



## **Mainstreaming Social Formation Activities at the Ateneo de Manila University**

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### **Abstract**

The year 2022 marks the end of the first full four-year implementation of a revised program of studies for all undergraduates of the Ateneo de Manila University, a Jesuit University in Metro Manila, Philippines. One of the key characteristics of this revised program of studies is that it seamlessly integrates social formation activities into the academic experience of all students. What follows is a description of the university's revised social formation program and how it is integrated into the program of study of all students. Student evaluations of the program have been highly favorable with students recognizing how the social formation activities are relevant to their academic formation. By integrating various social engagement experiences into academic courses, developing social formation outcomes that are progressive and build on each other year after year, and having a dedicated pool of professionals to design and implement the program and who work closely with faculty, the Ateneo de Manila University has put into place a comprehensive social formation program that heeds Fr. Pedro Arrupe's mandate for Jesuit universities to form persons for others.

**Introduction.** The year 2022 marks the end of the first full four-year implementation of a revised program of studies for all undergraduates of the Ateneo de Manila University, a Jesuit University in Metro Manila, Philippines. One of the key characteristics of this revised program of studies is

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that it seamlessly integrates social formation activities into the academic experience of all students.

Like all Jesuit universities around the world, the Ateneo de Manila takes seriously Fr. Pedro Arrupe's 1973 exhortation to Jesuit universities to form persons for others. And since then, the university has designed social formation programs that seek to form socially aware students who will respond to the imperatives of social justice.

Over time, these social formation programs have taken on various forms. In 1975, the Office for Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI) was established and from the 1970s to the 1980s, it ran basic orientation seminars on Authentic Christian Humanism, and facilitated voluntary month-long immersions in communities. By the 1990s, social formation programs were increasingly integrated into the program of studies of all undergraduate students, starting with a required three-day immersion with a marginalized community. This eventually grew into a social formation program with activities required each year for all undergraduate students.

In 2018, the Philippine government changed the courses all Filipino undergraduates must take and this served as an occasion for the university to revisit the entire program of study. A comprehensive and progressive framework for academic formation for all undergraduates was developed as shown in Figure 1. This also served as an occasion for us to design the university's social formation program as if from scratch. What we ended up with was a social formation program that was systematic and which was seamlessly integrated into the academic experience of all undergraduate students.

What follows is a description of the university's revised social formation program and how it is integrated into the program of study of all students. An overview of the social formation programs is presented as Table 1.

Figure 1  
 Framework of the New Loyola Schools Curricula

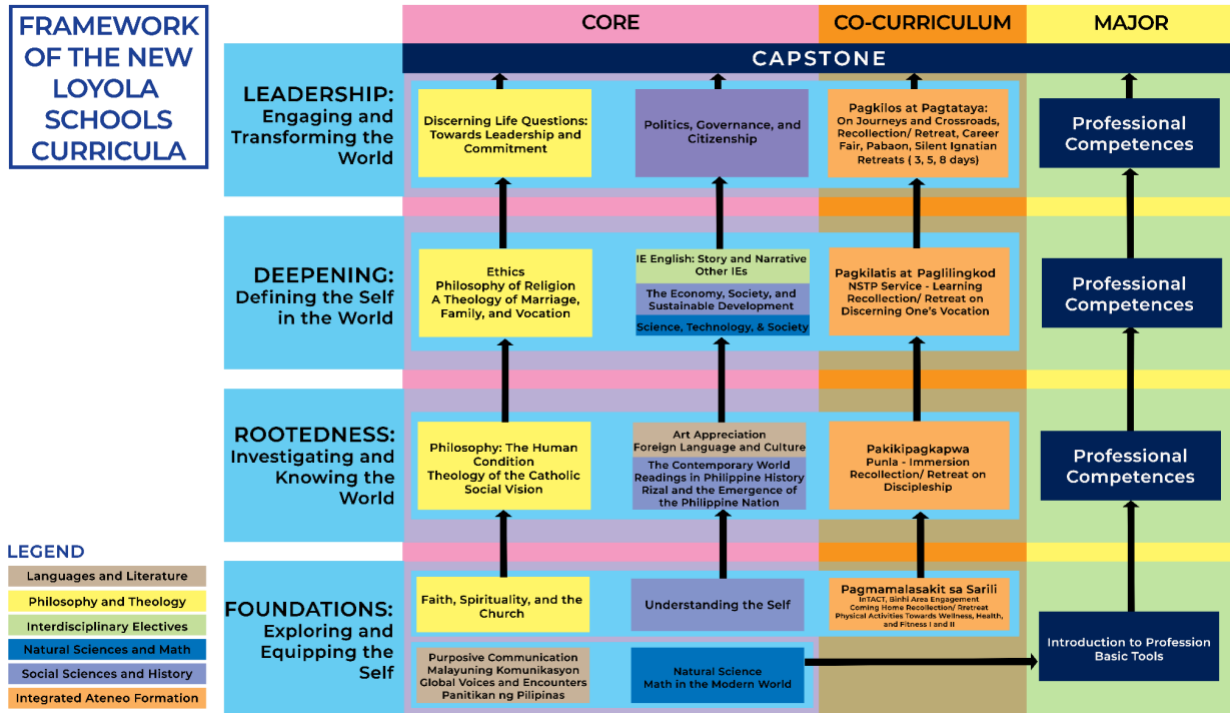


Table 1  
 Social Formation Programs for Undergraduate Students of the Ateneo de Manila University

Year Level	Social Formation Program Post-revision	
First Year	Exposure Trip tied up to Understanding the Self	2 half-day exposure trip (Two one hour online community engagement), Output: Reflection Paper
Second Year	Immersion tied up with Catholic Social Vision	2 ½ day immersion (Two 2 hour online sessions), Output: Sectoral Situationer and Theological Reflection paper
Third Year	Social engagement tied up with Economy, Society and Development and a major course	80 hour engagement (online engagements as needed, minimum of 2) Output: Service for a client
Fourth Year	Politics, Governance and Citizenship	Output: Advocacy Proposal

It is in SocSc 11 where the first social formation activity is embedded. Students interact with members of a marginalized community and in so doing, they come to realize that selves are shaped by social contexts. Differences in social contexts thus create differences in ways of being but insofar as we are all Filipinos, we also have significant commonalities. These interactions are facilitated by OSCI which is composed of full-time professionals who prepare, accompany, and process students who go through these interactions.

As a required activity for their SocSc 11 course, students are asked to write a reflection paper on their interactions with the members of the marginalized community using frameworks they learned from class. In the past, this activity was a stand-alone activity without an academic course but with the revision of the undergraduate program of studies, the activity is now anchored in an academic course.

**Rootedness: The Second Year Experience.** The theme for second year is Rootedness: Investigating and Knowing the World. After being equipped with the tools to better understand themselves, in second year, students are guided to an understanding of the world they live in through various Philippine history subjects, a course on Contemporary Society which explores modernity and globalization, and a course on Science, Technology, and Society. Students are also asked to reflect on the state of the world through a Theology course on the Catholic Social Commitment. As part of the Theology course, students go through a three-day immersion and after the immersion, they are asked to create a situationer of the sector they interacted with (ex. farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, etc.) and also a theological reflection. The three day immersion is facilitated by OSCI.

This course, which used to be in fourth year, was moved to second year after the redesign of the program of studies. Having it in second year made more sense in that the two exposure activities

preceded the activity requiring a service response. The first year social formation activity also helps prepare students for their immersion.

**Deepening: The Third Year Experience.** The theme for third year is Deepening: Defining the Self in the World. At this year level, students explore possible responses to their understanding of the world. In Theology, they learn about possible vocations. In terms of social formation, the critical course is Social Sciences 13 (SocSc13): The Economy, Society, and Sustainable Development where students learn about poverty and development. To supplement this activity, students are asked to render service to a marginalized community, government organization, or non-government organization. The students take this course alongside their blockmates taking the same major so their output is discipline-related. Business majors, for example, may help micro-entrepreneurs enhance their online marketing. Most science majors, especially during the lockdown due to the pandemic, helped public school teachers from all over the Philippines create science modules for basic education. SocSc 13 is a service-learning course which all undergraduate students are required to take. Students are graded based on their activity report and their reflections. The service-learning activity is supervised by OSCI.

The redesign of the undergraduate program of study allowed us to place this service-learning course in third year (instead of second year) after two years of exposure. By this time, they would also have already acquired some skills from their disciplinal courses allowing them to render more meaningful service. This activity also used to be a stand-alone activity but it is now anchored in an academic course.

**Leadership: The Fourth Year Experience.** The theme for fourth year is Leadership: Engaging and Transforming the World. To synthesize their experiences, seniors go through a course called Discerning Life's Questions. In terms of social formation, students are also required to take Social Sciences 14 (SocSc 14): Politics, the State, and Citizenship. This course takes the students' social formation experiences from previous years, situates these experiences at the national level, and asks how they can respond as Filipino citizens. In this course, students are asked to identify an

advocacy and create an advocacy proposal. It is also hoped that students will direct their thesis to something that is service-oriented.

**Other Features of the Social Formation Program.** As has been shown, social formation activities have been seamlessly integrated into courses that all students take. On top of this, some departments and programs have also decided to align some of their own required courses to these social formation activities.

Most of these alignments can be found in the third year program. Some of the service activities that are part of SocSc 13 are also credited as assessments for some disciplinary courses.

One ongoing innovation is for students of the Business Management Honors Program to stay with one community throughout the first three years of undergraduate studies. This will enable them to develop deeper relationships with the people in their partner community. For all other courses, students move from one community to another every year. This is because of difficulties in scheduling students for particular courses and the aversion of some departments and programs to having classes with students from only one course.

**Evaluations of Social Formation Activities.** Student evaluations of the new social formation program have been highly favorable<sup>2</sup>. A summary of the evaluation points is presented as Table

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<sup>2</sup> Details of the evaluations of the Integrated Ateneo Formation Program may be viewed at these links:  
INAF Satisfaction Report 1st Semester School Year 2020-2021: [go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-1stSem20-21](http://go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-1stSem20-21)

INAF Satisfaction Report 2nd Semester School Year 2020-2021: [go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-2ndSem20-21](http://go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-2ndSem20-21)

INAF Satisfaction Report 1st Semester School Year 2021-2022: [go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-1stSem21-22](http://go.ateneo.edu/INAF-Satisfaction-Report-1stSem21-22)

Note that the Integrated Ateneo Formation Program also includes orientation as well as spiritual formation activities.

2. This is particularly true for the third year program which saw a marked improvement in evaluations compared to the previous design prior to the revision of the program of studies. One must note, however, that the new third year program was only implemented when the Philippines was on lockdown which is a significant difference from the experience prior to the pandemic.

Of note is the feedback of students that they clearly saw how the social formation activities were integrated with their academic courses.

**Conclusion.** All in all, the Ateneo de Manila university has successfully integrated its social formation program into the program of studies of all undergraduate students. By integrating various social engagement experiences into academic courses, developing social formation outcomes that are progressive and build on each other year after year, and having a dedicated pool of professionals to design and implement the program and who work closely with faculty, the Ateneo de Manila University has put into place a comprehensive social formation program that seeks to form persons for others.

Table 2  
Social Formation Program Student Evaluation Results  
First Semester, School Year 2021-2022

	First Year Program	Second Year Program	Third Year Program
Average of Evaluations of Achievement of Expected Learning Outcomes	5.58	5.42	5.16
Compatibility with Academic Partner Course	5.52	5.43	4.79
Student Satisfaction	5.55	5.34	4.65

\* Evaluations are from 1-6 with 6 being the highest score

\*\* The fourth year program was first implemented in the first semester of SY 2021-2022 and the evaluation results are not yet available.