



Domus

Consider a career within
the university family





Universities are never just businesses: they are collegial bodies, communities of scholars, professionals and students working for a common purpose bigger than themselves.

The first recognisable universities anywhere in the world, such as Paris, Bologna, Oxford, were Catholic. Catholic universities today look very different from their medieval predecessors – but the key concepts remain the same.



Catholic universities are like a family – people of different generations and gifts cooperating for a shared future.



Catholic universities are like a household – a shared space that is secure, welcoming, safe, private.



Catholic universities are like a community – a set of relationships that are reciprocal, supportive, public.



Catholic universities are like the Church – a society from prayer, a common vision of life, a burning charity.

These four notions can be summed up in the Latin word *Domus*, meaning a family or household approach to being a university. At a Catholic university, you should feel at home.

Australian Catholic University is both public and Catholic and through its *Domus* program, it aims to assist job applicants in understanding the idea of a Catholic university when you consider working with us.

This booklet will try to answer these questions: how should I think of a Catholic university? How does it differ from other secular universities? What will ACU as a Catholic university ask of me if I accept a position? How will I benefit from this?

What is a Catholic university?

Catholic universities are part of the universal family known as the Catholic Church. From the outside, the Catholic Church can look like a vast, global corporation with the Pope as CEO. But it is actually a family of local Churches each differing in certain ways – and Catholic universities operate in the same way too. Some are owned by Religious Orders, others by groups of bishops.

ACU is an incorporated entity with campuses on the territory (diocese) of several different bishops. Every Catholic university shares in the faith-life of the Catholic Church.

The faith-life of the Church is expressed through a number of traditions: patterns of thinking, living and choosing, which have been handed down to us and are now handed on by us. These include Catholic social, moral, artistic and intellectual traditions. Even those who do not share or practise the Catholic faith can value, contribute and gain from these Catholic traditions. In universities, Catholic intellectual tradition is particularly valued and we should think of this as forming the heart of a Catholic university.

Catholic intellectual tradition is a pattern of thinking, living and choosing that highlights notions such as: the relation between faith and reason (or science, philosophy); the dialogue between all religions and between religion and secularism; character traits such as wisdom and courage, self-control and fairness; moral goodness – how to identify and promote it; human virtue – how to develop and communicate it; the human dignity of every person from conception to death; the common good and how to contribute to it; and our obligations to the most needy. Catholic universities offer a rich faith-life for Catholics and those interested in becoming Catholics – including opportunities for the sacraments, prayer, discussion and spiritual development. But they also offer everyone a rich range of activities from our Catholic tradition, and particularly from the intellectual tradition.

Like all families, Catholic universities ask for their way of life and traditions to be respected, properly understood, and referred to. But we never impose. Instead, we pose and we propose. We invite and warmly welcome every person of good will, whatever their own faith, tradition or culture. In fact, many of our staff are from faiths or traditions other than Catholicism and work happily and successfully here at ACU.

The key duty of a Catholic university is to witness to the faith of the Catholic Church in ways appropriate to a university. The university extends very broad freedom and latitude to its staff – but it has as an institutional obligation to protect its own capacity to witness to its own faith and tradition. This is no different from any organisation's loyalty to its own core mission. Individual staff members are not of course obliged to share in witness to the Catholic faith. Where they choose to, that is wonderful. But our profound respect for people's consciences means we would never suggest anyone subscribing to a position they do not share.

How do Catholic universities differ from other Australian universities?

Catholic universities are required by their own tradition to operate as centres for dialogue, critique, debate and as bridges between different perspectives.

At a Catholic university all views and perspectives are considered in teaching and research and in staff forums. Nothing is omitted—including the Catholic-specific view on any topic wherever there is such a view.

Staff and students are as free to critique Catholic positions as any other. The normal scholarly conventions will be followed, i.e., Catholic positions should be critiqued at their strongest with at least as much justice shown to their premises and argument as is shown to any other position.

Rational critique, and respectful debate are fully encouraged—but not campaigning against or ignoring views you do not like. Reasoned debate and dialogue equip the student or colleague to weigh everything up and make up their own mind.

Catholic universities speak often about the “whole person”. This idea goes back to a very well-established position in Catholic philosophy and theology that the human person is made up of many different parts but each part acts upon the other parts. For example, our intelligence affects our relationships, our spirituality affects our choices, and so on, which means the person is a balanced unity of many parts. Catholic universities seek to develop and care for all parts of the person. This affects not just our curriculum, pedagogy and research but also the attitude and motivation behind these activities. We are motivated by a love of students and colleagues as unique individuals, made of many parts assembled in a unique balance of gifts and talents.

Catholic universities open up a different set of networks and partnerships to staff. While our key partners are governments and the national university sector, we also have wonderful partnerships with Catholic dioceses, schools, hospitals and welfare providers. This establishes a unique network of family connections throughout the nation.



What will ACU as a Catholic University ask of me if I accept this position?

Just as families have a threshold understanding of what it is to be a family member, so Catholic universities have a threshold understanding of what it is to be an employee of a Catholic university. This threshold is not a matter of law or contract: we see it as a matter of belonging, having a job that makes you feel at home in the Catholic university.

The threshold understanding at ACU requires: that you accept the University is Catholic in its identity, life, goals, values, and relationships and express this acceptance through respect for the university's Catholic identity and the distinct mission this implies. For those—Catholic or from other faiths or traditions—who wish to go further and actively support the university in its Catholic identity and mission, there are plenty of opportunities. But the threshold understanding requires not active support but simply respect.

How do I know if I will be able to respect the Catholic identity and mission of the university? Respect means not ridiculing, not treating with public hostility, or campaigning against our identity or mission; not expressing surprise or outrage at the presence of Catholic activities, language, and symbols. Hopefully, feeling some pride in, forming some connection with, contributing to, or learning from at least some aspects of Catholic tradition—intellectual, moral, social or artistic.

Beyond the threshold, your role and level may ask you to become familiar with some further aspects of Catholic life, faith, or tradition. For example, for hiring managers there may be consideration of leadership positions and what these entail in a faith-based context; supervisors may want to know about the Church's social tradition on workplace fairness or its moral tradition on compassion and integrity. For lecturers or researchers in areas such as human life, health, social injustice, or any contemporary issue, there may be particular principles to ensure Catholic positions are accurately presented and critiqued. Many of these specific principles are covered in the Masterclass on Any Catholic University.

For people appointed or promoted to senior roles, there will be extra opportunities to lead on Catholic intellectual tradition and on the ethics of university life. The Domus program provides resources for training and development in these areas.

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How will I benefit from this?

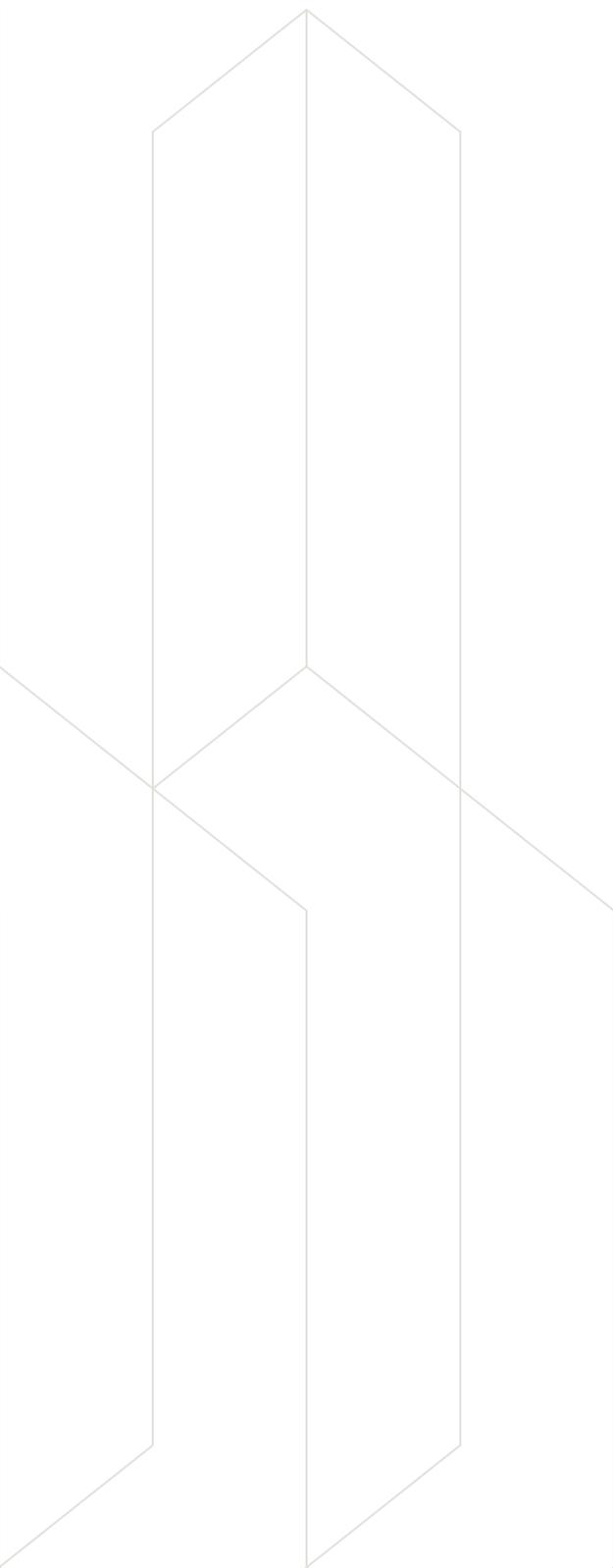
Whether you have a religious faith or no faith, learning about a faith and tradition with 1.6 billion followers can be interesting. And because the Church seeks dialogue with all faiths around the world, there is benefit in having access to, and perhaps participating in, these debates.

The Church venerates the communion of saints but is aware that it is a community of sinners. Going beyond the media caricature of the Church in Australia by learning about the genuine attempts of thousands of Catholics who reject wrongdoing and work for the common good, and the neediest of our fellow-citizens can be inspiring. There are certainly many opportunities to take part in works of Christian mercy and justice.

We aspire to build a home for our staff, offer the care of a family, and develop an academic and professional community.

We speak openly about the care for the whole person and for an ethical component to all university activities. We believe the experience of connection, belonging and common purpose contributes to a sense of flourishing in the workplace that you will enjoy, benefit from, and want to share with others.

ACU is clear that we value growth in courage and justice, wisdom, and self-restraint in society and in the university. We are an employer of hope, offering a faith and motivated by an impulse of charity. Above all, the benefit to our staff is helping provide education aimed not at selfish ambition but at community service.





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