



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2025

The 2023-2025 Strategic Plan stems from the Università Cattolica's desire to strengthen its original, cultural and ideal mandate, rediscovered and relaunched during the Centenary celebrations, in order to respond to the demands of civil society and the Church: a rooting in the centrality of the person, understood as social subjectivity and the driving force behind every possible transformation and design of the future, in the sign of a profound unity of culture.

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MISSION AND VISION

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore “in line with the spirit of its founders, specifically aims at assuring the presence of committed people in the academic and cultural world who are prepared to address and solve the problems of society and culture.” (Statute of Università Cattolica, Article 1). The University fulfils these tasks through an in-depth and qualified higher education which is adherent to the principles of Christianity, respecting the autonomy inherent in every form of knowledge, and according to a conception of science placed at the service of the human person and of civil coexistence, in accordance with the principles of Catholic doctrine and consistent with the universal nature of Catholicism and its high and specific demands for freedom.

It is on the basis of this strong tradition that the University of Italian Catholics will be confronted in the coming years with scenarios of post-traumatic change (the post-economic crisis, the pandemic and now the conflict in Europe) of society and the role of the university, which will also bring into play longer term transformations (technological evolution, fragile international balances, climate challenges, the growth of economic and symbolic inequalities). This new phase requires careful and forward-looking planning.

With regard specifically to the basic choices, objectives and priorities that guide the University's policies, the University aims to transmit to its students a unifying education in knowledge, and this is better achieved in the context of a *studium generale* where each student (and professor), while dedicated to cultivating particular disciplines, is called upon to live and breathe an overall climate of dialogue and synthesis between the multiple horizons of knowledge, within which anthropological and ethical profiles are of particular relevance.

If one wished to indicate, in a concise manner, the priority objectives of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, these can be identified in its intention to continue to be a place of research and an “educating community” that aims to contribute to the development of studies and to prepare young people for scientific research, public offices and professions with an adequate preparation and a moral education informed by the principles of Catholicism. The University aims to contribute to the advancement of the sciences and to adhere rigorously to the methodology required by each of them, without ever putting the primacy of the human person in second place.

The drive to foster the integral development of the person today translates into an academic community capable of generating intelligence and creativity capable of confronting the transformations taking place at national and international level.

Maintaining this unity of experience accomplishes the great cultural enterprise of forming people and citizens - not just specialists - who are accustomed to confronting the great questions that history, culture and society continue to pose.



THE NEW CHALLENGES

The centrality of the person is embodied in all the University's major missions: a teaching methodology conceived as education and formative relations, Research produced from the perspective of rigorous investigation aimed at discovering and communicating the truth, a service to society for authentic human advancement, in the face of the new challenges that await us.

In particular:

- On the educational offer side, the University will have to contend, on the one hand, with the increasing competitiveness of the university environment, above all with the emergence of new education providers (who act in the sector with the logic and technology of the global companies of which they are an expression), and, on the other hand, with the increasingly pressing demands of our stakeholders for a significant strengthening of internationalisation activities and greater integration between traditional and digital education: both requirements linked to a growing need for customisation of educational services. In order to move effectively, while preserving its originality, the University will have to devise a policy of access qualification, a rethinking of the way in which teaching is delivered and the content of the education on offer, and a series of measures aimed at an ever-higher quality of the student experience.
- Research is required to continually improve the quality standards of projects and publications, to promote new research lines and methodologies consistent with the 'mission-oriented' approach of European research, for an original and distinctive positioning within the international and Italian 'research system', which is the cultural signature of Università Cattolica. The University is able to express a multidisciplinary approach, supported by original and authoritative scientific expertise that should be enhanced and further developed in a system approach.
- As far as 'global engagement' is concerned, the University is to intensify its collaboration activities with higher education and cultural institutions around the world in order to increase educational and professional opportunities for the academic community, developing partnerships, alliances and agreements for incoming and outgoing international mobility, for the development of scientific research on strategic topics for the University and for the strengthening of international cooperation activities.
- The crisis of the culture of dialogue and peace will require a greater incisiveness of the Third Mission, through the promotion of projects and initiatives aimed at affirming and disseminating the values on which the educational mission of the University is based, The numerous solidarity-based activities already undertaken at various levels, national and international, which offer students and the entire academic institution the opportunity to experience processes of sharing, inclusion and integration between peoples and cultures, will be further developed and strengthened.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In the course of 2022, the Rector launched, involving the Chancellors and Delegates, an analysis of the reference scenario in which Università Cattolica operates, which could form the basis for the drafting of a new strategic planning document for the University. The elaboration of these projects involved all academic and administrative components, through specific working tables for each strategic area.

The strategic document was discussed at a plenary meeting (November 2022) attended by the members of the working tables and the Faculty Deans before the "Strategic Plan 2023-2025" of Università Cattolica was submitted to the Academic and Governing Bodies for approval in December 2022.

Following the approval of the Strategic Plan 2023-25, an Integrated Operational Plan was drawn up that outlined the projects to be launched for each of the three financial years 2023-24-25.

The drafting of the Integrated Operational Plan has, therefore, had the aim of translating the strategic directions, indicated in the approved Strategic Plan, into activities to which the various components of the University shall commit themselves, thus contributing to the achievement of the University's objectives in the period covered by the Plan.

STRATEGIC AREAS

- EDUCATIONAL OFFER AND STUDENT SERVICES
- RESEARCH
- GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONALISATION
- THIRD MISSION
- DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
- SUSTAINABILITY
- OPERATION, DIGITISATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS



The project essentially has three dimensions:

- **Interdisciplinarity:** compared to the traditional first- and second-level training offerings, design of new training programmes and redesign of existing programmes, promoting interdisciplinarity and collaboration between faculties.
- **Internationalisation:** increase in the number of international study programmes/courses (where the international character is not only determined by the language of delivery but also by the disciplinary content of the training activities and the definition of the outgoing professional profiles) and opportunities for structured mobility (e.g. dual and double degree) in order to increase the quality of the programmes and meet the demands of students; increase in the number of ECTS recognised following non-curricular mobility experiences (e.g. Erasmus +, international internships, summer schools, etc.); increase, also in programmes taught in Italian, of courses taught in English and/or which convey content useful for training professional profiles also sought after on the international market.
- **Innovation:** starting from a careful analysis of the three levels of education offered (Degree Programmes, Graduate Degree Programmes and Postgraduate Programmes), design of flexible and integrated training paths, useful to develop specific and transversal skills, highly demanded by the labour market.

Achieving these objectives also requires support for teachers in improving and innovating the teaching methods used, in order to offer students a quality learning experience that encourages active participation, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of the required skills, also by favouring the use of the latest technologies. In order to do so, starting from the numerous initiatives already active in our University aimed at enhancing and supporting the teaching skills of teachers and at accompanying the students' learning experience in a qualified manner, under the coordination of the University Teaching & Learning Lab, training paths for teachers will be defined and exchanges of good practices will be promoted, which will also be useful to extend the use of new technologies.

The aim is to create an environment conducive to the scientific growth of young researchers, starting as early as doctoral training, including through incentive mechanisms, maximising the present and future benefits of NOP and NRRP funding and the scientific returns from internal research funds.

The actions are aimed at reviewing the general guidelines for research at the University, completing projects funded by the NRRP and NOP and developing their future follow-up. Further objectives are: strengthening incentives for scientific production and its internationalisation; investing in databases and advanced calculation systems for research; strengthening the procedures for allocating internal research funding; developing a research communication plan.

The aim is to maximise the scientific results of the funding obtained under the NRRP, making them capable of generating persistent and evolving research activities, establishing the University's role of national and international excellence.

Internal funds for scientific research are mainly dedicated to projects of particular interest to the University that aim to engage interdisciplinary research teams on sensitive and topical issues that are not only scientific but also social and value-related. Their nature as limited and valuable resources, which have allocative alternatives, dictates that the maximum fruits be obtained from them.

The objectives of the Plan are to bring the governance of internal funds to ensure the maximisation of results on three strategic fronts: (a) to carry out exploratory research on emerging topics that do not find space in European and national funding lines or which, by their nature, are on the fringe but are of particular relevance to Università Cattolica; (b) to promote original research of a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary nature that generates structured collaboration between the disciplines present in the University, in particular between hard sciences and social sciences and humanities; (c) to create a base of results and expertise that can give rise to proposals in the context of national and international competitive calls for research.

Also, in line with the National Plan for Open Science 2021-2027, the University must adopt an Open Science strategy in order to orient all its scientific production towards it, so as to communicate research outputs for the benefit of both the scientific community and the public and private stakeholders to whom Open Science provides access.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONALISATION

The aim is to continue and expand the process of strengthening the international profile of the University, increasing its attractiveness to Italian and foreign students and enhancing the global reputation of Università Cattolica. In particular, the actions are aimed at developing administrative processes suitable for the efficient and coordinated management of all activities of an international nature; enhancing the international educational offer, in synergy with the requests of Faculties interested in developing double degree programmes (global articulation); developing processes to increase the attraction of Università Cattolica to international lecturers (visiting professors) and actions to promote and enhance the outgoing mobility of students and lecturers of the University. In order to enhance the international reputation of Università Cattolica, the establishment of national and international teacher and student communities and the promotion and consolidation of global academic networks are planned.

The central point of this initiative is to strengthen strategic partnerships with universities, research institutes, public bodies and companies for the development of programmes, articulation/double/joint degree programmes, for students enrolled at Università Cattolica who wish to acquire a foreign qualification, together with the degrees awarded by the University, and to promote the enrolment of international students, registered at other universities, in undergraduate and graduate degree programmes offered by UCSC. In addition, the aim is to increase the number of individual courses taught in English within faculties and open to international students, in order to promote inbound mobility.

The development of partnerships may take place directly or through organisations specialised in the development of asynchronous online programmes such as Higher Education Partners (HEP) or through existing academic collaborations such as SACRU.

It also becomes necessary to adapt outgoing and incoming mobility, both in presence and virtual (e.g. Internationalisation at Home), to the European (ESG) and national (AVA) quality assurance system indicators defined by ANVUR.

In particular:

- enhancing current mobility by improving the recognition of credits that the student acquires abroad;
- develop new programmes taking into account ANVUR indicators in order to achieve higher recognition of credits acquired abroad;
- developing the international mobility of PhDs in accordance with AVA3 requirements.

THIRD MISSION

The aim is to foster and strengthen the development of stable relations with the world of institutions, culture and business in order to increase the presence and attractiveness of the University on the national and international scene.

The University will have to create stable partnerships with external stakeholders, bringing together professors, students, facilities and research lines. The initiatives produce internal and external spin-offs for the University in terms of reputation and legacy (student attractiveness, research opportunities).

An important role in the strategic positioning of the University is played by the UCSC Alumni community, which was established in 2017 and is now made up of over 30,000 graduates who, thanks to their ability to circulate the image of Università Cattolica with renewed strength (Alumni Ambassadors), can support the generation of a progressively increasing flow of additional resources to support institutional activities.

The University has always paid special attention to continuing education. From the years of its establishment, it started specific lifelong learning programmes at all its locations, anticipating the European directives on lifelong learning by several decades.

The model realised so far can be confirmed in its general layout. It combines the free initiative of professors, research centres, high schools, etc. with a centralised management activity on a single platform and with standard procedures shared across all locations.

It therefore seems strategic in the next three years to focus as much on maintaining a good market level for the already mature sectors, in which, however, we see the competitiveness of other training players growing (in particular in the areas of CME, banking and finance, communication, teacher training, preparation for public selection process and professional qualification examinations) as on the growth of those sectors that are currently less developed with reference to continuing education (e.g. agrifood, public administration, management, etc.).

Nowadays, due to the ANVUR evaluation system and the ministerial conception of the work of universities, the activities of technology and knowledge transfer, spin-offs, trademarks and patents assume an increasingly important aspect in the overall evaluation of the university system.

In this sense, the company/research relationship becomes decisive for increasing the transfer of research carried out in the University to the productive world, particularly with regard to scientific faculties. In addition, the transfer of knowledge to organisations and institutions, including not-for-profit ones, for the improvement of the activities and processes of the institutions themselves, even with respect to personal services, is now increasingly in demand. Much is already being done in this area, but much more needs to be done.

With regard to the topic of patents, especially in order to address some of the critical issues that have arisen in recent years, a specific support action is needed for professors and researchers who intend to proceed with the registration of trademarks, patents and plant protection rights as part of their research activities.

Finally, in the area of widespread entrepreneurship, it seems more necessary than ever to offer concrete help to those who intend to set up spin-off activities based on scientific innovations, and at the same time to continue and expand activities aimed at young people who intend to develop innovative ideas in order to turn them into business realisations or, more generally, into solutions to be put into the labour market.

The activities are aimed at developing actions that favour the valorisation of Human Resources and the recognition of the equal dignity of the person in terms of gender, generational equity, equality in terms of different abilities, support for the family and parenthood, and the dissemination of a culture of equality in the recognition of differences.

- Development of Human Resources: the actions envisaged by this project aim to - starting from a review of the operating model and underlying processes currently in place at the University in the provision of services to users - to introduce innovative approaches for the organisational analysis and streamlining of processes and operating models, in a context of continuous change that requires investment for the professional growth of staff and for the development of an "Organisational and Digital Culture" and for the evolution of the Human Resources Function as a facilitator of change and facilitator of learning.
- Maternity/paternity support for researchers and professors: the actions envisaged consider the activation of Family Enrichment Paths for professors and technical/administrative staff to support parenthood and the care of family ties and the activation of measures to remove any obstacles due to special family needs, guaranteeing equal access opportunities also to international mobility initiatives.
- Definition of a management model in the medium to long term of the University's Gender Equality activities: it is envisaged to rationalise and optimise the UCSC actions in the field of Equal Opportunities through the networking of the various actors working on the equal opportunities issue (Equal Opportunities Committee, Technical Committee for the drafting of the GEP, GEP Team) and the establishment of a "task force" on the issue. It is also planned to initiate an evaluation of international and national standards and best practices on Equal Opportunities, which may lead, within the framework of the plan, to the elaboration of a proposal for an internal management model, to be submitted to the competent bodies.
- Activation of services to support parenting for professors, technical/administrative staff and students: the actions envisage, first of all, the launch of a need analysis process and the feasibility analysis of the various initiatives, which can be made available to professors, technical/administrative staff and students (socio-educational, recreational, innovative and excellence services for children that can make use of the most recent acquisitions in the field of educational sciences, psycho-social sciences and management of educational services). These services can be designed on the basis of the needs identified in the academic community, meeting the requirements and peculiarities of the different locations of the University.
- Strengthening the organisational coordination of the SISDD (Services for the integration of students with disabilities and with SLDs and SENs): in order to guarantee an increasingly high-quality service for students with disabilities and SLDs at all sites, the organisational coordination of the SISDD will be strengthened, separating services for students with SLDs from those with disabilities and identifying qualified staff and dedicated funding lines.

SUSTAINABILITY

The aim is to raise the University's sustainability standards closer to international best practice, while also enhancing and increasing teaching, research and Third Mission activities in this area. The actions are aimed at optimising the combined operation of the structures already in place at the University (Steering Committee and Competence Centre) to produce a gap analysis on the sustainability of current management and initiate an investment programme for all locations, including a green procurement programme. Furthermore, courses, research and external initiatives related to sustainability will be systematically surveyed and monitored and valorised through communication. The research and collaboration networks dedicated to sustainability in which the University participates will be consolidated and expanded.

The European Union's goal of progressively moving towards "climate neutrality" or "Net Zero" is adopted as the environmental management benchmark. In the current phase of energy markets, achieving environmental sustainability and climate targets through appropriate investments can generate energy and material savings that result in significant cost savings.



The main objective is to pursue the progressive digitisation of the University's activities with respect to both external stakeholders and internal processes and procedures.

The lines of intervention concern projects within the information systems function and projects supporting other business functions that require specific digitisation/automation projects.

Digital technologies are evolving with exponential speed. From Artificial Intelligence to blockchain, the innovations that will drastically change our future are already among us.

In an initial phase, emerging technologies in particular will be experimented with because of their potentially interesting connection to didactics and communication, with the aim of expanding the boundaries of traditional didactics. The immersiveness of Extended Reality technologies could be used in laboratory or simulation activities both in executive and in medical training (tele-presence in the operating theatre, virtual/augmented reality technologies for the study of human anatomy).

FINAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

By implementing the projects envisaged within the Integrated Operational Plan, the University will be in a position over the next three years to:

- Support its distinctive positioning by strengthening its identity and mission elements through projects that increase Università Cattolica's presence and attractiveness nationally and internationally.
- To make its educational offer more competitive, rationalising the existing one in such a way as to create the "spaces" to launch new initiatives foreseen in the plan.
- Improve student services in the crucial stages of the career path, in the entry phase (by innovating the methods of engagement, promotion and orientation of prospective students), during the path (by redefining the operational model of the Student Hub) and in the exit phase (by innovating placement initiatives and making the relationship with the world of work more proactive).
- Improving the Student Experience, by investing in Student Life (understood as the enhancement of meeting spaces and the evolution of learning spaces) and the optimisation of the User Experience of the student's digital and application tools.
- Innovating and experimenting with new teaching methodologies through the use of new technologies to support classroom teaching.
- Internationalise the Faculty by enhancing the structuring of outgoing mobility paths and visiting professors.
- Internationalising the management processes and the student journey of the international student. Strengthen outgoing student mobility offers by defining a more transparent and straightforward University policy in the recognition of ECTS.
- Launch, after the successful experimentation of the Faculty of Economics, a project for International Accreditation of other programmes at the University.
- Provide mechanisms for the valorisation of Università Cattolica researchers to make the academic pathway in Università Cattolica more competitive.
- Increase the recognisability of the Università Cattolica Research system through a structured communication and dissemination strategy of competences and results.
- Fostering and promoting a culture of equal opportunities.
- Enhance and capitalise on projects and initiatives for an increasingly "Sustainable" University in an identified and communicable strategy.
- Optimise internal and external communication flows, relaunching the University's Brand Identity. Reinforce the progressive path of digitisation and optimisation of internal processes, coupled with the development and training of human capital.
- Renew and upgrade the technology infrastructure and core management applications.

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