New Post-graduate Degrees in Faith-Based Leadership and Management from the University of Otago

From February 2019, managers and leaders in faith-based organisations will be able to gain postgraduate qualifications via new programmes offered by the University of Otago’s Department of Theology and Religion.

The qualifications – a Postgraduate Diploma in Faith-Based Leadership and Management and a Master of Faith-Based Leadership and Management – are being offered in conjunction with the Otago Business School’s Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme.

The new qualifications will provide professional development for leaders in faith-based organisations, those hoping to enter into this sphere of work, and those involved in leadership and management in parish churches, or in ministries based in local churches.

The Department has recognised a need to provide access to professional development for those in employment throughout New Zealand so, like many of its Theology papers, the programmes will all be available via the University’s distance learning programme, and can be taken part-time.

Programme content is also aimed at recognising and enhancing pastoral leadership, which often requires a high level of skill in managing people, staff, community trusts and complicated budgets.

The qualifications will also benefit people who hope to exercise their faith within their workplace in ways that enhance their positions and bring benefit for their businesses, their clients and other staff members.

University of Otago Division of Humanities Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Tony Ballantyne says the new programmes will make a significant contribution by augmenting the Department’s ability to offer sector-focused qualifications.

“Our Theology Programme has a long history of providing top-quality content for students on-campus and through distance teaching. It is very pleasing to be in a position where Theology at Otago can draw upon the outstanding expertise of its teaching staff and their relationships with communities of faith to expand its offerings to meet clearly identified needs in the sector.

“These new postgraduate options will also have wide appeal because, by partnering with the Otago Business School’s MBA programme, we can offer highly-focussed and socially-relevant content for practitioners to apply in a range of settings,” he says.

NZ Council of Christian Social Services Policy Adviser Paul Barber says he believes the new programmes will make a significant contribution to building capability in leadership and management in the faith-based social services that are part of the Council’s networks.
“The social services of the six member churches in NZCCSS employ nearly 12,000 people and 16,000 volunteers. These new programmes look ideal for people working in such organisations as well as other similar religious and community-based services,” he says.

Salvation Army Principal Adviser Dr Greg Coyle says the qualifications are much-needed.

“The University of Otago is to be congratulated on this innovation. It will assist The Salvation Army and many other faith-based organisations in career development for our staff. Both the government and philanthropic sector provides significant funding for services to such non-government organisations in the areas of welfare, advocacy, addiction treatment, emergency and public housing and employment readiness. These new degrees will provide a high level of skill in managing people and budgets, and will provide the funders of these services with assurance that they are being run by competent and well-educated people in relevant areas in organisations with a Christian perspective.”

The postgraduate diploma will consist of four MBA courses and three Theology courses. The MBA topics will include organisational leadership, human resource management, accounting, leading sustainable enterprises, operational excellence, and strategy implementation.

Theology courses will cover topics such as theological perspectives on leadership, theology and human well-being, citizenship, democracy and discipleship, and reconciliation, Christian ethics and public theology.

The Master of Faith-Based Leadership and Management involves these taught courses, and a 20,000 word research dissertation, focussing on some feature of leadership in a faith-based organisation.

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