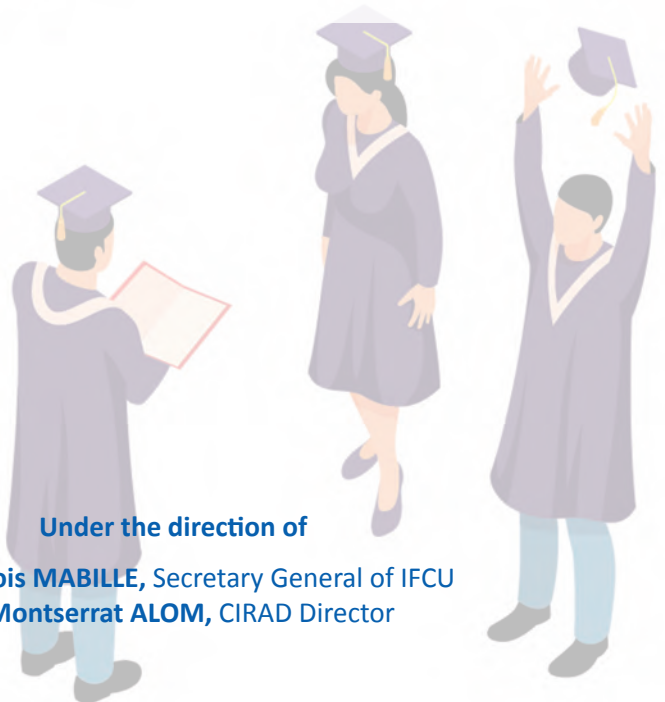




COMPANION DOCUMENT

**A REFERENCE FRAMEWORK
FOR ASSESSING
UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
*FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE***



Under the direction of

Dr François MABILLE, Secretary General of IFCU
Dr Montserrat ALOM, CIRAD Director



THE NEWMAN BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

The Catholic Benchmarking Framework for Universities' Social Responsibility (USR)

The International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) has just created a unique **Benchmarking Framework** that will enable Catholic universities **to assess their social responsibility performance**.

In recent years, various rankings (Shanghai, Times Higher Education) have emerged to rate universities in an increasingly competitive environment. However, these rankings are based on limited scientific criteria and overlook values that are essential to today's societies.

Echoing a growing number of initiatives around the world to promote USR, the Newman Benchmarking Framework is a viable assessment alternative that brings in a holistic approach to assess higher education institutions. By conveying principles and values that are in line with the humanist and Catholic tradition of the Church, this tool places the notion of responsibility at the heart of university life and of the entire community.

The Framework is the result of a two-year collaborative endeavor and includes some 160 indicators and twenty criteria sorted into 4 main areas:

1

institutional governance

3

university practices as an employer and with regard to the implementation of its "three missions"

2

environmental protection efforts

4

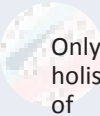
overall consistency with regard to institutional identity

Thanks to a partnership with the Swiss GMAP Center think tank, the **Newman Benchmarking Framework is the first of its kind to rely on the use of artificial intelligence** in order to offer an evaluation system that is both dynamic and respectful of the context diversity of universities. Access to this evaluation and foresight tool will enable universities to take stock of both their current and USR performance and future trends, while obtaining solid data enabling them to redefine their institutional development strategies.

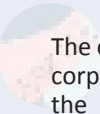
Providing visibility and quantifiability for their USR policies and practices will allow Catholic universities to promote their singular added value in the higher education landscape.

THE NEWMAN BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK IN A FEW WORDS

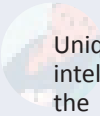
AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH:



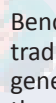
Only evaluation system to propose a holistic approach, through the concept of «responsibility», allowing for articulating the whole of any university's policies, which tend to lack coherence (transparency and reporting, inclusive university, gender balance, commitment with society, responsible research, environmental sustainability...).



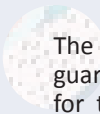
The only assessment framework adapting corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the higher education (HE) environment by taking into account the specificities of universities, their three missions and their institutional identity.



Unique in the world to put artificial intelligence (AI) at the service of the evaluation of higher education institutions (HEI).

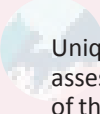


Benchmarking system differing from traditional ones (rankings), which are generally based on limited, biased and, thus, widely contested scientific criteria.

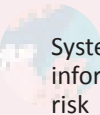


The only international system guaranteeing objectivity and respect for the specificities of the geographic context of the evaluated HEI.

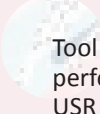
AND UNIQUE BENEFITS:



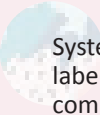
Unique in the world to offer not only an assessment of the current performance of the evaluated HEI, but also a projection of its future performance, with targeted suggestions for improvement.



System providing solid data to make informed decisions in terms of risk management and institutional development.



Tool that also measures the performance of HEI in communicating USR policies and practices, in order to help them improve their (often poor) communication strategy.



System allowing, thanks to the labels granted, to stand out from the competition in the higher education market by putting forward policies and practices conveying values that are increasingly appreciated by society and by (future) students themselves.



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PREFACE

Three years ago the General Secretariat of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) suggested launching a vast study on Catholic universities' social responsibility (USR) throughout the world. Indeed, one of the Federation's distinctive features is studying subjects comparatively and therefore from a resolutely international and multicultural perspective. Given the global challenges facing higher education, it seemed relevant to ask how, in the different countries where our member universities are present, this notion of social responsibility is translated, understood and, of course, implemented.

For universities for whom examining their Catholic identity provides a permanent stimulus it was also interesting to study the way in which the order of values and sometimes norms presented in Catholic social teaching could be institutionalised and put into practice within universities' policies and their engagement with their ecosystems. At a time when Pope Francis never ceases to call on Catholic universities to bring head, heart, and hands together, meaning that research and teaching must find concrete extensions for the purpose of improving life in our societies and paying more sustained attention to all those living on the margins, this research on social responsibility also reminds us of the importance of the engagement of the university as a community of teaching, research, and services in a world marked by globalisation, with all its advantages but also less desirable developments.

Thus, under the guidance of Dr Montserrat Alom, the Director of our International Centre for Research and Decision Support (CIRAD), an international team of researchers as well as consultants were called upon to define the meaning of Catholic universities' social responsibility. The result is a Reference Framework, Newman's Benchmarking Framework, which is probably the best and most comprehensive frame of reference on this issue to date. This paper is concretely intended to help our member universities to embark on a process of assessing their practices in this field and comes in support of the training courses that IFCU offers on University Social Responsibility. We hope it will kickstart a fruitful and useful approach for our universities working to serve society.

Dr François Mabilie
Secretary General of IFCU

PREAMBLE

This document offers a detailed presentation of the CIRAD-IFCU project aimed at developing a Social Responsibility Reference Framework for the Catholic university world.

Drawing on the dynamics that govern higher education today, it sets out the need to propose viable alternatives which convey principles and values that are in keeping with the humanist and Catholic tradition of the Church. Thanks to the diversity and quality of the questions raised, it hopes not only to fuel theoretical reflection but also help improve USR policies and practices.

This document is therefore intended for universities wishing to assess their social responsibility understood in a very broad sense – so broad that it encompasses all the fields found within institutions. In other words, USR is assessed from a cross-cutting perspective by taking into account universities' forms of governance, their approaches aimed at ensuring respect for the environment, their practices as employers, the ways in which their three missions are deployed, and, finally, the overall coherence of their identity as institutions.

It is only by making USR policies and practices visible and quantifiable that universities will be able to communicate and make a marketing case for themselves; be able to know their real performance in terms of strengths and weaknesses, and future trends; be able to make the right decisions in terms of risk management and institutional development; and, finally, have a tool which will allow them to highlight the added value that Catholic universities bring to the higher education landscape.

Dr Montserrat ALOM BARTROLI
Director of CIRAD-IFCU

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