

# AFP develops pathways for excellence in learning



The AFP and two of Australia's leading universities have united to provide tertiary education opportunities for AFP members.

**The AFP will develop stronger leadership and management, staff attraction and retention, and skills enhancements in new technology and specialised areas of crime investigation through improved access to tertiary education qualifications.**

In 2006, the AFP's Executive Management Board recommended the development of qualifications pathways to increase opportunity for AFP members to advance their tertiary education.

The Board, now known as the Strategic Leaders Group, endorsed a two-pronged approach which involved canvassing educational institutes and identifying tertiary programs that meet the needs and objectives of the AFP and its members.

The AFP's Learning and Development Higher Education and Research team examined the possibility of forming partnerships with various educational institutes to enhance the learning opportunities available to AFP members.

Since the team developed the qualifications pathways framework, two of Australia's leading universities have signed separate Memoranda of Agreement with the AFP. Monash University signed an agreement

on 25 August 2008 recognising the completion of specialised AFP College programs as credits towards undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in the areas of criminal justice, counter terrorism, Islamic studies and international relations.

In November 2007, Charles Sturt University (CSU) signed an agreement to provide higher learning and knowledge enhancement in the investigations, intelligence and security related areas.

CSU Dean Tracey Green said the agreement provided attractive credit packages for courses undertaken at the AFP College, which is a registered training organisation. As a result of the agreement, senior officers with five years or more of policing service in the AFP will be granted credit toward undergraduate programs, such as CSU's Bachelor of Policing degree.

"Courses such as this are designed to enhance investigation capabilities by building on existing skills and knowledge through university studies," Associate Professor Green said.

Under the agreement, AFP members have the opportunity to undertake tertiary studies at the undergraduate and postgraduate level while also receiving

credit for any other relevant learning that they have undertaken.

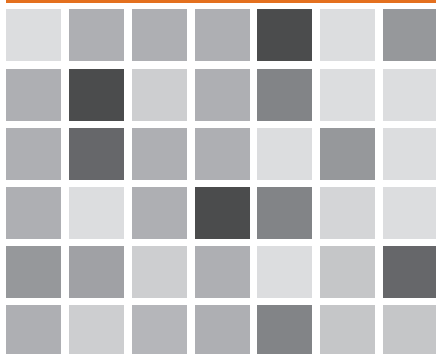
Dean of Monash University's Faculty of Arts Professor Rae Frances believes that university courses such as these extend the professional experience and training of students, building high level conceptual and analytical skills.

"The faculty is also very keen to further its research collaborations with the AFP, particularly through the Global Terrorism Research Centre and the Criminal Justice and Public Policy program," Professor Frances said in a media release.

Partnerships with universities such as CSU and Monash are designed to equip AFP members and the AFP College with research and best practice development.

AFP College intelligence trainer Arlo Van Rhyn believes the agreement offers both personal and professional benefits to the AFP. "AFP members are provided with an avenue to gain qualifications outside the AFP while also helping them to achieve a higher tertiary qualification," Mr Van Rhyn said. "On a professional level the AFP will increase their chances of retaining highly skilled employees."

Above: Professor Rae Frances, Dean of Monash University's Faculty of Arts.



Opportunities also exist for universities to capitalise on the agreement. "They gain the kudos of being associated with a reputable organisation and attract extra students into their courses," Mr Van Rhyn said.

Since 2001, 52 per cent of new police members have joined the AFP with undergraduate degrees or higher qualifications. These have been distributed over a broad range of subject areas. A further 19 per cent of members had begun university studies or completed a vocational degree before joining.<sup>1</sup>

While the emerging criminal and policing environments favour the development of bodies of knowledge aligned with higher education qualifications, the AFP recognises that higher education qualifications for AFP members should be embraced as an opportunity rather than an obligation.<sup>2</sup>

Graduates acquire skills in critical thinking, problem solving, self-directed learning, as well as a large volume of knowledge, through higher education.

These qualities are highly sought-after in the rapidly evolving high-tech environments of community policing, international capacity development and responding to emerging crime types.

National Manager Human Resources Paul Jevtovic said the AFP believes that a culture of professionalism is better served by a system that encourages self-initiating and motivated individuals to pursue higher education opportunities.

"A greater understanding of national and international issues will result from broader thinking by management, particularly in the areas of complex issues analysis and strategic thinking," Assistant Commissioner Jevtovic said.

"Publicly observable qualifications indicate high levels of capability and professionalism which directly correlates to increased credibility in court."

The pathway to higher education qualifications attracts new staff members and then helps to keep them in the AFP. The pathway supports skills enhancements in new technology and specialised areas of crime investigations which had previously been unavailable to AFP members.

According to the Executive Management Board, a structured approach combining higher education qualifications with policing or investigations studies would help the AFP to capitalise on its existing intellectual capital.

At present, many recruits enter the AFP with specialised university degrees which can be of particular value to the organisation. Without regular use or maintenance, the value of these qualifications can be eroded and lost to the organisation.

Creating qualifications pathways for functions and skill sets which target specific programs of study to achieve future roles are part of the strategies used to extend higher education qualifications.

Although the AFP has a higher proportion of graduates than other policing jurisdictions, difficulties are still experienced in recruiting staff from within the banking, finance, accounting, information communication technology and intelligence sectors. These skills are important in assisting the AFP to investigate crimes such as money laundering and computer-related crime.

Above: AFP College, Barton ACT.

1 Figures drawn from Surveillance Analysis Centre (SAC) Federal Police Development Program Opening Ceremonies (FPDP).

2 Boni, N (2005). Developing a model of policing for the future: Current considerations, ACPR, November 2005 [www.acpr.gov.au](http://www.acpr.gov.au).

Current qualifications in the AFP are skewed towards the vocational training and education sector. It is expected that the new framework will address this by encouraging AFP members to take the pathways towards higher education. An additional benefit of the new framework is the enhancement of the AFP College profile as a centre of learning excellence.

Higher Education and Research team project manager Christopher Vas said the qualification framework has been very well received and the AFP has had enquiries from a number of universities which have expressed an interest in forming partnerships with the AFP.

"The AFP's success in articulating its programs from the Vocational Education and Training sector into the higher education space demonstrates that the AFP is a creator of best practice," Mr Vas said.

"The creation of such a framework will also provide an impetus for members who otherwise may not have considered tertiary studies to look seriously at how a higher education qualification can enhance their professional development in the AFP."

In keeping with an ongoing commitment to its expanding workforce, the AFP will continue to help its members to access learning opportunities throughout their careers.

The AFP is pursuing discussions with other universities to ensure AFP members in various locations, nationally and internationally, have access to similar opportunities for learning at the tertiary level.

## Mathieu Nolte



**Senior Protective Service Officer Mathieu Nolte saw the higher education**

**framework on the AFP's intranet and applied to start the Bachelor of Policing course through Charles Sturt University.**

A solid reputation for policing, very appealing course content and the delivery of training at Goulburn Police Academy were not the only advantages of the framework, Senior Protective Service Officer Nolte said.

"Charles Sturt University recognised the six years I have been with the AFP and I was able to gain 112 credit points out of a possible 192," he said. "This means that I only have eight subjects to complete before I get my degree."

"I plan to utilise the qualification to move across into the organisation as a qualified member of policing, either in ACT Policing or as a Federal Agent."

"The higher education framework is a really good opportunity as graduates become more attractive to employers and possess the latest knowledge and skills offered at universities."

## Leonie Thomas

**Federal Agent Leonie Thomas has been in the AFP for six years and is enrolled in the Bachelor of Policing course at Charles Sturt University.**

"Apart from improving my time management skills and enhancing my knowledge of the AFP's legislation and guidelines, the higher education framework provided me with the opportunity to develop valuable contacts in other policing jurisdictions," Federal Agent Thomas said.

"I would definitely recommend the framework to another member as I received 80 credit points toward my degree. The program is extremely flexible and it also accommodates the commitments in your personal and professional life."

"The university was very understanding in regards to deadlines on assignments and the AFP provided me with study leave when I needed it."