Christian Studies in a Lutheran school or early childhood service…

It is essential that both facilitators and participants recognise Equip 2 as a continuation of the journey begun in Equip 1. Participants will continue to build on their understandings of the nature and purpose of Christian Studies in Lutheran education. These understandings will have already been initiated by Equip 1, prior experiences and in the completion of *Connect*. Evidence of experiences and learning throughout this unit will be demonstrated within the ongoing ePortfolio.

…engages learners in inquiry…

Inquiry based learning continues to be the dominant pedagogical approach advocated through Equip as an effective vehicle for developing deep understandings, encouraging student voice and agency and making meaningful connections with the prior learning and questions of learners.

The inquiry of Equip 2 into ‘Who are we?’ provides a more independent journey in which participants experience and reflect in detail on the key processes of an inquiry approach, and how they may be adapted to the learning context in which they work. These aspects are to be drawn out either as teachable moments during the inquiry, or as a reflective process at the conclusion of the inquiry. The goal is that participants can make connections between their experiences in Equip and the learning environment they create in their schools or ECSs.

Given that this is participants’ second Equip unit, greater learner responsibility and agency is given to participants in Equip 2, acknowledging their growing confidence and skill. However, facilitators remain best placed to determine the degree of independence that is given to participants during the inquiry.

Each of the following key elements of inquiry would likely be evident in both Equip 1 and 2 and are the focus for learning and reflection in Equip 2:

* **Shaping learning around significant questions (teacher questions, student questions)**
* Identification and teaching for deep understanding and conceptual learning
* Identifying prior understandings and using these as a starting point
* **Collaboration, negotiation and learner agency**
* **Making connections with the world of the learners**
* **Reflection and action**
* **Affective learning**
* **The valuing of process, content and product**
* **The recursive nature of inquiry (inquiry leads to inquiry)**

…to develop deep understanding…

A deep understanding of the nature of our relationship with God, self and others is central to this exploration and inquiry in Christian Studies. Equip 2's essential question 'Who are we?' allows participants to explore their understanding of the relationship we are offered by God and God’s calling to people to live in relationship (refer ‘Who are we?’ Mind map). Given that a depth of inquiry possibilities exist in each of these areas of theology, Equip 2 will require facilitators or participants to make selections in order to continue to engage in a deep and relevant line of inquiry (*inch-wide, mile-deep*).

The Bible continues to be the primary source for meaning and guidance in Christian faith and life, providing the basis through which Christians encounter God. Therefore, building biblical literacy in all learners, and engaging learners in deep biblical investigation, continues to be critical to the success of Christian Studies. The term ‘biblical literacy’ has been used to refer to an approach to reading, comprehending, interpreting and critically analysing biblical text. In Equip 2, alternative ways to encounter scripture will be offered to broaden participants’ experiences. The explicit and scaffolded unpacking of a biblical text remains an emphasis for participants to explore biblical texts for themselves and their students.

Depth of inquiry and understanding flows from investigation of significant questions and provocations. The stance of the facilitator remains that of inquiry teacher, providing a safe environment for questions and risk-taking, while also challenging participants to think deeply in order to collaborate and share with others. Participants continue to engage in theological inquiry using primary (biblical, core church writings such as creeds, catechism, personal experience) and secondary sources (commentaries, articles, videos, blogs). They explore various perspectives on questions and are encouraged to see their position on various theological questions as growing and dynamic.

For Equip facilitators, there remains a dual purpose in these theological investigations – to build both participants’ personal thinking and understandings (and faith journey) and consider how these ideas apply, and effectively translate to the context of the classroom and the learner.

…of what it means to be human…

The Lutheran understandings of being ‘created in the image of God’ and ‘sinner and saint’ are central to an investigation of what it means to be human. While all humans and all relationships are impacted by sin, it does not negate the image of God in which we were created. *“Before God Christians are both sinners under the law and ‘saints’ (forgiven sinners) under the gospel.”* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2015)

For participants, the personal nature of the essential question may provide challenge, further questions and/or reassurance. Equip 2 aims to clarify through carefully formed questions and supported inquiry, the precious and unique place of humanity in God’s eyes. Participants will explore the Christian understanding that each and every human is valued and sacred and the God who loves us is eternally gracious. It is this core message of a graceful and loving God that we intend all our community will come to know.

Christian human identity brings with it a calling and purpose (vocation) which is lived out in relationships. This is a response in faith to serve others using the gifts and abilities each have been given and that service is a tangible witness of faith, sharing and demonstrating the love and mercy given by God.

Participants further explore the Christian understanding that we are created as spiritual beings. However, not all humans find a spiritual connection with God. The inquiry approach should allow participants to explore and express their own spirituality in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment.

…living in relationship with God, self and other

The essential question for Equip 2 focuses on ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ clearly indicating the intention to explore the relationships we develop with God (vertical relationship) and with others (horizontal interpersonal relationships). However, it is also important to recognise that there is a third relationship with self (intrapersonal) that will also be shaped by faith. Inquiries should support participants and learners as they explore the great diversity of relationships that we are intended to build, restore and sustain.

* **Relationship with God**:

recognising that we have been created to live in a relationship with God, inquiries lead participants to understand the Christian belief that this relationship is broken by sin and restored by grace: ‘By the Grace of God I am what I am’ [1 Corinthians 15:10]. Our personal relationship with God, faith, hope and salvation are all core ideas that could be addressed through inquiries into the essential and subsequent questions. Inquiries can be enriched by shared expressions of spirituality including prayer, worship, stillness and meditation.

* **Relationship with self**:

recognising that we are ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ (Ps 139:14) in God’s image, inquiries can address the understanding that while we are complex and have unique characteristics and features, all people are equally valued. This has direct influence on self-identity, self-awareness and self-acceptance as each individual confronts the external influences of living in our world.

* **Relationships with others**:

recognising that our relationships with other people and our environment emerge from our relationship with God, inquiries about living in community involves consideration of:

* + personal responsibilities
  + ethical responsibilities and decision making
  + broken relationships and reconciliation
  + service as the hands of God
  + stewardship of his creation
  + welfare and social justice
  + multiple world views/ perspectives

‘Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God’ [Romans 15:7