

## **AUSTRALIAN CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS COURSE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

**The following information outlines:**

- a. Important information and guidelines **for AFFILIATES AND THEIR STAFF**
- b. Guidelines for course development procedures **used by ACS STAFF.**

### **MISSION STATEMENT/AIM**

ACS recognises that success for a graduate is likely to come if they have a set of skills and knowledge that differentiates them from their competition, and an ability to adapt in a rapidly changing world.

ACS believes that a mainstream and conventional approach to educational content and provision is not ideal in today's world. Development of a more successful approach to education requires lateral and uninhibited thinking, free from the commonly excessive influence of bureaucracy and tradition.

ACS courses aim (as far as possible), to identify and cater for future needs rather than current needs; recognising that in a rapidly changing world, future needs not current needs are what will be in demand. Above all, courses aim to provide foundational knowledge along with a capacity to adapt to change as it occurs.

Recognising the trend to globalisation, courses are aimed at being globally relevant, rather than only regionally relevant.

### **General Principles**

\*Affiliates will negotiate with ACS to establish a list of courses they are authorised to offer.

\*Affiliates will only have rights to use course materials from ACS courses which they are authorised to offer.

\*ACS will maintain the current version of any ACS course that is being used by Affiliates

\*ACS will upgrade courses with due consideration being given to suggestions made by Affiliates

\*ACS will supply Affiliates with updated PDF file copies of any course notes and subject guides.

PDF files will be supplied, to ensure printing problems do not occur; and facilitate ease of supplying additional or updated documentation.

\*A small-print copyright statement should always be present on the cover of ACS documentation printed by an Affiliate: the statement will read:

"Copyright ownership of this documentation resides with ACS. [www.acs.edu.au](http://www.acs.edu.au) "

## **UPGRADING AND REVIEWING COURSES**

Course upgrades made by ACS are based on the following criteria:

\*Consistency in visual appearance

\*Content that reflects and supports the stated aims

\*Optimum flexibility without compromising the aims (e.g. students should be able to undertake set tasks and assignments in many different ways)

\*Optimum accessibility (e.g. students who are restricted due to a physical handicap, economic limitations, or their location should still be able to undertake a course, provided major outcomes can still be achieved).

\*Freedom from unnecessary jargon

\*Balanced Consensus of all interested parties.

As a matter of policy, input is sought from students of both ACS and Affiliates, staff of ACS, and staff of any Affiliates concerned and involved with the delivery or study of any course. The ACS Academic Department will consider all constructive input and add to, or alter course notes in an attempt to satisfy issues raised.

\*Only one version of a course will be maintained by the ACS Academic Department

\*Content should be generic; as much content as possible should be relevant to all countries, climates, cultures and economies. If, and where a conflict occurs, the course should always aim to be relevant within the country that distributes the highest number of that particular course.

\*Writing style and layout should adhere to the ACS Style Guide, and the Course Template guidelines.

\*Course notes should function for both ACS and for any Affiliate. Attaching a customised front cover or first page to a document, will enable the document to be printed and used within any institution granted rights to use it.

\*Mention of procedures specific to ACS or any other institution will generally be confined to a Procedures Manual. The Affiliate may choose to develop a separate Procedures Manual, or adopt and modify an ACS Procedures Manual.

\*Changes to documentation will be managed and distributed by the ACS Academic Department.

\*Changes should be kept consistent with published course descriptions, both on the internet, and in printed documents.

\*Opinionated statements, without qualification, should not be included as course content. If, for example, there are three different ways of viewing a topic, NO WRITER has the authority to present their own opinion, without clearly showing that it is merely one view,

and that there are other valid ways of looking at the topic. In such situations it is always preferable to present at least two different perspectives.

\*Courses must be spell checked using U.K. spelling as the standard.

\*Courses will be periodically reviewed and upgraded according to enrolment numbers i.e.

- Courses with more than four student enrolments per year should be reviewed and updated at least annually.

-Courses with more than 15 student enrolments per year should be reviewed and updated at least every six months.

-Courses with fewer than four student enrolments per year should be reviewed and updated as frequently as possible, but within the limitation of available funds.

\*Changes should, where feasible, align with the accreditation requirements of IARC, and any accrediting body, with which an Affiliate has an association.

Any attempt to align courses with accreditation requirements, should only be made if the course in question is already generating sufficient income to support the financial viability of seeking that accreditation.

\*Course codes are classified to reflect the level of study.

Unless stated otherwise, courses are set at a standard that would be useful study for an adult, who has reached an educational capacity equal to or beyond completion of the final year of senior secondary school.

An exception might be a hobby level or general interest course.

All course codes are structured to have 4 parts, as follows:

a/ First letter:

**B** indicates Bachelors (B modules can be used for credit in degrees, diplomas or certificates)

**V** indicates Vocational (V modules can be used for credit in diplomas or certificates)

**A** indicates Adult education (Designed to be studied only for general interest)

b/ Second two letters:

These indicate the discipline of the course or module: for example:

**HT** means horticulture

**WR** means writing and publishing)

c/ First number:

When a code has three numbers, and the first is 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on, the number indicates whether the course is the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> (and so on) level of post secondary education.

d/ Final numbers:

These distinguish one course or module from another.

Example of a module code: **BHT101 – Horticulture I**

## **Procedure for Changing Established Courses**

-Recommendations for any of the following changes to content should be submitted in writing to the Principal of ACS:

#Additions or alterations to the essential meaning of the text

#Additions or reductions in content of assignment questions or set tasks

-These recommendations may originate from students (through feedback forms), Affiliates, or staff of ACS.

-Recommended changes to content should be considered within a week of receipt by two different academic staff, be managed by the Principal, and a decision made and listed for action, within 10 days of receipt.

*\*Recognise the fact that the content or wording of something may have evolved to its present form, as a response to issues raised by students or staff in the past.*

*Altering, (or applying to alter), set tasks and assignments in particular, can be a backward step if you are not fully aware of how and why the current situation evolved.*

*\*Be CAREFUL before recommending or implementing changes! Be HIGHLY CONSCIOUS that ACS courses have developed as the combined work of many different people (i.e. industry professionals and academic staff) over many years.*

## **Procedure for Maintaining Currency**

In order to ensure that the most current version of a course is provided to students and used by staff the following procedure should be followed:

\*All ACS course documents for each course (i.e. all booklets, materials, subject guides and accompanying notes etc.) must have the date of development, review or upgrade inserted on the cover page in the top left hand corner.

\*When courses are reviewed or upgraded, the new document will only show the date of the latest review.

\*Only the latest version of each course document will be maintained by ACS

\*Each course document will also show the file name (and location) above the date of review

\*A file register will be maintained by ACS in which, the date of the latest review will be clearly indicated against the file name, for all course documentation.

\*When updated versions are sent to Affiliates, details should be entered onto a file register kept by the Affiliate, in which the date of the latest review undertaken for all course documentation is clearly indicated.

\*ACS staff must double check all course documents against the file register, to ensure that the latest version of any documentation within a course is used for further upgrade or review.

\* ACS staff and Affiliates (and their staff), must double check all course documents against the register to ensure that the latest version is provided to students.

### **CUSTOMISING ACS DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES**

The following information outlines suggestions on how Affiliates might Customise ACS Distance Education Courses :

\*Fee level and structure may differ to ACS.

\*Package course materials in a different quality folder or case.

\*Use a different quality cover, or a different binding method.

\*Remove introductory pages from the beginning of a subject guide and replace with the Affiliate's own introductory pages.

\*Supply students with a supplementary reading list that specifies additional topics to be read in each lesson, either in a text book supplied by the Affiliate, or in additional printed notes supplied by the Affiliate.

\*Provide additional or supplementary instruction for some or all lessons, through either video presentations, on-campus workshops, online or telephone tutorials, or some other method.

\*Provide a selection of support services (these may be part or all of the services that ACS normally provides; or they may be in addition to those which ACS provides). For example:

- Video loan library
- Access to tutors (one on one) over the phone, email, in person, etc.
- Open days, social events, tours, workshops, etc.
- Bookshop discounts (NB: ACS gives 10% discount to students)
- Discounts on other courses (NB: ACS gives 5% on subsequent courses).
- Online student room

\*Provide additional Materials as part of the course package  
e.g. One or more additional books, college merchandise, etc. (ACS often provides an ACS carry bag or ACS T Shirt)

\*Assessment system may be varied from the system ACS follows  
(i.e. ACS assesses students on the basis of assignments AND one 1.5 hour exam, per 100 hour module or course)  
An Affiliate may or may not choose to conduct an exam; and the duration of the exam may or may not be 1.5 hours.