

DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO
ROMA



**POLICIES
FOR THE SALESIAN PRESENCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION
2012 - 2016**

Rome, July 2012

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Salesian mission in higher education

[01] The Salesian presence in higher education has grown quantitatively and qualitatively since the adoption of the Frame of Reference documents. The Salesian Congregation has recognized this growth, manifested in the increasing number of Salesians involved in this level of education and the rising number of young people attending higher education institutions under its responsibility.

[02] Therefore, the Salesian Congregation says its presence in the field of Higher Education is part of its mission and that the institutions of higher education, with the schools and the vocational training centres, "promote the development of the youth by the assimilation and the critical lecture of the culture and through education in the faith, in order to the Christian transformation of society."¹

[03] This presence is accomplished by the promotion of academic centres under the direct responsibility of the Salesian Congregation or in shared responsibility with other religious institutions, and by the presence of Salesians working in higher education institutions exercising management, teaching or research responsibilities. The presence also extends to the action of those Salesians who take care of the management and the animation of student residences or perform a specific pastoral work for young students in Salesian or non-Salesian institutions.

¹ *Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*, 13.

2. The process developed by the Salesian Institutions for Higher Education (IUS)

[04] Since 1997, as part of the government's program for the period 1996-2002, and by initiative of the former Rector Major of the Salesians, Don Juan Edmundo Vecchi, was created a service of the Generalate addressed the IUS, a support and animation service that since 2002 is part of the Department for Youth Ministry. The specific task assigned to the responsible of this service motivated the development of a particular experience of animation and accompaniment of the Salesian presence in higher education.

[05] The most characteristic feature of this animation experience is that it has not been a series of events spread over time, but a real process, developed over the years following agreed programs and with a methodology developed strategically.

[06] The main challenge has been to propose to the higher education institutions, belonging to the Salesian Congregation, the joint construction of the model to be achieved, model defined by the same institutions and then approved by the highest authority of the congregation, the Rector Major and his Council.

[07] The first phase of this process provided to the IUS of a Frame of Reference consisting of a series of documents that have been the result of a joint program of action². This has enabled the achievement of three main objectives: to know the status of institutions, define a common identity to all of them and provide guidance for the development of the Salesian presence in higher education.

[08] The second phase involved the promotion of the ideal embodied in the "Identity of the Salesian Institutions for Higher Education", through a series of guidelines contained in the document "Policies for the Salesian presence in

² *Common Program for the promotion of the IUS, 1998 – 2001.*

Higher Education 2003 - 2008"³. The implementation of the policies has been performed through two common programs, which have guided the joint work of the IUS during the years indicated.

3. Challenges to the Salesian presence in higher education

[09] Higher education institutions have undergone profound changes in recent years, not only as a result of the processes that affect this level, but also as a result of the transformations that characterize the social, cultural and economic context of the societies where they are located. These changes have produced a higher level of complexity in their organization and in the management model required to meet the demands they face from society in accomplishing their core functions.

[10] As Higher Education institutions of Christian inspiration, Catholic nature and Salesian identity⁴, the IUS also face the challenge of proposing, consistently with the specific task assigned to them within the Church, a proposal for life that, based in faith, enters into dialogue with the knowledge and the science in the context of the new evangelization.

[11] The IUS face a triple challenge: firstly, to ensure the quality of their educative and cultural proposal; secondly, to guarantee the fulfilment of his pastoral educational purpose, according to the charismatic Salesian identity; and finally, achieve an economic and financial sustainability to ensure its continuity in time. These challenges demand of the IUS to move together into the process of defining their own model of being present in higher education and to exercise their core functions of teaching, research and service to society.

³ The validity of this document has been extended to the years 2008 - 2011, by resolution of the Rector Major and his Council.

⁴ Cf. *Identity*, n. 14.

4. Objectives of the Policies for the years 2012 - 2016

[12] Therefore, in continuity with the policies adopted for the period 2003 - 2011, the policies contained in this document are intended to:

a) Give continuity to the process developed by the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education in the previous period, ensuring their identity and institutional strength;

b) Guarantee the compliance with their pastoral educative purpose, through the quality assurance of the formation and the impact of their educative and cultural proposal.

[13] The option for the Salesian presence in higher education states the will of having an educative and cultural impact⁵. This means that the effort and commitment that characterizes this type of presence should ensure an impact on the lives of students and a transformation of the societies in which they are located.

[14] First of all, it is necessary to ensure an education of quality to the students, guaranteeing that the formation processes favour their personal and professional growth, as well as their integration into society as citizens. In accordance with the Salesian educative style, this impact should be sought through the quality of the academic proposal, and also through the support and the personal relationship that should characterize the educational process.

[15] The will of impact is showed also by the intention of making a cultural contribution to the Salesian Congregation, to the Church and to society. This is done primarily through the formation of the same students, who are called to be promoters of social change, but also through research and university extension services.

⁵ Cf. *Identity*, nn. 24 y 31. The document *Policies for the Salesian presence in higher education 2003-2008*, pointed some permanent and operational options that were necessary for its implementation (Nos. 10 to 14). In continuity with such policies and options, this document highlights the clear will of each IUS of having an impact on the educative and cultural context in which it is located.

5. Conditions for the applications of the policies

[16] The implementation of these policies supposed the will and the commitment of the institutions to perform a set way of reflection and action that contributes to the development of a common educative heritage in the field of higher education and the consolidation of each particular presence according to the guidelines of the common identity defined⁶.

[17] The application of these policies will be effective through the coordination of the roles and responsibilities of the different governance and animation structures of the Congregation, related to the orientation of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education: the Department for Youth Ministry, the provinces and the IUS.

[18] The application should take into account the cultural, social and religious places where the institutions are located. For this reason it shall be adopted a more contextualized model of implementation, which based on the decisions taken within the General Assembly, takes effect across the Continental Conferences and other forms of meeting, oriented to the reflection and practical application of these policies.

⁶ Cf. *Identity*, n. 18.

I. POLICIES

Premises

[19] These Policies, as those previously in force, are aimed exclusively at higher education institutions that are under the responsibility of the Salesian Congregation. In the case of shared responsibility centres, the position and the particular contribution of the Provinces to such centres will be oriented by these guidelines.

[20] The implementation of these policies at each IUS, involves a commitment to deepen the principles and options contained in this document, and apply them within the own institutional project, taking into account the particular characteristics of the social context and the options taken by the province.

[21] As with the previous document enacted, these policies were elaborated for the period 2012 to 2016. At the end of this time, the Assembly of provincials and heads of the institutions is called to verify, validate and guide the implementation of the choices made and the realization of joint projects approved.

[22] Continuing with the practice experimented⁷, the Youth Ministry Department will encourage and guide their implementation, promoting the coordination with other government and animation structures of the Provinces. The responsibility for planning and implementation of the policies correspond to the General Coordinator, the Board of Directors and the Continental Coordinations, who will promote the implementation of processes at the continental level.

⁷ Cf. *Common Program 1, 1998-2002; Common Program 2, 2003-2007; Common Program 3, 2007-2011.*

POLICIES THAT REFER TO THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF IUS

[23] 1. Ensure an on-going and deep reflection on the identity and mission of the Salesian presence in higher education.

[24] The IUS, individually and collectively, will commit to reflect upon and develop a common heritage on the educational style and on the way of being present in the higher education sector. The Department of Youth Ministry, through the General Coordinator, will facilitate this process and collect the fruit of the reflection.

[25] Such reflection, as well as the praxis developed by the institutions in carrying out their mission, may lead to the definition of the core elements educative-pastoral Salesian university model.

[26] 2. Ensure in each institution an on-going process of reflection and evaluation of the criteria, mechanisms of management of academic structures to be innovative and consistent with the educational and pastoral purpose that characterizes the identity and mission of the IUS⁸.

[27] Each IUS institution shall define in its Institutional Project the criteria, the options and the priority areas which, in line with the institutional mission, will guide all academic and extension activities: teaching, research and extension services.

[28] Each IUS institution shall ensure that the guidelines regarding the salesian identity and mission are reflected in its day to day working.

⁸ Cf. *Identity*, 24.

[29] 3. Guarantee in each institution an active Salesian presence, both quantitative and qualitative, made up of religious and collaborators, capable of directing and animating a project at cultural, scientific, academic and pastoral level.

[30] It should be the responsibility of the Provinces to ensure an adequate presence of Salesians and collaborators in IUS institutions able to witness to the values of faith, the charisma and the Salesian mission. Such a presence should be capable of animating and accompanying the academic community in implementing the Institutional Project.

[31] The provinces should make provisions within their formation plans to ensure the ongoing formation and accompaniment of Salesians and collaborators destined for the higher education sector⁹ so as to equip them better for their future roles in this sector. Specifically, the Provinces shall be alert to the urgent need to form a pool of personnel adequately trained and competent to manage institutions of higher education¹⁰.

POLICIES THAT REFER TO THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH OF THE IUS

[32] 4. Ensure the institutional strength of the IUS and the quality of its educational programmes so that it stays relevant to the integral formation of the young and to the ever changing needs of society.

[33] The institutional strength and development of IUS institutions shall be the joint responsibility of the Provinces and the Board of Management of the institutions themselves by setting in place clear guidelines, policies and adequate structures of government.

⁹ Cf. *Identity*, nn. 29 and 30.

¹⁰ Cf. *Identity*, n. 32.

[34] The IUS institution shall provide for [a] adequate formation of its personnel in a quality culture and [b] the adoption of strategically planning instruments, a proactive management style, and continuous and transparent evaluation processes.

[35] The IUS institution shall opt for institutional or programmes accreditation, wherever this systems or process exists.

[36] 5. Ensure an efficient economical and financial management of the IUS institution to promote sustainable self-reliance while at the same time paying special attention to underprivileged youth¹¹.

[37] Each IUS institution shall manage its finances in line with the educational and pastoral aims of the institution, giving special attention to students who are poorer. Investments are to be in consonance with the objectives and mission of the institution as reflected in its institutional project.

POLICIES THAT REFER TO THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

[38] 6. Guarantee the quality formation of its students within a university model inspired by the principles of the preventive system of Don Bosco ensuring their personal and professional growth, and their formation to be committed and productive citizens of the country.

[39] Each IUS institution should resort to an ongoing process of analysing and strengthening the formative processes within the institution with a view to ensuring a relevant and meaningful educational experience to its students. Intimate knowledge of the background of the students and the factors in their milieu that impinge on the formation processes should be continuously examined so as to provide a formation to the students that would be beneficial to them both academically and professionally.

¹¹ Cf. *Identity*, 19.

[40] Reflection on these processes will help each institution to define and apply a more contextualized model of education centred on the student - a model that reflects the students' needs, answers social challenges (for example, the challenge of entering the job market) and promotes their personal and professional development.

[41] 7. Promote a social and cultural impact through academic activity in any IUS institution. It shall strive to contribute to better understanding of the social situation and its transformation through study and research. In this endeavour, it shall concentrate especially on those aspects that concern the living conditions of the young¹² and care for the marginalised.

[42] In line with the social teaching of the Church, the IUS institutions shall promote research that helps society, contributing towards a better understanding of culture, new technologies of information and communication, processes that promote social inclusion and care for the environment.

[43] The IUS institutions shall seek ways to promote and define public policies at all levels and in all areas of human endeavour.

POLICIES THAT REFER TO THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS

[44] 8. Continue to work on strengthening the IUS network and the development of synergy between the IUS institutions and other such institutions within the larger society through active involvement and participation.

[45] The IUS institutions shall promote the synergy to be found in collaborating on common projects of a multilateral or bilateral nature.

¹² *Identity*, n. 12.

[46] The IUS institutions, individually or as a group, or all together, shall commit themselves to be active agents of teaching, research and developmental activity both within civil society and the Church.

[47] **9. Continue to work consistently on strengthening the IUS network through the structures of government of the Provinces.**

[48] The Provinces shall involve the IUS institutions to play their specific and, at the same time, significant role in the development of Organic Provincial Project.