



**BSE**RVATORY  
MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

## WHY VALUES MATTER

Universities are now more important to society than ever before; economically, politically, culturally and socially. The challenges they face are greater and require them to be stronger. Fundamental values have enabled universities to enrich society over the ages and are vitally important in this generation.

Across the globe universities are coming under greater pressure from a variety of sources for different reasons. The pace of change is faster, global problems are more complex and larger scale, solutions require greater innovation, interdisciplinarity, and collaborations – all in a climate that is less predictable. Political systems that do not protect crucial academic values and ideologies that do not acknowledge them or which have excessive bureaucratic system rigidities and commercial sponsors seeking undue influence are additional issues.

These pressures can pose challenges to the fundamental values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and integrity. Adherence to these values provides foundations which make universities stronger in response. Compromising these values puts at risk the quality and security of university operations, their long term health and the benefits they deliver to their stakeholders and societies.

Universities have generally served their societies well, some for over 900 years, and adherence to their fundamental values has been a significant reason for this.

## THE MAGNA CHARTA OBSERVATORY OF FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND RIGHTS

The Magna Charta Observatory of Fundamental Values and Rights (MCO) is the global guardian of fundamental university values and assists universities and higher education systems to operate effectively in accordance with them. It does this for the benefit of students, staff, society and universities themselves. Over 800 universities from 85 countries have signed its statement of fundamental values since 1988.

The MCO fulfils its mission by gathering information, commissioning research, monitoring, expressing opinions, preparing publications, making presentations and organising conferences and workshops relating to the nature of, respect for, and protection of the fundamental university values. It investigates where infringements are reported and advises constructively.

It partners with kindred bodies and institutions around the world for projects and events and communicates via its website [www.magna-charta.org](http://www.magna-charta.org) and social media. It contributes to events organised by other bodies.

The MCO was founded by the University of Bologna and the European University Association. It is a non-profit organisation and is based in Bologna. It works with other national, European or international organisations pursuing similar or compatible aims. It is funded by the Italian government and donations from signatories.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The fundamental values are set out in the Magna Charta Universitatum which is reproduced overleaf. The values can be summarised as: the university is an autonomous institution; the research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power; teaching and research must be inseparable; there must be openness with freedom for staff and students with concomitant responsibility to society.



Artwork: Giuseppe Palumbo

## WHY THE MCO IS NEEDED

The MCO provides assistance for universities who want to be at the forefront of understanding and implementation of the fundamental values. They may want this for a wide range of reasons - from wanting to serve their students better to becoming more attractive as global partners in mega research projects.

Occasionally universities are concerned that the circumstances in which they are required to operate do not allow them to operate autonomously and they seek the assistance of the MCO to review and report.

Countries can enable their universities by becoming more aware of the significance of fundamental values for the development of their higher education systems and universities and approach the Observatory for support in taking this forward.

In some situations, key stakeholders are concerned that fundamental values, especially academic freedom, are not being upheld and call upon the MCO for assistance.

The values themselves operate in different contexts. Autonomy is a journey - not a destination. Journeys have different starting points, progress at different speeds and experience different operational constraints. A deeper understanding of this variety is required.

As institutions operate more globally the importance of mutual understanding and shared values helps to build stronger partnerships through trust. The learning from other situations can enrich practice elsewhere.

With its signatories the MCO seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of values and their operation.

## HOW YOUR UNIVERSITY CAN BECOME A SIGNATORY

Full details can be found on the home page of the MCO website [www.magna-charta.org](http://www.magna-charta.org).

In summary, go to the MCO's admissions policy, complete the form and attach the required supporting documents and submit them by the due date. Your application will be reviewed by the MCO's Applications Committee and if approved by the Council you will be invited to sign the MCO at the next available ceremony.

There is no application fee, nor annual membership subscription but signatories are asked for voluntary donations to enable the work of the MCO.



## HOW THE MCO PLANS TO FULFIL ITS ROLE AND SUPPORT UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR STAKEHOLDERS

The MCO's strategy is designed to enable it to be more effective as the guardian for fundamental university values and to assist universities and higher education systems to operate effectively in accordance with them in modern ways.

The MCO strategy is, by 2020:

- to become more global
- to attract more signatories
- to engage more closely with signatories
- to enhance its monitoring and advisory capability
- to exert collective influence where necessary
- to organise more conferences and workshops
- to modernise how it works
- to publish more virtually on a vibrant website
- to research how values can lead to greater impact
- to focus on both staff and students with regard to values
- to celebrate achievements of signatory universities
- to appoint and equip ambassadors to work regionally
- to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships.

## HOW YOUR UNIVERSITY CAN BENEFIT

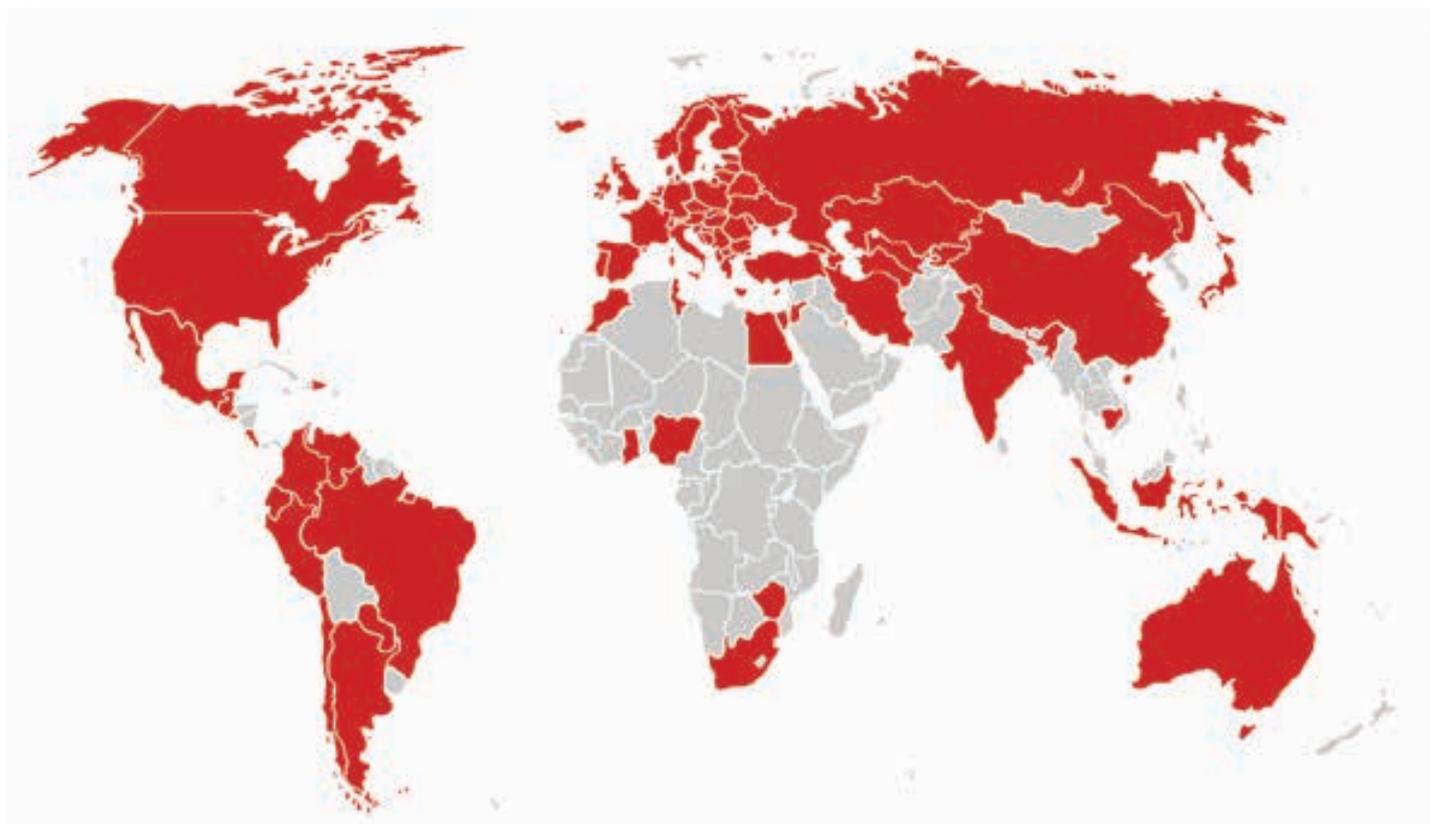
The MCO exists for the benefit of universities, particularly those who have signed up to its values, and their stakeholders and the communities they serve.

By signing up to the fundamental values and putting them into practice universities make a profound public statement which can be trusted by students, staff and stakeholders.

Through active self assessment, participation in conferences, workshops and in other ways your university will both give to and gain from enhancing the mission of the MCO.

Your university can benefit from MCO services such as monitoring, events and partnerships with kindred bodies. This will include insight into how those values can be safeguarded and developed and their policy implications. Through its Council and ambassadors, the MCO is able to offer expertise for signatory universities wishing to develop their mission or who are facing crises or are in transition.

By signing the statement of fundamental values, the Magna Charta Universitatum, your university's profile can be enhanced locally, nationally and internationally.



Location of signatory universities

# MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

## PREAMBLE

The undersigned Rectors of European Universities, gathered in Bologna for the ninth centenary of the oldest University in Europe, four years before the definitive abolition of boundaries between the countries of the European Community; looking forward to far-reaching co-operation between all European nations and believing that people and States should become more than ever aware of the part that universities will be called upon to play in a changing and increasingly international society,

Consider

1. that at the approaching end of this millennium the future of mankind depends largely on cultural, scientific and technical development ; and that this is built up in centres of culture, knowledge and research as represented by true universities ;
2. that the universities' task of spreading knowledge among the younger generations implies that, in today's world, they must also serve society as a whole ; and that the cultural, social and economic future of society requires, in particular, a considerable investment in continuing education ;
3. that universities must give future generations education and training that will teach them, and through them others, to respect the great harmonies of their natural environment and of life itself.

The undersigned Rectors of European universities proclaim to all States and to the conscience of all nations the fundamental principles, which must, now and always, support the vocation of universities.

## FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organised because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.

To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.

2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.

3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and for students entitled, able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge.

4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

## THE MEANS

To attain these goals by following such principles calls for effective means, suitable to present conditions.

1. To preserve freedom in research and teaching, the instruments appropriate to realise that freedom must be made available to all members of the university community.

2. Recruitment of teachers, and regulation of their status, must obey the principle that research is inseparable from teaching.

3. Each university must - with due allowance for particular circumstances - ensure that its students' freedoms are safeguarded, and that they enjoy concessions in which they can acquire the culture and training which it is their purpose to possess.

4. Universities - particularly in Europe - regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning, as essential to the steady progress of knowledge.

Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, they encourage mobility among teachers and students; furthermore, they consider a general policy of equivalent status, titles, examinations (without prejudice to national diplomas) and award of scholarships essential to the fulfilment of their mission in the conditions prevailing today.

The undersigned Rectors, on behalf of their Universities, undertake to do everything in their power to encourage each State, as well as the supranational organisations concerned, to mould this policy sedulously on this Magna Charta, which expresses the universities' unanimous desire freely determined and declared.

*Bologna, 18 September 1988*

## IN CONCLUSION

'Autonomy' is a journey undertaken over a period of time rather than a destination at a single point in time. Its implementation and context are different in different cultures, countries and institutions. While founded and located in Europe, increasing globalisation makes it imperative that the MCO develops a more global perspective.

With support from its signatories and stakeholders the Observatory is able to deliver the activities in its strategy globally. It can do so in a way which reflects a deep and modern understanding of the values underpinning autonomy within higher education, communicate this extensively and engage with its signatories more effectively so that its profile and impact can be enhanced.

If more signatories give a higher profile to the fundamental values in their publications and operations, higher education across the globe will be served well - particularly the universities which engage with MCO to make it happen.

*More information about the MCO, its Council, secretariat, publications, observations, conferences and events, plans and world-wide community of signatories can be found at [www.magna-charta.org](http://www.magna-charta.org)*

### SIGNING THE MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

If you are interested in signing the  
Magna Charta Universitatum,  
see the procedure on our website  
[www.magna-charta.org](http://www.magna-charta.org)

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Social

