

## Strategic Plan 2019-2022

### INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) was set up in 2012 at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC) in response to the need to provide more research and research training in the field of internationalisation of higher education. Its doctoral programme seeks to develop a “reflective professional” through a unique combination of academic research and practitioner knowledge, and the Centre seeks through this knowledge to make a practical contribution to the internationalisation process at UCSC. 2018 marked its 6th year of successful operation, and after an initial period of experimentation this strategic plan is a significant milestone in the development of the Centre. A clearly communicated strategic plan based on a shared vision and goals for CHEI and a strong commitment to building capacity are fundamental to ensure that CHEI is in a position to build on past achievements and continues to make an outstanding contribution to the field of international education throughout its first decade of existence.

### CONTEXT, VISION AND MISSION

#### **SWOT Analysis**

The plan builds specifically on CHEI's strengths and addresses its weaknesses while also identifying threats, opportunities and trends in the external environment that can impact on its ability to carry out its mission now and in the future. The SWOT analysis was undertaken through discussions with CHEI's Scientific Committee and Management Board and also included analysis of feedback gathered from academic staff and students who participated in a range of different training and dissemination events throughout 2018.

#### **Strengths**

CHEI is located in the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, a well-established Italian university with a growing focus on internationalisation, and has developed an innovative PhD programme, both in content and format. CHEI is attracting an internationally diverse student body, thanks to its supervisory team, drawn from academic experts both within UCSC and around the world, and has rapidly established a good reputation. The PhD programme opened in 2012 with just 2 students and the current cohort is now 14 (5 applicants on the preparatory track and 9 PhD students). This team of academic experts has also made the Centre attractive as a partner to other universities in EU-funded programmes, thus further enhancing its visibility in different world regions. CHEI has also been supporting a number of UCSC schools in their internationalisation processes, particularly in the development of internationalised curricula.

#### **Weaknesses**

Nevertheless, it is still a small centre with a number of weaknesses. It has a small team of academic staff with limited supervision capacity to meet the growing student demand to undertake doctoral studies, or to support internal needs for support in internationalisation. All of its academic and administrative staff are part-time, and the vast majority of its supervisors are not based at UCSC and are undertaking CHEI work in addition to their own institutional workloads. Current supervisory capacity is stretched to the limit and cannot expand any further without compromising the quality it has built its reputation upon. It is still in the process of developing its own internal policies and procedures and does not yet have a comprehensive communication or recruitment strategy. It still has only a limited number of revenue streams.

### ***Opportunities***

CHEI is operating in a field with growing demand from practitioners to undertake doctoral studies. Internationalisation has become key to strategic development in higher education and this gives it an opportunity to shape policy and practice at different levels around the world. As other research centres become more interested in internationalisation, or new specialised centres are created, there is an opportunity for joint initiatives, collaboration and strategic partnerships. UCSC is also seeking to strengthen its own internationalisation strategy thus providing opportunities to further embed the Centre and create stronger internal collaboration with the different Schools, as they seek to further internationalise their programmes and services. Stronger internal engagement with UCSC's strategy for internationalisation will also offer opportunities for CHEI's work to create greater impact in the field globally.

### ***Threats***

While universities are developing more strategic and comprehensive approaches to internationalisation, there is nevertheless a pushback against internationalisation of higher education in many parts of society, and CHEI cannot ignore this growing tendency, and the impacts it might have in both the shorter and longer term. The recent development of new research centres in internationalisation and/or higher education in other countries has made CHEI less of a unique proposition and has increased the level of competition. An ongoing threat to CHEI's development is the rigid national regulatory framework for doctoral programmes in which it is required to operate and which can limit its desire for innovative practice.

The strategic imperatives identified in this SWOT analysis have enabled CHEI to clarify its vision and mission and set of principles to guide it in its strategic choices and to determine the five key goals for the duration of this plan.

### **Vision**

#### **To become a global leader in higher education internationalisation**

CHEI will be recognised globally as a leading research centre in higher education internationalisation that is engaged in high quality and high impact research and postgraduate training.

### **Mission**

CHEI seeks to realise its vision by promoting, conducting and disseminating research through its doctoral programme, professional development programmes, consultancy activities, both internal and external, research outputs and publications as well as its participation in institutional, national and international dialogues on internationalisation of higher education.

### **Principles**

- CHEI acts as a catalyst to bring people and their ideas together in order to encourage innovation, identify creative solutions, impact policy and further the field of internationalisation of higher education.
- CHEI is an inclusive and collaborative community of learning that recognises the diverse contributions of its members.
- CHEI builds partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders to advance shared priorities and optimise the use of financial and human resources.
- CHEI identifies ways to share its knowledge and resources within UCSC and to support the university mission.

### ***Strategic imperatives arising***

The strategic imperatives arising from the SWOT for this strategic plan will be first of all to **develop a sustainable financial and human resourcing model** that will enable it then to:

- Strengthen the doctoral programme
- Enhance professional development and consultancy activities
- Develop a clearer research identity
- Build stronger connections to other doctoral schools in UCSC
- Establish key local and international partnerships
- Improve communication and visibility at local, national and international levels

## Goals, objectives and actions

CHEI has identified 5 strategic goals, each with its own suite of objectives and actions that form the body of this plan.

1. **Building capacity**, because CHEI's future development is inextricably linked to a sustainable human and financial resourcing model
2. **Creating and sharing useful knowledge**, focussing on its doctoral programme, research and consultancy, and professional development, because these are the principal academic activities through which it sets out to realise its vision and mission, both within UCSC and beyond
3. **Establishing mutually beneficial local and international collaborations**, because CHEI recognises it cannot act alone, both within UCSC and beyond
4. **Optimising services**, to ensure that all academic activities are adequately supported
5. **Enhancing internal and external visibility**, to ensure that CHEI is able to play its part in both the UCSC community and in the field of internationalisation of higher education.

### **Goal 1. Building capacity**

CHEI has been growing steadily over the last six years. However, its current human and financial resourcing model does not guarantee long-term expansion and it now needs to secure a sustainable base that can enable future growth through appropriate staffing and adequate funding.

#### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Increase the academic team in line with the objectives of this strategic plan.
2. Secure stable and/or diverse funding sources

#### **Priority Actions**

1. Identify funding for post doc positions or equivalent to enhance capacity to carry out research and appoint new staff
2. Expand the adjunct programme and supervisory team in line with the PhD needs, the research strategy and partnership policy.
3. Expand grant and contract funding streams, including EU sources.

### **Goal 2. Creating and sharing useful knowledge**

CHEI will conduct and support research activities in internationalisation that are of value to higher education and to society.

#### **2. 1. Doctoral Programme**

CHEI's flagship programme is its doctoral programme in internationalisation of higher education. It has grown successfully over the first 6 years and is becoming increasingly attractive to practitioners in a broad range of institutions around the world. After a period of experimentation, it now needs to consolidate the programme and better articulate its value and unique proposition.

#### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Refine the doctoral programme in terms of its overall learning outcomes and how these are reflected in the content and structure of the research seminars and other learning platforms to be developed.
2. Refine and further develop the reflective practice approach to learning to better enable students' theoretical understanding and critical awareness, conduct original research, contribute to international scholarship and develop innovative practice of value to the field
3. Elaborate the current blended learning model through enhanced use of technology, also in collaboration with others.
4. Define the target student population and ensure diversity of professional and geographical backgrounds.

#### **Priority actions**

1. Produce a document that describes the doctoral programme and defines graduate characteristics, learning outcomes and curriculum.
2. Elaborate a learning and teaching strategy that supports the model described in Action 1.
3. Develop a plan for sustainable growth in a number of places and diversity of students

## **2.2 Research and consultancy**

CHEI has exploited opportunities for research and consultancy as these have presented themselves to the Centre. In particular, winning the tender for the European Parliament Report on Internationalisation of Higher Education that was published in 2015 gave it significant visibility around the world. It now needs to develop a proactive approach, identify areas of expertise on which it will build its reputation for innovative research and consultancy of value to the field.

### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Define our research identity that will enable us to become internationally regarded for our research output in selected fields of enquiry
2. Conduct and facilitate research that addresses relevant issues and makes a tangible difference within the field.
3. Provide thought leadership on matters of global significance that can make an impact on national and international policy in internationalisation of higher education.
4. Ensure appropriate communication and dissemination of our research outcomes.
5. Identify opportunities for consultancy services, both within UCSC and beyond.

### **Priority Actions**

1. Produce a document that sets out CHEI's research direction and areas of key interest that can inform partnership policy, funding sources, publication priorities and consultancy strengths.
2. Define CHEI's contribution to professional associations, and national and international conferences and similar fora and identify type and frequency of interventions.
3. Define the nature of consultancy services

## **2.3 Professional Development**

CHEI has undertaken professional development internationally principally through participation in Erasmus+ and other EU-funded programmes that have enabled it to participate in projects in Europe and Latin America. It has also participated in other training programmes in Russia and Egypt.

Within UCSC, it has offered regular seminars on internationalisation and has provided workshops for PhD students in other Schools. It has also set up a programme on Teaching International Classrooms for the UCSC Schools that are developing degree programmes for the international market. All these activities need to be further consolidated and developed, both internally and externally.

### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Define how professional development is understood within CHEI, how it is underpinned by the research strategy and doctoral programme, and our approach to teaching and learning.
2. Identify new professional development opportunities within the university, nationally and internationally

### **Priority Actions**

1. Review current programmes within UCSC and in partnership with others (Erasmus+ and other internationally funded programmes) to define how/whether they should be further developed.
2. Develop policy for professional development and identify priorities.

## **Goal 3. Establishing mutually beneficial collaborations**

CHEI cannot reach its goals by acting alone. In order to improve and expand its research activities it needs to shift from an ad hoc to more systematic approach to identifying opportunities through collaboration. It will seek to enhance its programmes and activities in partnership in order to grow and provide innovative solutions to future needs

### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Build strategic partnerships internally and externally to enhance reach and visibility.
2. Collaborate with other research centres within UCSC as well as nationally and internationally on key areas of interest.

3. Expand relationships with potential clients and partners in government, private sector and non-governmental organizations
4. Expand relationships with faculty, researchers, PhD students within the university

#### **Priority Actions**

1. Develop a partnership policy with other research centres for joint research and professional development activities
2. Define policy for joint degrees and *co-tutelle* arrangements
3. Define a visiting scholar policy that attracts quality researchers and is also beneficial to CHEI.
4. Foster new and existing strategic partnerships with the different UCSC Schools.

#### **Goal 4. Optimising services**

CHEI has always sought to develop people-centred services that recognise diverse needs and respond quickly and efficiently to requests. It has often been possible to offer highly individualised attention, but as numbers grow it is important for CHEI to be able to anticipate needs and provide a generalised service while still responding to specific needs of individuals. CHEI operates in English but is based in Italy and while limited attempts have been made to offer students the opportunities to learn Italian, there is still significant room for improvement. Furthermore, CHEI defines its doctoral programme as a blended model but until now there has been only limited use of technology. It is to CHEI's advantage to enhance connectivity through a more effective use of technology both for pedagogical and administrative purposes in all its programmes and activities.

#### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Enhance the students' educational experience through provision of quality educational and administrative services
2. Foster a culture of innovation by supporting students to learn in multiple ways through innovative programme delivery including online provision, tools and education and language learning resources
3. Deliver a high level of administrative service supported by technology wherever possible.

#### **Priority Actions**

1. Review the student life cycle and produce a framework for PhD supervision that defines the student experience and the nature of the support provided.
2. Develop a quality assurance policy
3. Develop an innovative and flexible virtual learning environment in partnership with UCSC, or others, to improve learner engagement and give wider access to programmes and activities, including language learning.
4. Define job descriptions and review work flows at CHEI Office.

#### **Goal 5. Enhancing internal and external visibility**

CHEI has been enhancing its profile nationally and internationally over the last 6 years based mainly on personal connections and networks but also through its research publications that have reached a global audience. It has also been developing its reputation within the university as a centre with a strong international dimension and unique expertise. It is now ready to consolidate these achievements and develop them more strategically in order to further enhance its profile and visibility.

#### **Objectives**

We will:

1. Enhance communication and visibility of the PhD programme via the website and other channels.
2. Increase knowledge of and accessibility to research products via the website and other channels.
3. Enhance the strategic value of CHEI to the university by strengthening contacts in the various campuses, contributing further to internationalisation efforts and seeking new ways to share expertise

**Priority Actions** (in collaboration with UCSC and the Office for International Education and Global Engagement)

1. Develop a comprehensive communications strategy
2. Develop a marketing and recruitment plan

3. Identify scholarship opportunities for PhD programme linked to recruitment strategy
4. Improve visibility of and access to research outputs
5. Enhance the website as a strategic tool for communication to multiple users
6. Improve awareness of CHEI and the contribution it can make to internationalisation in the different UCSC schools.

### **Implementing the strategic plan**

Success of any strategic plan requires a concerted effort, shared responsibility and alignment of activities across successive annual action plans. All areas involved in CHEI's management, governance and operations will need to work in harmony to achieve UCSC's plans for CHEI.

Once this strategic plan is agreed, an *action plan* for the first year with timelines, quantitative and qualitative targets and indicators as well as assignment of responsibilities will be developed by the Director of CHEI, who is ultimately accountable for implementation of the strategic plan. Where additional funding will be required for the strategic plan to be fully realised this will be identified in the annual action plan and brought to the attention of relevant bodies for their action and approval.