

2025 - September 14-19
Rome



LEADING CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES

FACE-TO-FACE TRAINING PROGRAM

Programme structure and content



LEADING CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

An Action-Oriented Programme for Senior Leaders of Catholic Universities

There are within the Roman Catholic tradition, some 1800 Higher Education Institutions (HEI), which range from large multi-faculty universities in Rome and elsewhere to very small single programme institutions in both developed and developing countries. There are several characteristics which make the leadership of these complex and creates a consequent need for more professional leadership. The characteristics include:

- ➔ challenges to these Roman Catholic HEIs from secular and non-supportive societies,
- ➔ ambiguous relations with government agendas in terms of status, financing, accreditation, recognition and quality assurance,
- ➔ a greater variety of stakeholders with a range of different interests and demands,
- ➔ variability in student enrolment for clerical or related professions, giving rise to the necessity of considering options to extend and diversify the student population and the academic offering,
- ➔ intense challenges of competition,
- ➔ the absence of a tradition of professionalised leadership management and administration,
- ➔ organisational cultures which are traditionally relatively weak on:
 - strategic approaches;
 - outward looking/entrepreneurial processes;
 - systematic decision-making and institutional processes;
 - systematised QA,
- ➔ the existence of a host of societal challenges relating to:
 - a loss of spiritual ethos in business and government;
 - social deprivation and underprivilege;
 - demand for higher quality education for which a positive contribution is required;
 - issues relating to relationships with government and the political setting,
- ➔ in common with other HEI, there have been the challenges of COVID, in terms of:
 - positioning
 - delivery
 - the use of technology
 - student care
 - sustaining the academic community and others.
- ➔ limited critical mass and economies of scale.

Clearly, these issues do not apply to, or affect, all these HEIs equally, but taken together, they do constitute a challenge to institutional sustainability and possible survival.

OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

The programme, the latest in a series conducted by the academic team for IFCU since 2013 is designed to:

- help participants better understand these issues,
- develop relevant approaches to facilitate the sustainability of individual institutions,
- strengthen the capability of the RC HEI system to play an increasingly more valuable and purposive role in the contemporary world, especially in the light of Papal expectations of higher education.

The programme is designed to be:

- focused on the specificity of the Catholic identity including the nature of a Catholic university; the Catholic intellectual tradition etc.,
- oriented to specific generic issues in the management and leadership of this type of HEI, and will be supported by learning derived from policy and consultancy projects undertaken by the academic team with Catholic and secular universities and HE agencies,
- interactive, and drawing on participants' own management and leadership experience,
- focused on issues/concerns identified by participants themselves,
- action oriented - in the sense that concrete approaches to the defined issues will be identified, and the design of action plans facilitated,
- strategic in orientation - relating to the longer term integrated development of the participant's institution,
- international and comparative - in that good practices relating to common issues will be derived from the experience of other programme participants in their particular settings and from other international contexts provided by the academic team and the literature on university leadership and management,
- collaborative - in the sense that participants will help and support each other in the attempt to find managerial/leadership approaches to specific challenges through advice from their experience,
- respectful of the spiritual origins and values of Catholic universities and their evolution, in the development of strategic approaches.

“One of the best combinations of management frameworks, action and case studies in the setting of Catholic Universities Culture: you don't usually find these elements together”



The programme is a one-week residential experience accompanied by a preparatory phase and optional follow-up, if requested.



It is intended that the programme will convene in the afternoon of Day 1 (Sunday) and conclude on the late afternoon of Day 6 (Friday). The working day will normally comprise four sessions of 1½ - 2 hours each plus occasional evening activities.



Social events and visits to Rome-based institutions including the Dicastery for Culture and Education are anticipated.



Use will be made of electronic means in the delivery of the programme including providing materials ahead of sessions in order to maximise interactive discussions. It is advisable to bring a laptop or iPad to take full benefit from the programme.

PARTICIPANTS' PRIOR PREPARATIONS

Participants will be expected to:

- undertake a few preliminary readings of a limited number of articles relating to the ethos and management of Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEI);
- produce a SWOT analysis of their institution (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) on the basis of an easy to use structured questionnaire,
- propose embryonic objectives for the strategic development of their institutions (which will form the basis of group discussions and subsequent individual action plans).

These are submitted before arrival in Rome, thus facilitating tutor and colleagues' preparations; enabling the time together to be used more effectively; and ensuring it is synchronised with participants' interests.

THE RESIDENTIAL PERIOD OF ONE WEEK IN ROME

There will be a number of interlocking strands in this phase, namely

Strand 1: Institutional Strategic Development

The purpose of this Strand is to assist participants to consider and plan for the diagnosis and implementation of key strategic priorities in the development of their universities. This will include:

- consideration of participants' assignments and provision of advice on issues raised (through SWOT groups of up to eight members),
- a presentation by the academic team of a framework for strategic planning and management,
- the compilation, by participants, of informal journals throughout the week, culminating in a tentative action plan to be worked at on return to their university,
- an hour's reflection session at the end of each day to enable participants to distil their thinking and to take advantage of individual tutorials as requested.

Strand 2: Catholic Identity and Higher Education

This is based on the proposition that Catholic universities have special obligations and characteristics arising from their origins, missions and roles in relation to the intellectual apostolate. The manifestations of this will be explored through:

- an analysis of the major policy initiatives emanating from Pope Francis and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, and the institutional implications,
- a consideration of the practical means of embedding Catholic identity and related values in the life of universities,
- an exploration of the social responsibility obligations of Catholic institutions.

Strand 3: Aspects of the Context of managing Catholic Universities

This strand will examine some of the factors in the environment of the Catholic university, including:

- global trends in higher education,
- emerging international best practice on the nature of the successful university,

- the quality and excellence imperative and institutional accountability,
- the complex cultures of universities,
- changing patterns of governance,
- the consequences of COVID and other major disruptions to relative normality, and the implications for leadership and policy making.

Strand 4: Role of the Rector and senior leadership in effective institutional change and development

This programme is focused on the assumption that the prime responsibility of senior leadership is systematic and continuing institutional development in response to a turbulent environment, which involves consideration, inter alia of:

- dynamics and stages of institutional change and policy formation,
- resistance to change,
- typologies of change strategies and related approaches.

Strand 5: Personal effectiveness of the Institutional Leader

The above relies on the assumption that the leader is personally competent in a range of basic skills, and consideration will be given, inter alia, to:

- personal leadership styles,
- management of groups and committees,
- interpersonal relationships,
- the skills of influencing.

Strand 6: "Open Box" sessions

Whilst the SWOTs will cover a range of topics, additional issues raised by participants in discussion throughout the above Strands which are not timetabled in advance, may be considered in these sessions. Whilst the precise content cannot be identified until the programme is running, indicative topics might be:

- human resource and talent management,
- the regional role of the university,
- lifelong learning and non-traditional learning.

ACADEMIC TEAM

The contribution of the core colleagues mentioned above will be supplemented by particular contributions from IFCU staff and from university rectors and colleagues from the Holy See.

Emeritus Professor John L. Davies has a career which includes senior institutional management and international research teaching and consultancy in over 66 countries, in the field of higher education management, latterly at the University of Bath, UK. He is a former Pro-Vice Chancellor at Anglia Ruskin University (Research and Knowledge Exchange) and at La Trobe University (Quality Assurance). He is currently active in HE consultancy specialising in all aspects of sustainable university development, including 10 Catholic universities and the pontifical system. He has a long experience of setting up and working with QA agencies, including AVEPRO as a Commission member.

Professor Chris Brink, CBE is Emeritus Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University in England, former Rector of Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and former Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) of the University of Wollongong in Australia. Earlier he was Head of Mathematics and Coordinator for Strategic Planning at the University of Cape Town, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian National University. He was Convenor of the sector-wide Research Assessment Exercise 2020 in Hong Kong and currently convenes RAE 2026. Chris Brink is known as a champion of the idea of a civic university. His books include *The Soul of a University: Why excellence is not enough* and *The Responsive University and the Crisis in South Africa*. Before entering university management he held the A-rating of the National Research Foundation. He is a logician with a Cambridge PhD, an interdisciplinary DPhil, Master's degrees in mathematics and Philosophy, and a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. He has served in an advisory or assessment capacity for various universities and organisations.

David Lock is Secretary-General of the Magna Charta Observatory, has undertaken national higher education scoping studies, directed and contributed to a wide range of leadership development programmes for senior university and ministry leaders in over 30 countries, especially in his former role as Director of International Projects for the Leadership Foundation in HE. He has had a varied career in international higher education and university leadership including establishing and being rector of a university in the Middle East and as secretary/director of administration at several UK universities. David co-delivered the first IFCU programme for rectors of Catholic universities, and is particularly active in institutional governance and institutional values.

Loïc ROCHE is the Head of the Executive Training Department of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), which he joined in 1999. Within the IFCU, which federates 235 Catholic universities, he promotes institutional and training activities and also manages the communications of the network. In particular, he is in charge of the organisation of conferences, colloquia and thematic General Assemblies, thus mobilising its membership and partners. He is a graduate of the institute of d'Etudes Politiques d'Aix-en-Provence and the Institut de Hautes Etudes de l'Amérique Latine (Sorbonne). Among his fields of expertise, apart from the Catholic academic world, are international relations, political science, communication, international university cooperation and certain issues related to development.

The full programme schedule will be provided later, as the above may need to be adapted as a result of the participants' questionnaires.

INFORMATION - CONTACT

Dates	14-19 September, 2025
Venue	Pontifical Irish College, Rome
Registration Fees	IFCU Members: 2,300€ Non-members: 2,800€ This covers participation in the program and materials, coffee breaks, lunches and dinners from Sunday Lunch to Friday Lunch. The registration fee does not include the accommodation.
Registration Deadline	7 August, 2025
Participants Profile	Participants will include rectors, vice-rectors, deans and heads of administration and others with senior responsibilities, including from Catholic HE agencies and boards, and those who aspire to these senior positions.
Contact	Loïc ROCHE loic.roche@bureau.fiuc.org

Join us in Rome from September 14 to 19, 2025
(6 days) for our new training session "Leading
Catholic Universities in the XXIst Century"



WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID ABOUT IT

"The programme delivered one of the highest returns on investment that I had ever experienced from an opportunity of this kind"

Rev'd Professor Stephen Morgan
University of Saint Joseph,
Macao
LCU 2019

"The future of Catholic higher education is globally focused and highly collaborative. The IFCU program promotes collaborative leadership in the rich environment of the Church's home in Rome. All Catholic university leaders must participate in this unique and strategic opportunity to share challenges and grow in collaboration to support one another in fulfilling the Church's vision of Catholic higher education that is both sustainable and serves the Church's social mission in the 21st century. This program enhances leadership and builds strong institutions of higher education."

Dr. Marianne Mount
Catholic Distance University - USA
LCU 2022

"This is a very comprehensive university leadership program that would be valuable to even the most seasoned university leaders. I highly recommend it to any one intending to become or already being a university leader. The academic staff are tested champions with great experience and use very practical examples."

Dr. Patrick Kyamanywa
Uganda Martyrs University
LCU 2023