

MASTER OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

1. Background

The Master of School Leadership is a 100-point one-year full-time or two-year part-time degree for current and potential school leaders who have at least five years of work experience in school sectors. Applicants will be qualified teachers who currently hold positions of responsibility including curriculum coordinators, community liaison officers, student welfare coordinators, learning area leaders, school council representatives, vice-principals, principals, or regional office staff. The program will be available from Semester 2, 2004 on a part-time basis only. It is expected that full-time enrolments will be possible from 2005.

There is concern throughout the nation about the preparation and ongoing development of school leaders. The Australian Government has announced plans for a National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership. The Victorian Government's Blueprint for Government Schools has identified the development of leaders as a major priority. The Blueprint refers to the need for an accelerated development program for high potential leaders.

This priority is confirmed by the analysis provided to the Victorian Department of Education and Training by Boston Consulting, entitled *Schools Workforce Development Strategy 2003*. It gives strong support to new and innovative ways to build the capacity of leaders and draws attention to the role of institutions such as universities to contribute.

The priority is also confirmed by research within the Faculty of Education which has highlighted the diversity in school educational experiences (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001; this is a prescribed subject text), the extent of educational disadvantage, and the need to narrow the differences evident in educational performance (Teese and Polesel, 2003; this is a prescribed subject text). Whilst much is known about successful school leadership and the pivotal role it has in school improvement (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), research into successful school leadership that we are conducting with universities across eight countries is producing examples (e.g. Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann, 2003) that are not fully explained by our current knowledge. A feature of this proposed Masters program is that it provides students with an opportunity to be directly involved in generating knowledge about leadership and school improvement.

The Faculty of Education has engaged in a series of discussions with key stakeholders including leaders at the most senior levels of the Government and Catholic school systems. The need for a degree along the lines proposed has been endorsed.

It is within this context that the proposal for a Masters degree in School Leadership has been developed. It is an opportunity for the University of Melbourne to take the lead in an area of high priority. The proposed degree will provide students with an opportunity to develop a capacity for leadership through critical exploration of different conceptual frameworks and policy understandings, and to shape work practices that are informed by current research.

The MSL: Benefits for Graduates

Graduates of the program will be able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of leadership, including a capacity to develop strategies for innovation and transformation, with the latter considered to be significant, systematic and sustained change that leads to improved outcomes for all students in all settings. They will also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues in education, and the role of leaders in dealing with these issues in school settings.

The MSL: Benefits for Schools and School Systems

It is envisaged that schools and school systems will benefit from the Master of School Leadership through the employment of graduates:

- Who will have international connections with schools and educational researchers.
- Informed views on school leadership and improvement that are grounded in research.
- Enhanced capacity for reflective practice.
- A commitment to, and capacity to take the lead in, areas such as governance, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Quality Assurance

In preparing this proposal the Faculty has undertaken a series of discussions with practitioners, system leaders and stakeholders. The Faculty has consulted the key principal organisations at primary and secondary levels in the Government, Catholic and independent sectors. It has discussed the proposed degree with senior leaders and middle level managers in the Government and Catholic sectors. There have been roundtable discussions with potential candidates in the course and with groups of principals in both Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan Victoria. The proposal has also been discussed with potential international partners who may participate in cross-accreditation arrangements.

2. Course/Program Objectives

Goal:

To enhance students' knowledge and understanding of, and capacity for, leadership, so that they are better prepared to lead improvement in student outcomes through school innovation and transformation.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- Effective school leadership.
- Strategies for innovation and transformation of schools to improve outcomes for all students in all settings.
- The use of data to drive change and intervention focussed on improvement of teaching and learning.
- Contemporary issues in education and the role of the leader in dealing with these issues in the school setting. Areas from which these issues will be drawn include governance, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

To provide opportunities for students to develop international connections with other schools and researchers.

To enhance the capacity of students to combine historical analysis with analyses of contemporary policy options.

To enhance student skills in research and scholarly writing.

To enhance student skills in reflective practice.

3. Entry Requirements

An applicant may be eligible for entry into the Master of School Leadership if the applicant has:

- Completed an undergraduate degree and an appropriate fourth-year level education qualification, or a four-year education degree, and

- A documented record of at least five full-time equivalent years of professional or teaching experience in a school sector/s

Selection

To assist with selection and the likelihood of success in the course, the Selection Committee may conduct interviews or call for referee reports to assess applicants relevant work experience or elucidate any of the matters referred to above.

4. Course structure

The program will reflect the approaches that characterise the outstanding Postgraduate Diploma of Educational Studies (Student Welfare). This program is exemplary in its modelling of approaches to adult learning in the professional domain (its academic leaders were selected for show-casing in the Vice-Chancellor's Colloquium on Teaching and Learning).

The Master of School Leadership will be structured around four themes, the first three consisting of two subjects, whilst the last theme is a school-based project. The four themes and their respective subjects are:

Theme 1: Leadership and Governance

482-xxx: Leadership for Transformation (12.5 points)

482-xxx: Governance and the Community (12.5 points)

Theme 2: Curriculum and Educational Outcomes

482-xxx: Leadership and Educational Outcomes (12.5 points)

476-xxx: Curriculum for a Knowledge Society (12.5 points)

Theme 3: Learning and Learning Organisations

476-xxx: Leading a Learning Organisation (12.5 points)

482-xxx: Learning and Individual Pathways (12.5 points)

Theme 4: Leadership Development

482-xxx Project in School Leadership (25 points)

The program will be offered in a highly flexible format to meet the needs of students who will likely be working full-time. The course will be offered as intensive study during blocked times in school holiday periods and at weekends. Students will be encouraged to seek short-term study leave from their employers as appropriate (for example, to support overseas study opportunities, or full-time study).

Cohesiveness will be achieved with a series of workshops at the commencement, in the middle and at the end of the program. Key themes will be drawn from the different subjects, with experiences shared and outcomes summarised in a daylong program involving all or most of the academic team, leading practitioners who contribute to the program, as well as the students.

5. EFTSU and Budgetary Consequences

The course will be available to Australian fee-paying student from Semester 2, 2004 and to international fee-paying students on a full-time basis from 2005.

Master of School Leadership – 100 credit points (*new course*)

1. The Selection Committee will evaluate the applicant's ability to pursue successfully the course using the following additional criteria:
 - A three year undergraduate degree and a fourth year level education qualification, or a four year education degree; and
 - at least five years of full time documented professional or teaching experience in a school sector.
2. The Selection Committee may conduct interviews and call for referees and employer references to elucidate on any of the requirements for entry listed above.