.

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[1] David McCabe, review of "Human Dignity," by George Kateb, *Commonweal*, June 17, 2011, 29, http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=1f55aa8e-50bb-43fe-aab2-c3a748fb3a5b%40sessionmgr11&vid=1&hid=17&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=rlh&AN=61796454.

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "dignity," accessed December 8, 2012, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52653?redirectedFrom=dignity&

Problems with the appeal to human dignity

In light of the fact that there are different grounds upon which an understanding of human dignity can be based, the students then explore a number of problems associated with appeals to human dignity in contemporary ethical discourse. Principally, human dignity is sometimes used to support opposing arguments. Further, the appeal to human dignity has not stopped the occurrence of genocides and other atrocities.

Module 3: Putting the human in human dignity?   2 ½ weeks

All the various positions from which people mount their arguments about human dignity are anchored in their understandings of what it is to be human. In module 3, students explore the multidimensionality of the human person, with a view to rethinking their understanding of human dignity.

What does it mean to be human?

Students investigate the ways in which the human person might be approached from a range of theoretical perspectives—in disciplines such as sociology, medicine, psychology, theology, economics, education, physics and exercise science. This investigation is with a view to assisting students to come to an understanding of the human person as an evolving, multidimensional being. The work of John Macquarrie is used to explore a number of the existential tensions inherent in being human.[3]

Rethinking human dignity

A multidimensional understanding of the human person is then brought to bear on our understanding of human dignity. The notion of human dignity as a multidimensional reality is juxtaposed with each of the four approaches examined in module 2, in order to construct a more robust, workable definition of the term.

Module 4: Contemporary Challenges   4 weeks

In module 4, this new understanding of human dignity is brought to bear on a number of case studies; in 2013 these are *Crime and Punishment, Enhancement*, and *Personal Identity and the Media*. This is followed by an exploration of the personal and professional challenges of a multidimensional understanding of human dignity.

Case Studies

For their major assessment task, students conduct a detailed analysis and evaluation of one of the case studies presented in module 4. Rather than making normative judgements, students are asked to analyse critically the case in terms of: the understanding of human dignity at work in the person; the social influences, attitudes, norms and circumstances that may have contributed to such an understanding of human dignity; the way in which this understanding of human dignity is used to justify the person's choices and actions; and aspects of human dignity that may be compromised in the case, in light of a multidimensional understanding of the concept.

Personal and Professional Challenges

In class, students analyse their personal understandings of human dignity using the same process, i.e. in terms of their social influences and traditions, and the way in which their choices and actions are underpinned by their understanding of the concept. They compare this understanding with that which is implicit in the ACU Mission statement and the documents of their chosen profession. Finally, students discuss the professional applications of a multidimensional understanding of human dignity, and the challenges that this may pose for them in their professional lives.

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[3] John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1977).