

DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO  
ROMA



# **I D E N T I T Y**

**OF SALESIAN INSTITUTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (IUS)**

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### A NOTE ON THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Salesian Congregation and higher education

[01] The Salesian presence in the field of the university is rather recent in the history of the Congregation which Saint John Bosco founded in 1874.

This fact represents something new in the unfolding and development of Don Bosco's educative mission, which to this very day has been strongly centered on primary and secondary education and, with particular fame, on vocational training.

[02] St Anthony's College (Shillong, Assam, India, 1934) was the first, among all the IUS, to take this new direction of higher education. We must emphasize the significance of this fact in terms of the vision that the founding missionaries had for the future and their strategic choice, because the Salesian presence in India had just begun twelve years earlier and the initiative represented at that moment a farseeing and courageous decision, given the scenario of a missionary outpost right in the frontier.

[03] Scattered across the continents, today these Salesian institutions for higher education are now more than forty, and continue to increase in number. Altogether, they offer a very diverse range of situations and academic courses. Nevertheless, there are some relatively common elements in the historical origins of the individual IUS.

- a) First of all, the preoccupation to provide Salesians with opportunities for higher education.
- b) Secondly, the jump to higher education results from the growth and evolution of primary and secondary schools that have gained a reputation for academic excellence in their respective areas.

c) Thirdly, the urgent need to accompany young people at a time in their life in which they make the more important decisions for their future.

d) Fourthly, all the IUS are characterized by the desire to provide opportunity for university studies to so many youth, disadvantaged because of poor economic and social conditions.

e) Last but not the least, it must be said that all the IUS are young institutions. But if the shortness of their existence does not allow them to show their academic tradition and consolidated research, it is also true that their youthful forces express a firm decision to be accredited because of their own merits.

[04] Under the name of “IUS,” Salesians institutions for higher education, we wish to gather together all centers for higher learning, including tertiary institutions other than universities owned and managed, directly or indirectly, by the Salesian Congregation.

The differences in society, culture, and government laws account for a great degree of diversity among all the IUS. In terms of academic level, there are universities properly speaking, colleges, individual faculties, schools for higher education specialized in humanities or/ and technology.

There is also a broad range of professional courses, mostly focused on the arts, education, and technology.

In terms of enrollment, there are smaller centers with a few hundreds and the majority with thousands of students.

[05] In front of such a varied panorama, the Rector Major Don Juan E. Vecchi, already in 1997, advocated the service of the Salesian Generalate in Rome for the IUS, in order to seek “the common general conditions which would insure, both in the individual institutions and in the whole system, a significant Salesian presence on the levels of science, education, and ministry, in the centers that generate and promote culture in society.”

[06] Such service took concrete shape in the *Common Program for the Promotion of the IUS (1998 – 2001)*, resulting from the consensus of the highest academic authorities of the IUS, the provincial superiors responsible for these institutions, and the members of the General Council.

The *Common Program* was then approved by the Rector Major and his Council. We quote his words: “in this way Salesian universities become part of the Salesian mission. “

The main purpose of the *Program* was to look ahead and plan the future of this Salesian mission in the field of universities.

[07] One of the main tasks of the *Common Program* was to define the identity of the IUS, that is, to offer “the general guidelines enabling each academic community to draw up its own cultural, scientific, technological, educative-pastoral, Salesian project.”

This present document is the result of such effort. It is the fruit, first of the reflection done by a commission of rectors, and then by a wide consultation among the academic communities of the IUS, in order to reach a consensus and, most of all, a sharing in the common mission.

## **2. Purpose and objectives of this document**

[08] 1. The purpose and objectives of this document are:

- a) to define the characteristics of the Salesian presence in higher education, its relevance, and its importance in the mission of the Congregation;
- b) to help the IUS in the drawing up of its own institutional project;
- c) to offer an authoritative and stable direction along which to promote through the years, on the part of the Rector Major and his Council, policies and strategic plans for the entire Congregation in the field of universities.

[09] 2. However, the most immediate goal of this document is to become the major source of inspiration and guidance for the institutional project with which

each IUS justifies, presents, and implements its cultural, educative, and pastoral “mission,” as the Salesian service in the actual society of which each institution feels to be part and to which it is fully committed.

[10] 3. Despite its desired conciseness, the text does express a number of convictions and goals as described below.

[11] a) The respect for and acceptance of the nature and the scientific-academic tradition proper to the universities, and of all the challenges and demands posed by the universities, in terms of quality and excellence.

[12] b) The twofold resolve of Salesian Congregation. First of all, to provide young people with an integral formation, scientific and professional, human and Christian. And secondly, to carry out accurate research especially on the youth situation, in order to propose to political, social, and religious authorities a number of well-defined suggestions for its transformation.

[13] c) The conviction regarding the validity of working together, Salesian religious and lay people, to effectively fulfill the above-mentioned resolve, by entrusting responsibilities to one another only on the basis of a shared commitment to the common project and of each one’s personal competence.

## I – IDENTITY OF THE IUS

### 1. Nature of the IUS

[14] The IUS are institutions for higher education with a Christian inspiration, a Catholic character, and a Salesian nature. They are of varied types, whether in terms of their relationship with the Church (pontifical, Catholic, of Christian inspiration) and to the Salesian Congregation (owned by the Salesians, entrusted by others to the Salesians, or jointly managed with others), or in terms of the academic degrees offered, and the local situations in which they are located.

#### 1.1. Institutions for higher education

[15] Each IUS, as an institution for higher education, is an academic community composed of teachers, students, and administrators. In a systematic, critical, and proactive way, it promotes the development of the human person and of the cultural heritage of society through research, teaching, higher and ongoing education, and diverse services offered to local, national, and international communities.

Therefore, the scientific and academic factor is a *conditio sine qua non* for the IUS, and at the same time, a method and style which characterize their nature as universities.

#### 1.2. Christian inspiration and Catholic character

[16] The Christian inspiration of the IUS implies a vision of the world and human beings which is rooted and in harmony with the Gospel of Christ, and an academic community that shares and promotes such vision.

With their Catholic character, the IUS show that they are born out of the heart of the Church (*ex corde Ecclesiae*) and acknowledge that they feel themselves



immersed in the heart of the Church (*in corde Ecclesiae*) through a positive and faithful link with the Catholic Church, as an expression of communion with the community and its pastors in its worldwide and local manifestations, according to the specific terms expressed in their respective statutes.

The Catholic character also represents the institutional commitment of the Salesian Congregation to serve society and the Church in the setting of universities.

### 1.3 The Salesian nature

[17] The values of the Salesian spirit and pedagogy, resulting from the Preventive System lived by Don Bosco in the Oratory of Valdocco (cf. Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis of Sales, no. 40), enrich the nature, activity, and style of being university of the IUS. This implies:

- a) a preferential option for young people, especially those coming from the lower social classes;
- b) a close relationship among culture, science, technology, education, and evangelization, professionalism and integrity of life (*reason and religion, good Christians and upright citizens*);
- c) a community experience based on the *presence* of teachers and administrators among and for the students, in the spirit of family;
- d) an academic and educative style of relationships founded on *love*, manifested to and perceived as such by the students (*loving kindness*).

## 2. Distinguishing elements of the IUS

[18] The Salesian Congregation, aware and respectful of the specific nature and demands of universities, is also present in this field to accompany young people during the most critical stage in their growth-process and offer its educative heritage and charism. Thus, the IUS are characterized by their preferential option in favor of young people from the lower social classes, by the clear

Salesian identity of their academic communities, by the Christian and Salesian orientation of their institutional project, and by their educative-pastoral goals.

### **2.1. Preferential option for young people from the lower social classes (the beneficiaries)**

[19] The IUS make a preferential option for young people from the lower social classes, avoiding any elitism not only regarding their beneficiaries but also regarding the nature of their research and the development of the different services. Such an approach implies a number of choices:

- a) to facilitate access to the university for young people who come from the world of work and the lower social classes;
- b) to guide research, teaching, study, and cultural services in order to know better the situation of youth, especially the most disadvantaged, and bring about their positive transformation;
- c) to form persons committed to justice, and to a more human and supportive society;
- d) to promote in society formative programs that impact on educative processes as well as on strategies and policies for youth.

### **2.2. Academic community committed to the institutional project (the subject)**

[20] A Salesian institution for higher education is set up as the community of all those who commit themselves to the quest for truth and to the mission of formation, each one according to his or her professional and academic responsibility, and in line with the Christian and Salesian values of the institutional project (cf. also nos. 22—23. 26—28, 33c), in a spirit of corresponsibility and openness to the different cultural and social realities.

[21] The academic community of each IUS, while ensuring a rigorous and critical intellectual style, is inspired by a methodology of interdisciplinarity, teamwork, and corresponsibility on the academic, organizational, and

managerial levels. Moreover, it is autonomous institutionally, academically, and administratively, in regard to the fulfillment of the mission entrusted by the Salesian Congregation, and the legal duties and the rights of individuals. Therefore, it must have:

- a) *teachers* who combine professional competence, capacity for research, teaching, and education, sensitivity to the world of youth and capacity to welcome them, commitment to solidarity and justice, and a lifestyle coherent with the Gospel values;
- b) *students*, who participate as corresponsable protagonists in the scientific, cultural, educative, and social commitment of the institution;
- c) a *core of people*—that is, the local Salesian community or Salesians in direct relationship with the Province (cf. CG 25, 80), and lay persons—who identify themselves closely with the Salesian spirit and mission, and thus become capable in the fulfillment of their duties to guide the educative-pastoral challenge that must inspire and accompany the processes of research, teaching, community outreach, and campus-management;
- d) an *environment* in which the human person is at the center, where dialogue and collaboration form the basis of the methodology, and where the presence of teacher-guides awakens in the young the love for truth, for life, and for others.

### **2.3. Institutional project with a Christian and Salesian-orientation (content, values)**

[22] Like other universities, the IUS also conduct research, organize teaching, and transmit culture in terms of knowing, knowing how to do, how to be, and how to communicate and share. This is expressed in their respective institutional projects (cf. also nos. 26—28, 33c). In order that the projects be inspired by Christian values and realized in the Salesian style, the IUS should promote:

- a) a concept of the human person which is inspired by the Gospel and thus situates the individual at the very center of life and promotes his/her integral nature;

- b) a moral conscience based on values, with special emphasis on the promotion of justice and a culture of solidarity, through a model of sustainable human development, of equality and reciprocity in relationships, and of human life in its highest dignity;
- c) a dialogue among different cultures and religions, between culture-science-technology and a faith capable of enlightening reality and life, that is the inculturation of the Gospel;
- d) a special attention for the field of education, the formation of educators, the field of technology and work, and the world of communication.

[23] All these demand from the academic community an effort of ongoing formation—scientific, pedagogical, ethical, and Christian, a systematic reflection on the cultural orientation of its institutional project; an intense interdisciplinary dialogue on the major challenges of society in the light of the Gospel values and the Salesian charism.

#### **2.4. Educative-pastoral aim (the goal)**

[24] The institutional project of each IUS is guided by a clear educative-pastoral purpose, according to characteristics of Salesian pedagogy and spirituality. This aim is expressed through:

- a) the creation of an environment that is rich in human values, including that of familiarity;
- b) the scientific and systematic arrangement of research, of the scope and sequence of the curricular offerings, and of the contents of teaching, in consonance with a transcendent vision of the human person and of life;
- c) an interdisciplinary dialogue among the different academic subjects, including ethics, religion, and theology;
- d) the offering of specific subjects on morals and religion, on par with the other disciplines from the standpoint of science, pedagogy, and academic importance;

e) a broad range of student services, including activities that are explicitly Christian (evangelization, Christian formation, liturgy and sacraments), ecumenical and interreligious understanding and dialogue, and committed service to others.

## II –FUNDAMENTAL CHOICES FOR ACTION OF THE IUS

[25] The identity laid out for the IUS will become a reality only if a platform of choices for action are made and implemented: to face the identity-related challenges through a well-defined *project*, to give importance to *human resources* as the main asset of the institutions, to strive tenaciously for an *educative impact* on the students and society, to ensure an effective *management* which guarantees the serene unfolding of the university's complex life.

### 1. Work according to an *institutional project*

[26] Every IUS represents the expressed will of the Salesian Congregation to be present in the field of university with a specific *mission*. This mission is expressed in the corresponding *institutional project* – cultural and scientific, educative-pastoral, organizational and normative – that addresses the needs of the local situation, and thus applies and gives shape to the identity described above. We cannot imagine the rigorous work in the university on the part of the IUS without the reference and guidance offered by the institutional project.

[27] The entire institutional project should show clearly the *specific features* of each IUS, with respect to the other courses for higher education offered in the same locality.

[28] The project develops gradually through *strategic and operational plans*, with well-defined objectives and timelines.

## 2. Selection and ongoing formation of teachers and administrators of the IUS

[29] To handle effectively their mission and obtain quality results, according to their identity as Salesian and Catholic institutions, the IUS should select teachers and administrators very carefully, taking care of their ongoing formation and investing in them in order to guarantee their ongoing growth in terms of professional, educational, and Salesian competencies.

[30] The process of ongoing formation should foster in teachers and administrators a profile suited to the demands of the institutional project:

- a) their capacity for *self-development and self-evaluation*, in view of a continuous renewal of their scientific, technical, cultural, and educational competence, to be able to react positively to social and cultural situations and to ever-new scientific, moral, and educative challenges;
- b) their *ability to share a common project*, to work together, to realize a genuine interdisciplinary dialogue, and to guide collaborative processes within society and the Church;
- c) a special *sensitivity vis-a-vis young students and the situation of young people*, especially the poorest ones, and a specific competence (according to their specialization) to contribute to the building up of a society that is more just and mutually supportive, and more open to the integral development of young people;
- d) *the openness to, the deepening of, and the living out of the values of the Salesian identity*, that characterize the institutional project and a renewed motivation to live their vocation and fulfill their role within the academic community;
- e) the *ability to manage* the university effectively and efficiently.

### 3. Impact on society

[31] The existence and concerns of the IUS are justified, especially because of the qualified service they offer to young people and the concrete impact they can have on society in harmony with the characteristics that constitute their nature and identity (cfr. all of I). To realize this impact, the IUS must:

- a) focus their *efforts in the fields of research and teaching* on those areas of knowledge that are more in consonance with the Salesian charism;
- b) promote *concrete projects* which foster the involvement of other social, educational, and economic forces in the locality for the education and growth of the people;
- c) create *synergy* among the IUS and with other institutions and agents in society and the Church, and in particular in the Salesian Family. To bring about this synergy, the collaborating parties should have a clear institutional identity, a specific aim to achieve, and a concrete project to implement. This implies further a clear and precise system of organization and management, and the careful monitoring, evaluation, and control of the process;

### 4. Quality management

[32] Research, teaching, and the impact of both on the community are the three main tasks of the university, which demand that the teachers be competent. But it is also necessary that the entire university be *very accurately managed* in order to create the best conditions and obtain the optimum result in the three areas. This is the main purpose of good management. Therefore, *special competencies and professionalism*, not necessarily related to research or teaching, are required.

[33] Quality management on all the levels of the university requires:

- a) clear definition of the unique *nature* of the university, strict respect for the *competencies and roles* of persons and/or of colleagues, but without becoming enslaved by bureaucracy and standard operating procedures (SOP's);



- b) patient encouragement to *participation* on all levels, as a key element of individual and collective responsibility;
- c) consideration of the *institutional project of the university* (cfr. nos. 22—23, 26-28) as a genuine Magna Charta for the entire academic community, going even further than the norms required by the competent agencies of the government and the statutes of the institution;
- d) implementation of the project through *particular strategic and operational plans* that determine goals, timelines, and areas;
- e) *systematic and disciplined effort* in implementing the project and carrying out the plans;
- f) rigorous and regular *evaluation* of the results;
- g) lean and flexible lay-out of the organization, the buildings, and the facilities;
- h) increased *investment* in successful operations, and immediate *adjustments* in cases of failure, always in accord with the spirit of the institutional project;
- i) consolidation of *economic resources* with a particular effort to achieve self-sufficiency;
- j) convinced effort to achieve *synergy* among all the sectors of the university, with the other IUS, and with other universities and agents in society;
- k) *transparency and communication* in the management of the university.

Rome, January 7 2003



Fr Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA  
Rector Major

## A NOTE ON THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

1. **1997, 8 December.** The letter of the Rector Major Fr. Juan Vecchi, dated 8 December 1997, to all “Salesian provincials, their councils, and confreres of the Salesian universities” advocated the service of the Salesian Generalate for the IUS” and entrusted “the task of guiding and animating such service” to Fr. Carlos Garulo.

2. **1998, 10-13 July.** The *Second Meeting of IUS* brought together in Rome the presidents and principals (30), their respective provincial superiors (14) primarily responsible for such institutions, the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation, and 8 members of his Council. The aim of the meeting was to *agree on a three-year action plan* to help define the future of the IUS. This led to the *Common Program for the Promotion of the IUS (1998 – 2001)*.

Gradually, a large number of the envisaged initiatives were actually finalized so that by the end of the set deadline (July 2001) the results could be presented to the Rector Major and his Council:

- a *report and diagnosis* of the situation of the IUS,
- a document defining the *Identity* of the IUS,
- a proposed document *Policies of the Salesian Congregation for the IUS* for the immediate future.

3. As to the definition of the **identity of the IUS**, the *Common Program* requested:

a) the establishment of a commission to prepare a **draft-document** on the identity (cf. item 1111). The Program also indicated the *main aspects to consider* (cf. item 111):

- the *nature of the IUS as university*;
- the *Christian inspiration and the Catholic character*;
- the criteria, approach and operation of the IUS in line with the Salesian *mission*;
- the *professional competence* for teaching, research, and community outreach;
- the *effective outreach* of IUS in the local church, the Salesian Congregation, the arena of the university, and society;
- the *involvement* on different levels of other persons in society and the Church, in particular, the members of the Salesian Family.

b) the submission of this draft-document to the IUS for **consultation**, prior to presentation for the Rector Major’s approval.

4. **1999, February – 2000, April.** To achieve the aim defined in the *Common program*, the **Commission on general guidelines** was set up:

a) The Commission was **composed of**: Luciano Bellini (president of UPS, Ecuador), Alfonso De Castro (principal of the Facultades Salesianas, Lins-Brazil), Cyril De Souza (professor at UPS in Rome, India), Walter Cusinato (rector of ISRE, Venice), Antonio Domenech (General Councilor for youth ministry, Rome), Carlos Garulo (delegate of

the Rector Major for the IUS, Rome) Leonardo Santibáñez (Deputy Grand Chancellor, UCSH, Chile), Félix Serrano (president of the Universidad Mesoamericana, Guatemala).

b) Based on the input of the entire Commission, the “**first draft**” was prepared by Walter Cusinato, Antonio Domenech, and Carlos Garulo with the cooperation of Severino De Pieri (Dean of SISF), who met in Venice, 29—30 September 1999.

c) The text of the first draft was submitted again for the approval of the entire Commission that concluded its work in April 2000.

5. **2000, June -- 2001, February.** On the occasion of the 2000 Conference of the IUS on “The potential of our synergy,” held in Quito, Benediktbeuern, and Bangkok, the draft-document was presented for **consultation**, subsequent reading, discussion, and dialogue within the academic communities in order to improve the proposed text.

6. **2001, July 13 – 17.** On the occasion of the **Third Meeting of the IUS**, held at the Salesianum (Rome, Generalate) the document, which incorporated most of the comments and proposals made by the IUS to the Commission, was presented to the assembly.

7. **2002, July.** The same text was **submitted to the Rector Major**, Fr. Pascual Chavez, and his Council for their approval and official publication.

8. **2002, December.** The Rector Major and his Council **approved unanimously** the document “Identity of Salesian Institutions for Higher Education (IUS)” at the same time as the “Policies for the Salesian Presence in Higher Education, 2002—2008” to ensure the realization of the identity, as yet an ideal.