

# Life Management Studies for the Higher School Certificate

For the first time in 1993, many year 11 and 12 students studying for the Higher School Certificate are able to elect two and three unit courses in Life Management Studies. The syllabus, developed by the Board of Studies in NSW, was sent to all schools in the state in 1992.

The course aims to equip students with skills in practical problem-solving, effective communication and change management. The syllabus' rationale states, "Today's society is characterised by rapid social change, cultural differences, conflicting values, competitive pressures and great uncertainty... Life Management Studies aims to provide opportunities for students to explore and form positive attitudes about others, to develop an understanding of their relationships with families and others, to learn to work co-operatively, and to appreciate the importance of effective communication." The Life Management Studies core concepts include:

## Interpersonal Relationships

- \* Forming and maintaining relationships
  - communication patterns
  - managing conflict
  - roles in relationships
- \* Group and intergroup processes
  - team building
  - assertiveness training
  - leadership and management styles

## Resource Management

- \* Decision-making processes and sty
- \* Managing change in family circumstances, eg through divorce, death and unemployment

## Well-being

- \* Satisfaction of needs
  - physical
  - social
  - emotional
  - intellectual
- \* Measures of well-being
  - self-esteem and confidence
  - peer acceptance
  - ability to cope with and adjust to change

## Life Span Development

- \* Life span approach to development of
  - individuals
  - families

Life Management Studies also offers students optional strands in subjects such as Work Roles and Workplace Environments, Leadership and Group Dynamics, Parenting as well as Families and the Law.

An Independent Research Project is another integral component of Life Management Studies. The Project provides the opportunity for students to select and pursue a specific area of interest related to the course. It enables students to transfer and apply the knowledge and skills developed in the course into real life contexts.

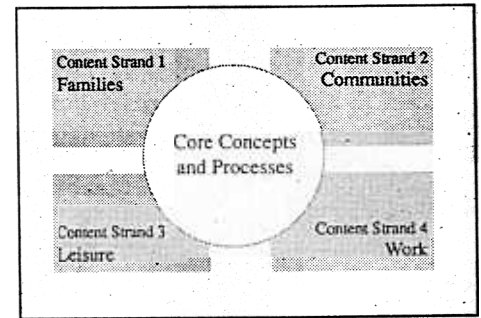
The Board of Studies has prepared a support document for teachers on how to implement the Life Management Studies Syllabus, although it is up to the individual school to decide on the teaching materials they use.

The Board of Studies is also currently developing a teaching kit series for years 7-10 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. In the second unit in this series, Interpersonal Relationships, material from The Conflict Resolution Network is used in the activities.

These courses mark a major step forward for school education. No longer are students expected to simply learn the three "R's", reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. They can now also learn essential skills of how to relate, reckon and resolve!

The Conflict Resolution Network has a range of books, videos and trainers' manuals relevant to the Life Management Studies program. For inquiries contact CRN Resources, ph: (02) 419-8500, fax: (02) 413-1148 or CRN Schools Development, ph: (02) 953-2394, fax: (02) 310-3751.

To obtain a copy of either syllabus write to the Communications Branch of the Board of Studies NSW, PO Box 460, North Sydney, 2059. Or, for more information, phone the Curriculum Officer for Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, (02) 925-8111.



2/3 Unit Course Structure Overview

## Teacher training for new school course

The introduction of a Life Management Studies course for Higher School Certificate students is exciting for the future of our society. For students to gain maximum benefit from the course, it is essential that teachers implementing it understand not only the theory but have some practical skills themselves in Conflict Resolution, communication and mediation.

In 1987 Christina McMahon was responsible for the writing and co-ordination of a Life Skills program for students in years 7-10 at an independent school. Her background in psychology, self-development and Conflict Resolution, as well as her teaching experience, gave her some insights into the needs of the students.

Christina says, "With the help of like-minded staff, we as a team developed the resources for what was on paper, a great course. Unfortunately, the teaching of the course was not as successful as we had hoped. Teachers were assigned to the Life Skills course on availability rather than experience in personal development or Conflict Resolution. It appears that students benefitted much more when the teacher had developed skills themselves rather than simply knowing the theory."

Christina gives a word of warning to new Life Management Studies course teachers, "Teachers need to be carefully chosen to teach this course. Some will be naturally ready to take on the challenge with little training. Others would benefit immensely from some formal training, targeting specific areas of the syllabus, and there are excellent resources available for doing this."

To discuss this course or training with Christina McMahon ph: (02) 953-6678. ❖

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