

MEDIA RELEASE

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Formation program sparks global renewal of evangelisation in Catholic schools

Australian Catholic University's preeminent formation program for Catholic educators and education leaders is inspiring an evangelisation renewal in schools around the world.

Spiritus is a formation program run by ACU's La Salle Academy training educators and leaders to rethink Catholic schools as "centres of evangelisation".

The program has been conducted in seven Australian dioceses, and internationally in Fiji, UK and Ireland, Europe, New Zealand, and most recently in East Africa to more than 200 educators.

Spiritus offers practical guidelines for evangelising within schools, drawing of the Church's most authoritative document on Catholic education, *Gravissimum educationis*, which marked its 60th anniversary in 2025.

A [recent evaluation](#) of Spiritus found the majority of participants had a clearer understanding of the role Catholic schools played in proclaiming the Gospel.

Out of nearly 400 participants from 2025, 98 per cent said they had a clearer theological understanding of the purpose and tradition of evangelisation in Catholic schools.

The majority of principals who participated in Spiritus programs last year also committed to implementing a whole-school approach to evangelisation, rather than delegate the work to a particular department or subsection of the staff.

Director of Teacher Formation at the La Salle Academy, Peter Woods, said Spiritus had reliably supported leaders around the world to translate the Church's vision for evangelisation into realistic and achievable goals.

"Spiritus is unique in that we train Catholic school educators and leaders to reimagine Catholic schools as intentional, missionary communities, rather than institutions where faith formation exists alongside academic life," Mr Woods said.

"We also strongly encourage leaders to take the initiative and lead from the front and be authentic witnesses of the Catholic faith."

Mr Woods said Spiritus had transformed leaders from seeing leadership of a Catholic school as a job to a vocational calling.

"Research shows that the school leaders, particularly principals, are central to shaping evangelising school culture," Mr Woods said.

"At the same time, we are aware of the gap between knowing how to evangelise and practicing this in Catholic schools. The Spiritus program offers sustained support, particularly in strengthening partnerships between the school and parish, embedded mission into the curriculum, and making evangelising a core part of strategic planning."

Since launching five years ago, Spiritus has grown from a professional learning program to offering units in postgraduate courses in faith formation and evangelisation.

Pre-service and early-career teachers studying at ACU have also benefited from the Spiritus Teach program (formerly Signum Fidei) which is designed to equip young teachers with skills, formation, and mission-readiness to thrive in Catholic education.

Mr Woods said the Spiritus program was having positive impacts internationally, and were recently asked to present at the 106th General Assembly of the Standing Committee for Catholic Education (CEEC) held in The Hague, Netherlands.

Earlier in 2026 the Spiritus team also conducted the first in-person formation program in East Africa, with more than 200 Catholic educators and leaders from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania attending the three-day gathering at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The program had previously been offered [online pro bono](#) since 2022.

“The global spread of Spiritus shows just how effective this program is at empowering Catholic school leaders and educators to take an active role in making evangelisation a core mission of schools,” Mr Woods said.

“The responses from our participants confirm that the program not only offers formation but a renewed sense of hope for the future of Catholic schooling.”

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