SCOPE OF THE LIVING VALUES THEMSELVES: A PROSPECTUS OF POSSIBILITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

1. From international experience, there is a wide range of values which universities may wish to espouse and live. These values have evolved over time and continue to do so. There is no generally agreed canon of values. The choice of values is a matter for each university and it is crucial that universities identify a small number of core values. It is envisaged that universities which have signed the Magna Charta Universitatum (and possibly others) will wish to include, among other values, the more or less fundamental values which were evident at the MCO's inception, and whose importance at the global level of higher education has been confirmed since. These are included below together with two additional values which have evolved in recent years.

   - **Institutional Autonomy and Responsibility**

      This encompasses the ability of the university to set its own rules and conduct its affairs without external restriction, whether from government and public authorities or stakeholders/users of its services in the higher education market place.

      There are several dimensions to this including decision-making power in the domains of:

              academic affairs;
              organisation;
              finance and physical resources and
              human resources.

      The focus is on the relationships between universities and external agencies in terms of legal matters (including the legal status of the university) and in turn whether the relationship and dialogue is adversarial or collaborative, light or heavy handed, enabling and facilitating or not. This is, in effect, akin to a social contract between universities and the external agencies.

      The MCO also wishes to emphasise that the right to autonomy implies the obligation to act responsibly and sensitively to external stimuli. It is not a concept of the academic monastery. It also involves the right to challenge.

      It is recognised that the pursuit of autonomy is more akin to a journey, rather than a fixed destination and that different universities and universities in different countries are at different places on the journey and are travelling at different and variable speeds. Autonomy is an aspect

of the dynamic interaction or social contract with society. It is not under the control of individual institutions and it changes over time in all contexts.

- **Academic freedom**

  This is founded on the freedom of the academic, both as an individual and as a collective, to practise responsibly, independent intellectual enquiry in the generation and pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination, through the process of education, publishing and knowledge transfer, all broadly defined.

  This freedom could be constrained by external forces (government interventions and economic or social stakeholders) for a variety of motives; using a variety of methods and constraints and with diverse consequences.

  Academic freedom may also be constrained locally, intentionally or inadvertently by university leadership style, operating policies and practices or organisational culture.

  It is recommended that both external and internal discussions should be undertaken as appropriate in the analysis.

  The principal elements of academic freedom are indicated in the tool box (here), and it is asserted that these elements bring with them the acceptance of responsibility in the exercise of the freedoms.

- **Equity**

  This might encompass, *inter alia*, equality of opportunity regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, disability or sexuality, manifested in processes to guarantee fairness, merit and justice permeating all of the institutional processes in the academic, financial and human relations domains.

  It includes equity of access to higher education with regard to socio-economic background and the idea that a student population should represent the diversity of the society at large in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, disability or sexuality and also regarding social backgrounds.

- **Integrity**

  This value has specific meaning related to science and research but also for more general conduct, behaviour and processes in terms of *inter alia* openness and transparency, wholeness, honesty, absence of corruption in whatever domains, dignity, acceptance of personal responsibility and generosity of spirit and action; ethical behaviour; shared purpose and vision.

2. It is apparent that universities in specific settings and situations may well adopt **other missions and qualities which are underpinned by living values.** From experience these may include:

- **Global Outlook**

  Elements that might demonstrate the promotion of this value could include strong international faculty and student profiles, encouraging and supporting two-way student mobility; student global employability; a commitment to the study and research of global themes; responsibility to assist in capacity development in HE systems; developing mutually advantageous partnerships; borderless education; and sustainability in all its forms. Values in this area could encompass both philosophical and instrumental elements.

- **Creativity, Innovativeness and Excellence**

  The commitment of the university not only to excellence in all areas but also to experimental, 'outside the box' approaches in education and research; an active commitment to the principles and practices of a learning organisation and a priority on quality as a way of life.

- **Societal Responsibility**

  Whilst this is the counterpart to the values of academic freedom and institutional autonomy described above, it is a value in its own right and may encompass stakeholder/user engagement in programme design; delivery and evaluation and research and development; Mode 2 approaches to education and research (i.e. stakeholders and user engagement for their design and delivery; multi-disciplinary problem orientation, etc); incorporation of major social issues in thematic teaching and research; incorporation of external social values, (but critically); and an outward looking, entrepreneurial culture, including a concern with relevance to local communities and commitment to sustainability.

- **Diversity, Pluralism and Inclusiveness**

  Connected to equity and equality of treatment, the commitment to these values would specifically manifest itself in the toleration or active pursuit of diverse student and staff bodies as indicated earlier; the promotion, toleration of and openness to the discussion and challenge of different political, social, cultural, religious or economic views – and dissent on campus, the engagement with partner institutions and organisations from diverse sectors and parts of the world.

- **Health, Well-being and a Caring Community**

  A number of elements could figure in this, including personal support mechanisms for staff and students (people centeredness); friendly culture; expectation of service; partnership and help-giving; openness to advice; looking after weaker contributors; encouraging and celebratory ethos; pervasive sense of pride; courtesy and confidence.

3. There are other missions and qualities, underpinned by values which universities may wish to formulate and promote, but it should be emphasised that this initiative focuses on the main institutional values. Selecting a few, ideally 5 or fewer, meaningful, key values is optimal but may prove to be challenging for university

communities. To achieve this small number, it might be useful to test the appropriateness of the provisional values that are proposed against the following criteria:

- are the values clear and understandable to all stakeholders (i.e. are they easy to grasp)?
- are they important to the university (possibly as a means of differentiation and do they describe it at its best)?
- are they the minimum necessary to communicate?
- are they convertible into tangible behaviours, actions and practices?
- do they support self-reflection, review and goal setting?
- will people understand, appreciate and incorporate them?
- is it possible to assess their realisation and impact?
- are they free of jargon and written in a manner that fits the university?
- can they be easily memorised and repeated?
- are they narrow enough to help guide the key stakeholders and will they help avoid distractions?
- do they align with the university's mission and vision?
- etc.

4. The Tool Box contains sections on values. The values adopted by the pilot sites can be found here. An example of a format which universities could use or develop in the process of formulating each value, and its accompanying behaviours and actions, to analyse where the institution stands at present, and what it proposes to do about any problem areas identified can be found here.

5. Other values identified during the piloting process can be found here. More details of their context can be found in the reports of each pilot site which can be found here.

6. There will undoubtedly be other values but it should be emphasised that we are talking of higher level values here, not the means. There is a serious challenge for universities to select those of the above – or others – which are meaningful. It may be useful to subject the provisional selected values to a series of tests/criteria to be satisfied of their appropriateness e.g.

- are the values clear and understandable to all stakeholders (i.e. are they easy to grasp)?
- are they important to the university (possibly as a means of differentiation and do they describe it at its best)?
- are they the minimum necessary to communicate?
- are they convertible into tangible behaviours and actions to encourage improvement in behaviours and practice?
- do they support self-reflection, review and goal setting?
- will people understand, appreciate and incorporate them?
- are they free of jargon and written in a manner that fits the university?
- can they be easily memorised and repeated?
- are they narrow enough to help guide the key stakeholders and will they help avoid distractions?
- do they align with the university's mission and vision and key people in the organisation?

etc.

7   A format which universities could use in the process of formulating the value, and its accompany behaviours and actions; to analyse where the institution stands at present; and what it proposed to do about any problem areas identified can be found [here](#).