Catholic Higher Education

As a result of the common tradition of values, Catholic universities are genuine partners of Porticus in Higher Education (HE). Nevertheless, there needs be critical dialogue in the search for academic quality and the combining of quality with distinctiveness – which is an integration of intellectual, moral and spiritual development. Non-Catholic universities that also share this search will also be considered as partners.

For Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs), a number of key lessons learned have emerged from Porticus’ rich history of working within this area, across the various regions, and with a dedicated portfolio of HE. We have, hence, gained broad experience on how to succeed as a university that is consistent with its Catholic identity.

Consequently, we facilitate the global development of value-based higher education in dialogue with the Christian tradition – which allows institutions and scholars to best achieve their mission and contribution to the Church and to civil society in a rapidly changing world. We are convinced that the development of knowledge, rooted in the Christian tradition, will help to effect change in the world.

Our Catholic Higher Education challenge

Recognising that quality tertiary education is conditioned by a genuinely preparatory secondary level, this Portfolio intends to support predominantly Catholic HEIs. They are a special niche in the university landscape (approximately 5%), with a specific identity within the global tertiary education network.

Our traditional partners are still a small minority in the HE market, and not always properly equipped to respond adequately to the challenges of quality, good governance, internationalisation, and research advancement.

On the other hand, they have a specific role to play, given their understanding of ‘integral education’, their reference to a set of ethical principles as carried over in the living tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and Thought, and their respect for the spiritual dimension and freedom of the individual. Their model can become a source of inspiration beyond the confessional frontiers.

Social Change Goal

Our vision is that Catholic HE contributes substantively to building a more just and humane world. To achieve this vision, our social change goal for this Portfolio is that Catholic HE successfully cultivates among its students, the wider public and the Church, an integral vision of world and humanity, rooted in Christian tradition, including a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. With all their activities, the Catholic HEIs contribute to the overall mission of the Catholic Church and aim ‘to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: The search for truth, and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth.’
This integral vision of world and humanity emphasises trust and argument, ratio and fides – with a clear articulation of the spiritual dimension of the human being – and moral courage and profound humanistic values. It thus catalyses critical and effective active citizenship in service to society. It educates the young people through ‘the languages of head, heart and hands’ [Pope Francis], and inspires and capacitates them to become agents in their private and professional lives, and ethical leaders in the societies they are rooted in.

**Strategic implications for Porticus**

Porticus future engagement in Catholic HE will pursue the following systemic change objective:

CHEIs become successful universities, articulating an integral vision of the world and humanity, and rooted in Christian tradition in their:

- **A. Leadership, quality and institutional design**
- **B. Education via optimising curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, and access**
- **C. Thought leadership: research advancement of knowledge as to faith, reason and society.**

What is at stake is a new articulation of the deepest convictions in Porticus’ tradition to find the most appropriate and most creative ways to meet the needs of our partners today.

To support this systemic change objective, we have identified five direct outcomes supporting this objective (A/B 1-3/C), and three crosscutting outcomes (D 1-3).

This means that Catholic HEIs should be helped to:

- Meet the immense systemic challenges in HE already taking place, which require seizing initiative and acting ambitiously so as to see ‘a golden age for HE in the next 50 years’. The strategy at this level is to support the **infrastructure** of institutions by improving the quality of the institutions’ leadership, structures and resources, as well as to explore new forms of HEIs in order to implement an integral pedagogy and towards working with virtual learning facilities.

- Educate young people through the ‘languages of head, heart and hands’ [Pope Francis] to become agents in their private and professional lives, or ethical leaders in the societies they are rooted in. The strategy at this level is to enable **access to and development** within HEIs that are part of or consistent with the Catholic tradition through specific scholarship and Alumni programs. By doing so, we can build a group of critical graduates and post-graduates who constitute the backbone of society and drive change in the world.

- Enrich the global reflection on major challenges for humanity by creatively developing the Christian heritage and its contribution to thought leadership. The strategy at this level is to support and initiate **knowledge networks** around specific topics (a.o. new theological languages; Catholic Social Teaching (CST); critical dialogue with sciences) including the funding of research, establishment of Chairs, and new ways of dissemination. This will allow for selective research funds towards institutions and scholars we engage with, on topics that are important to our Christian worldview and that contribute to addressing challenges for humanity.

More concretely, we have divided the Catholic HE field into ten strategic clusters and articulated for each of them a rationale for intervention: regional hubs, sectoral improvement, Rome, new models, scholarships, assessment models, curricula and pedagogy, topical networks, research initiatives, and knowledge networks.