

INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY OF THE FACULTY OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

OUR PROVENANCE

The Faculty of Catholic Theology is committed to being internationally oriented in carrying out its teaching and research mission, benefiting from opportunities to further expand its international presence as part of the global Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Faculty of Catholic Theology sees itself as being firmly anchored within the University of Bonn's overall concept for research, study and teaching, which is international by design.

Promoting international networking and relationships is a primary objective of the Faculty council, as these are becoming increasingly important for the individual theological disciplines and the theology Faculty in general. These efforts are chiefly carried out on the seven levels outlined below, in accordance with the internationalization strategy of the University of Bonn.

OUR JOURNEY

1. International academics

The Faculty strives to enhance recruiting structures and support for academics from abroad to promote greater dialogue between the various theological subdisciplines, and in recognition of the increasingly global nature of the field of theology. Top international candidates are invited to interview for teaching openings as part of the ongoing commitment to cultivating internationalism (for example, professors from the Congo and Belgium). Efforts are made to maintain a similarly dynamic “incoming” culture with non-professorial teaching staff as well, particularly for the planning and execution of third party-funded projects. Additionally, junior academics are required to take international research visits and strongly encouraged to present and discuss their research before international scientific boards and at conferences.

2. Study offerings and teaching

Internationalization is of major importance to the Faculty of Catholic Theology with regard to study and teaching. The Church's global connections and the intercultural, sectarian and religious dialogue it engages in

inject an element of internationalization into teaching on a sustained basis. Faculty members are involved in the English-language Master of Ecumenical Studies (MESt) and the Theology and Global Development Master's program of the Institute of Catholic Theology at the RWTH Aachen University through a partnership with the interdisciplinary Center of Religion and Society (ZERG). Bonn students enjoy opportunities to study abroad in Europe through Erasmus exchanges, which bring eagerly welcomed foreign students to the Faculty in turn on a regular basis. The year of theological study at the Abbey of the Dormition in Jerusalem is of particular note in this regard.

Plans are in place to expand the Faculty's Erasmus offering and make it more attractive. An Information Day is held annually to raise awareness among students of existing study abroad opportunities. Targeted efforts are made to leverage the existing network of international research contacts to enhance internationalization in teaching in terms of both structures and content.

3. Internationalized administration

Administration is a key element for successful teaching, research and study offerings, occupying an important place in the internationalization agenda accordingly. The Faculty of Catholic Theology has thus appointed an Internationalization and Erasmus Officer to advance this agenda with expedience. The objective in the area of teaching is to streamline and standardize the recognition of graded assessments completed in other countries, thus administrative staff undergo training to become more aware of the internationalization-relevant issues. Additionally, applicant internationality will be given greater consideration in job offerings going forward.

4. Location

Because of its unique location and international connections, Bonn affords tremendous opportunities for the Faculty of Catholic Theology to enhance the internationalization of its research and teaching work. The Faculty already has partnerships in place with numerous Bonn-based research institutions, including various foundations and research funding/sponsorship organizations like the DFG and Cusanuswerk, university institutes like the Franz Joseph Dölger Institute for Research for Late Antiquity Studies and Bonn and Cologne-based institutions with international operations, such as the German Bishops' Conference (DBK), the Catholic News Agency (KNA) and the Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH).

Networking internationally holds increasing potential, which the Faculty intends to utilize to a greater extent going forward. The aim is to strengthen intercultural and religious dialogue, in particular awareness of Bonn's status as a seat of the United Nations.

5. Strategic partnerships

The Faculty engages in long-term strategic partnerships involving intensive interaction, both in Europe and beyond, including particularly Central Africa and the North American east coast as focus regions. These include the Université catholique du Grand Bandundu in Kikwit, the Université pédagogique du Congo in Kinshasa, the Faculty of Theology in Pretoria, Stellenbosch University, the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and several US universities such as Yale in New Haven, Boston University and the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Various collaborations are also in place, for example through ISRIT, the Intercultural Society for the Study of Religions and Intercultural Theology based in Salzburg, Austria, and with the US Religious Education Association. The Faculty of Catholic Theology is seeking to deepen its existing partnerships for greater impact in the areas of study offerings, teaching and research while working to forge new partnerships.



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6. Public relations

The Faculty of Catholic Theology views public relations as highly important, ensuring, for example, that its website affords foreign students and academics rapid access to information. The website is now slated for a redesign to make such access even easier, providing specific information as well on becoming a visiting foreign student or lecturer at the Faculty.

The Faculty has three principle public relations objectives: 1) internationalization on all levels, as part of which Faculty members are encouraged to become visiting lecturers in other countries, 2) leveraging the exposure thus gained to promote interest in the Faculty abroad, and 3) to heighten the Faculty's international profile by organizing conferences and colloquia.

7. Language policy

Language study in the first semesters of the Theology degree programs centers on the required languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Students are then able to employ linguistic competencies thus acquired in further study of other foreign languages. The Faculty offers Ivrit language courses (modern Hebrew) which build upon students' previously gained knowledge. Language center classes can be counted as elective courses for the degree programs. In line with the Faculty's interest in students having active language competency in the dominant languages of modern academic research, including English in particular, plans are in place to offer additional English-language courses (electives courses, for example) on a regular basis.

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