



**Webinar**

**13 May 2024**

**15.00 - 16.00 CEST**

**Can the  
higher education  
experience and  
environment  
be inclusive  
without  
students engaged  
in deciding how?**



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# 1. How to join the webinar

In order to join the zoom meeting, we kindly ask you to download the zoom app (link for your convenience <https://zoom.us/download>).

The web browser client will download automatically when you join your first zoom meeting, but in order to avoid technical problems, we kindly ask you to do it in advance.

There are 3 ways to join the Zoom meeting:

1. From the Zoom app on your desktop
2. Through the link via your email invitation
3. From the Zoom website

Once you have signed in with your username and password, you will have to enter

**the meeting ID: 858 6182 9290**

**the password: 752869**

**or use the link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85861829290?pwd=TFVvTXc0OFZET2hMU0t1MEZ6R3Y5Zz09>**

PLEASE, DON'T SHARE THESE INFORMATION WITH ANYBODY. Only registered participants are allowed to enter.

Please, keep your audio and video off.

You will first be placed in a waiting room. Following authorisation you will be placed in the virtual meeting room.

IMPORTANT: Please, rename your profile. Your name that appears under your picture has to be the same as you used to register for the webinar, so that we can recognize you. Thank you.

In case you would like to submit questions, please, write them on the Chat.

## 2. Introduction to the webinar

*Can the higher education experience and environment be inclusive without students engaged in deciding how?*

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Following the success of the 2023 Student Essay Competition, the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) is pleased to launch a new call for essays from university students worldwide. This year the MCO is inviting students to take the helm as coordinators of their study programmes, and so reflect on how access to education, with diversity and inclusivity anchored in principles of equity and fairness, can prevail.

The Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 speaks about the critical role of universities in acknowledging that individuals and communities, often due to inequitable circumstances, have difficulty gaining access to higher education or influencing the modes and matter of academic study.

The MCO will be delivering a webinar with the Global Student Forum (GSF) and the European Students' Union (ESU) on the 13th May to make a case for the need and role of students in deciding how the higher education experience and environment is made to be inclusive.

By launching the student essay competition during this webinar, the MCO would not only like to give more substance to the topic of inclusion, but to also strengthen our commitment to increasing and raising the profile of student involvement in universities.

# 3. Programme

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14.50 Opening access to participants at Zoom

15.00 Welcome and Introduction by the moderator

*Martina Darmanin, Member of the MCO Governing Council*

15.05 *Graeme Atherton, Head of the Centre for Inequality and Levelling Up (CEILUP) and Director, National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)*

15.20 *Angel Mbutia, Secretary for Gender and International Relations, All-Africa Students Union*

15.35 Q&A

15.45 Launch of the 2024 Student Essay

*by David Lock, Secretary General of the Magna Charta Observatory*

16.00 End of the webinar

# 4. Speakers' bios

Professor Graeme Atherton is based at the University of West London. He leads the Centre for Inequality and Levelling Up, the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) and also the World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) initiative. He has published over 250 papers and articles related to access and equity in higher education over the last 25 years.

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Graeme  
Atherton

# 4. Speakers' bios

Angel Mbutia holds a Masters in Research and Public Policy and a B.A (Political Science & Sociology) from the University of Nairobi and a CPA (K) from the Kenya Accounts and Secretaries National Education Board (KASNEB). She's currently the reigning Ms. President Kenya, an honorary title bestowed to the winner of the annual Leadership and Governance contest among emerging women leaders in Kenya and she was also listed in the prestigious Business Daily Top 40 under 40 most promising women in Kenya.

She is a dynamic individual who was elected as the first Chairperson of the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel (COMYAP). COMYAP bridges the gap between young people and decision-makers at both regional and Member States levels in COMESA and contributes to the decision-making processes in the region in the area of youth participation in democratic governance and socio-economic development processes. She is also an adviser to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs giving youth perspectives in their foreign policy.

Angel serves as the Secretary for Gender and International Relations at the All-Africa Students Union, based in Accra, Ghana. In this role, she has played a pivotal role in fostering student activism, equipping young leaders with the skills and knowledge to engage in governance, champion gender equality, and take leadership roles in promoting peace and security within their respective nations.

During her campus years she served as Vice-President of the Students Organization of Nairobi University (SONU). She's a global champion for the realization of a just and equitable world for all children and young people, and believes no child should be left behind, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5 and 16.

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Angel  
Mbutia



# 4. Speakers' bios

Martina is the former President, Vice-President and Human Rights and Solidarity Coordinator of the European Students Union (ESU). Her portfolio at ESU focused on equitable access to education, academic freedom, student agency in education governance and international cooperation on education. She is currently a member of the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO).

Martina's academic background is in the field of Health Sciences and holds a Master of Science degree through research in Food Studies and Environmental Health from the University of Malta. She is a passionate researcher as she continues to work on research and development for solution driven policymaking within the education sector through the Knowledge Innovation Centre.

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Martina  
Darmanin



# 5. The Magna Charta Observatory

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The Magna Charta Observatory is the global guardian of fundamental university values and assists universities and higher education systems to operate effectively in accordance with them for the benefit of students, staff, society and universities themselves.

Over 900 universities from 86 countries have signed its statement of fundamental values since 1988.

The MCO supports a global community of universities through values. It assists universities pro-actively and through supportive actions when difficulties are encountered.

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 is funded by the University of Bologna and donations from signatories.

## Why MCO is needed

The MCO provides assistance for universities who want to be at the forefront of understanding and implementation of the fundamental values.

It has developed the Living Values project which can be used by universities to enable them to put their values into practice more effectively.

MCO reviews and reports when circumstances do not allow universities to operate autonomously.

MCO helps Countries to enable their universities to be more aware of the significance of fundamental values for the development of their higher education systems.

MCO assists key stakeholders when fundamental values, especially academic freedom, are not being upheld.

MCO seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of values and their operation in different contexts.

MCO helps universities learn from other situations that can enrich practice. As institutions operate more globally the importance of mutual understanding and shared values helps to build stronger partnerships through trust.

Autonomy is a journey - not a destination. Journeys have different starting points, progress at different speeds and experience different operational constraints.

## MCO Strategic plan



[Click to read the Magna Charta Observatory strategy for 2020-2025](#)

# 6. The MCU 2020

The Observatory has prepared a new version of the Magna Charta Universitatum: the MCU 2020. The text (in English) has been adopted by the MCO's Governing Council.

The new MCU removes nothing from the original fundamental values to which universities signed up. It strives to be responsive to and resonate with contemporary challenges and concerns.

Its tone recognises that the pursuit of the fundamental values has worth along with their actual attainment, which, in practice, is a constant quest.

It recognises the more global nature of what universities do and the wider range of local responsibilities which they have.

The text of the MCU 2020 is here below.

It has been launched at the occasion of the XXXIII MCO anniversary on 16 June 2021.

## Preamble

The Magna Charta Universitatum, a declaration and affirmation of the fundamental principles upon which the mission of universities should be based, was signed in 1988 on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna. The first principle was independence: research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests. The second was that teaching and research should be inseparable, with students engaged in the search for knowledge and greater understanding. The third principle identified the university as a site for free enquiry and debate, distinguished by its openness to dialogue and rejection of intolerance.

The Magna Charta Universitatum recognised that universities upholding these principles could take many forms under the combined influence of culture, geography and history. Despite being explicitly the product of a specific moment in European development the document envisaged a networked world in which knowledge and influence should cross cultural boundaries in the pursuit of human understanding.

The world has since become interconnected in ways unimaginable at the time of the original declaration. Universities have proliferated around the globe, dramatically increasing in variety as well as scope and mission. Globally the number and diversity of students seeking a university education has increased, as have their reasons for doing so and the expectations of their families and communities. The number of publications has increased enormously while trust in academia is being eroded by a loss of confidence in expertise. In the sway of new technologies, modes of learning, teaching and research are changing rapidly; universities are both leading and responding to these developments.

Despite these changes, the potential of higher education to be a positive agent of change and social transformation endures. The principles laid out in the Magna Charta Universitatum are as valid today as they were in 1988, and they are the necessary precondition for human advancement through enquiry, analysis and sound action. The dramatic changes outlined above require the global academy to identify responsibilities and commitments that the signatories agree are vital to universities around the world in the Twenty-First Century. That is the reason for this new declaration.

### Principles, Values and Responsibilities

Universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability.

Intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society. That independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves.

To fulfil their potential, universities require a reliable social contract with civil society, one which supports pursuit of the highest possible quality of academic work, with full respect for institutional autonomy.

As they create and disseminate knowledge, universities question dogmas and established doctrines and encourage critical thinking in all students and scholars. Academic freedom is their lifeblood; open enquiry and dialogue their nourishment.



Universities embrace their duty to teach and undertake research ethically and with integrity, producing reliable, trustworthy and accessible results.

Universities have a civic role and responsibility. They are part of global, collegial networks of scientific enquiry and scholarship, building on shared bodies of knowledge and contributing to their further development. They also are embedded in local cultures and crucially relevant to their future and enrichment. While they are immersed in and connected with global developments, they engage fully with and assume leading roles in local communities and ecosystems.

Universities are non-discriminatory spaces of tolerance and respect where diversity of perspectives flourishes and where inclusivity, anchored in principles of equity and fairness, prevails. They therefore commit themselves to advance equity and fairness in all aspects of academic life including admissions, hiring and promotion practices.

Education is a human right, a public good, and should be available to all. Universities recognise that learning is a lifelong activity with tertiary education as one part of a continuum. Within that one part, universities serve diverse learners at all stages of their lives.

Universities acknowledge that individuals and communities, often due to inequitable circumstances, have difficulty gaining access to higher education or influencing the modes and matter of academic study. To realise human potential everywhere, universities deliberately seek ways to welcome and engage with diverse voices and perspectives.

By signing the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 universities declare their commitment to the original declaration and to upholding and advancing the Principles, Values and Responsibilities stated above, to strengthen the role of universities in the preservation of the planet and promoting health, prosperity, and enlightenment around the world.

*Approved by the Governing Council 12 March 2020*

# 7. MCO Essay Competition 2024

Following the success of the 2023 Student Essay Competition, the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) is pleased to launch a new call for essays from university students worldwide. This year the MCO is inviting students to reflect on how access to education, with diversity and inclusivity anchored in principles of equity and fairness, can prevail. More specifically, the guiding question of the 2024 MCO Student Essay Competition is as follows:

“What would you change about your higher education<sup>[1]</sup> experience or environment to make it more inclusive\* for all who have the ability to benefit from it?”

The Magna Charta Universitatum, 2020, emphasises the critical role of universities in acknowledging that individuals and communities, often due to inequitable circumstances, have difficulty gaining access to higher education or influencing the modes and matter of academic study.

Through this essay competition the MCO wishes to increase and raise the profile of student involvement in universities. The MCO has representatives of students in the membership of its governing body and in its various activities. By including representatives of students in the membership of its governing body and in its various activities, it continues to recognise the importance of bridging the student voice from the institutional to the international levels.

**There will be 5 prizes** for winners to present their essays and participate in discussions with an international audience at the MCO Anniversary 2024, consisting of expenses paid (including travel and accommodation costs) or a prize of equivalent value, at the discretion of the organizers.

Details will be communicated at a later date.

[1] Higher Education includes in this case, university level education, as well as any other tertiary level education offered by vocational education and training institutions, further education centres, or alternative non-formal or informal learning providers

**The competition is open to students registered in any university in any country.** The closing date for the submission of essays is 5 July 2024. The winners will be announced on 27 August 2024. More details are contained below.

\*You may choose to reflect upon one or more of your student experiences and the surrounding environment in relation to higher education governance (including student movements), culture, teaching, learning and/or research could be more inclusive. Such methods may concern:

- Making access to education opportunities/resources/facilities more equitable and fairer.
- Enhancing students' participation in and successful completion of their courses/programmes through more inclusive and diverse learning environments (E.g., through flexible and/or community-engaged learning, teaching and research opportunities).
- Widening university policies and capacity to put the freedom to study/ research/ engage/ pursue/ explore interests into practice.

Essays must be submitted in English, must not exceed **1000 words** and must be uploaded to a link that will be published on the MCO website soon.

Essays will be judged on the following criteria (all four criteria will have equal weighting):

1. Relevance to the theme:

- a. Does the essay propose concepts or methodologies to make their higher education experience or environment more inclusive to those who have the ability to benefit from it?
- b. Does the essay substantiate these concepts or methodologies with evidence from literature/ empirical or anecdotal evidence/ personal experience?

2. Awareness of the factors involved:

- a. Does the essay give context to how their higher education experience or environment is/ is not inclusive?
- b. Does the essay consider the possible risks to implementing their changes from either institutional/ teacher/ learner/ researcher perspective?



3. Uniqueness of the approach proposed
  - a. Does the essay consider what is uniquely valuable about the concept or methodology they are proposing?
4. Potential impact for the university and beyond
  - a. Does the essay reflect on the outcomes that could result from such changes to their higher education experience or environment?

An independently chaired and gender balanced international judging panel comprising current and former student representatives and senior academics and leaders in universities will review entries and their decisions will be final.

Members of the judging panel for 2024:

- Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Secretary General, All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Ghana and Member of the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory
- Catherine Stimpson, Professor and Dean Emerita of the Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York University, USA and Member of the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory
- Tamires Gomes Sampaio, Member of the MCU2020 drafting group
- June Pym, Education Advisor, The Saville Foundation
- Tahirih Danesh, CEO Africa College

Five prizes (one for each winner) of expenses paid participation in the in the MCO Anniversary 2024 will be awarded. In addition, the judging panel may award certificates of merit. All entrants will receive a certificate of participation.

The MCO is pleased to be working with the Global Students Forum and the European Students' Union in the organisation of this competition.

**Formal requirements:**

- Only one entry per author is permitted.
- Neither the author's name nor the name of his/her university or higher education establishment must be included in the essay or in the file name of the essay.
- The author is allowed to quote from other works but such quotations must be acknowledged.
- Essays must be solely the work of the author.
- The Author is not allowed to use generative AI in the planning or writing of the essay. If the use of AI is suspected the judges will exclude the essay from further consideration.
- At the judges' discretion, the writer of short-listed essays may be invited for a short online discussion before their decision is finalised.
- Essays must not exceed 1000 words.
- Essays must be in the English language.
- Essays must be uploaded to the link that will be published and not be sent by email or with a different tool.
- Failure to comply with the formal requirements will result in exclusion from the competition.
- The decision of the judges will be final.

By participating in the contest, the author confirms his/her authorization to processing the data.

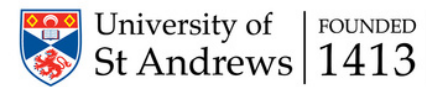
The data will be processed pursuant to d.lgs. N.196 of 2003 (code regarding the protection of personal data) and its amendments and additions, as well as EU Regulation no. 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR)

More details about the MCO and MCU can be found at <https://www.magna-charta.org>

# 8. Supporters of the MCO - 2024

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'The MCO thanks its supporters whose donations enable it to implement its strategy and serve universities



**The MCO depends**  
**on donations**  
**to undertake**  
**its work.**  
**To make a**  
**donation, please,**  
**click here**



# 9. MCO Contact details

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## Secretariat

**DAVID J. LOCK**

Secretary General

**CARLA PAZZAGLIA**

Events organizer & Administrator

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# Thank you!

**LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE  
QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS.**