

Erasmus Policy Statement

The Newman Institute is an independent university college, founded in 2001 by the Jesuits in Sweden and the editors of the cultural review Signum.

Since 2010, the Institute is accredited by the Swedish Government to confer two bachelor's degrees, one in theology and one in philosophy. The Institute also offers courses in cultural studies. In 2020 the institute received accreditation for a master's program in theology, which started in 2021, and it is at present planning a master's program in philosophy.

Since its beginnings The Newman Institute's ambition has been to offer excellent academic education and a dynamic environment for research. It serves today about 300 students, representing a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

With theology and philosophy as its core competencies, the Institute is especially interested in the relationship between religion and science, the phenomena of globalization and secularization that characterize the countries of north-western Europe, and the concept of integral ecology. International cooperation and strategies for internationalization form the basis of The Newman Institute's milieu for higher education. The Jesuit character of the Newman institute expresses itself in the international dimension of its work, in the ongoing intellectual dialogue with the surrounding culture, in its pedagogical profile and in the commitment to contribute to the development of the society through active citizenship.

In 2018 the Newman Institute became a founding member of IAJU, the International Association of Jesuit Universities (www.iaju.org) and of its European regional association, the Kircher-Network (<https://kirchernetwork.org>). The Kircher network unites 30 member institutions all over Europe and the Near East. Some of these institutions are large universities (as the Gregorian University in Rome, Italy or the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain), others are small, specialized schools of theology and/or philosophy. In 2019 it also joined the ELEA-network, under the leadership of Leuphana University (Lüneburg, Germany) which aims to establish a European cooperation on liberal education within the European Universities Initiative. The Newman Institute is actively participating in the development of these three networks. Several of the activities and research projects connected to these networks are sponsored by the Erasmus+ program. Here are a few reasons why the European cooperation is of particular importance and of strategical interest for the Newman Institute:

- The study of philosophy and theology has shaped for centuries the intellectual discourse within Europe. Even today, many of the great challenges that Europe faces require philosophical and theological reflection in order to be addressed adequately. These questions stretch from social ethics to religious dialogue, from environmental challenges to a re-evaluation of the current economic model, to artificial intelligence and

transhumanism. All these challenges can only be addressed in a European context and the Newman Institute wants to be part of this endeavor.

- Sweden is a secular country with a small Catholic minority. As the Newman Institute intellectually is rooted within the philosophical and theological tradition of the Catholic Church, one of the great sources for European thinking, an academic exchange with the leading universities belonging to this tradition is vital for its own intellectual integrity.

- The Jesuit intellectual tradition is based on an understanding of the human being that is closely related to the concept of liberal education. Education is not only the transfer of knowledge but the formation of a human being, the shaping of responsible citizens. Some European universities have made liberal education the core of their pedagogical model. The Newman Institute wants to cooperate with these institutions more intensely and is therefore committed to the ELEA initiative. A precondition for this cooperation is the framework that the Erasmus+ program offers.

- One of the main research areas within the Newman Institute is the relationship between science and religion. Faculty of the Newman Institute is involved in common projects with other European schools of theology who are working in this field. In order to develop this cooperation, the Erasmus+ program is of crucial importance.

International exchange holds greater importance for smaller institutions than for bigger universities: the competence that the Newman Institute is offering is dependent on its European partners. But the unique competence that faculty at the Newman Institute provides, with its geographical positioning and the access to the peculiar academic tradition pertinent to the field of philosophy and theology in the Northern part of Europe, is also an important contribution offered to partner institutions. Thus, the relatively small size of the Newman institute constitutes a limitation and a liability for its work. But in the context of a strong cooperation with European partners it also has the potential to turn this into an important asset.

The Newman institute partakes in KA1 – Learning mobility of individuals, and KA2 – Cooperation among organizations and institutions. The Kircher network and the European Liberal Education Association are the main framework in which the academic exchange activities of the Newman Institute take place. The envisioned forms of cooperation consist mainly of:

- Peer research groups in the fields of Philosophy of religion and of the relationship between science and religion. These research groups create valuable academic contacts for the Newman Institute, that already have produced additional access to teaching competence and in internationalization of the curriculum. During the Erasmus period 2021-27

the institute aims to receive at least two teachers from partner institutions per academic year within the above-mentioned academic fields. Reciprocally, the Institute would send one teacher for a corresponding exchange to one of the participating institutions.

- Share resources in the form of library resources and academic staff exchange. The ambition is to learn from each other's experiences on – among other – challenges in inclusion and diversity, digitalization, and sustainability. The Newman Institute intends to do this by publishing best practices, co-hosting webinars, taking part in, and actively organizing blended intensive programs for example within the Kircher network. In order to increase the level of the exchange of best practices, at least two members of staff per year are encouraged to visit partner institutions in the framework of Erasmus+.

- The Newman Institute aims to offer a European Bachelor of Arts program in liberal education, organized within the ELEA network. In preparation to that, it is involved in the mobility of individuals, helping students to take part in a truly European education (including the demand to learn at least one more European language, besides English and native Swedish). The Institute expects a low but regular flow of students per year to attend courses at the Newman Institute. In addition, even though it has been notoriously difficult to motivate Swedish students for studies abroad, resources are invested in recruiting at least one or two of the Institute's own students to study a period of time at any of the ELEA or the Kircher network's partner institutions.

The Swedish Government is the principal agent in assessing the quality of academic programs and modules of international exchange that the Newman Institute is involved in. However, both the European Association of Jesuit Universities (Kircher network) and the European Liberal Education Association (ELEA) offer a framework for and resources to monitor and to promote the development of the aforementioned activities. The targets of these initiatives are partly defined by the sub-groups mentioned above. The "science and religion peer group", for example, is evaluating its work in three-year periods, under the supervision of the board of the Kircher network. A critical review of the conferences and publications as well as relevant student exchange that was achieved during this period of time is crucial of the continued work of each group. In a similar way, the steering group of ELEA plans and evaluates common activities.

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