

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

WORLDBOUND

ISSUE 8 - 2023

Double Degrees

Cover Story

***Double Degrees: Expanding Horizons and
Broadening Perspectives in Higher Education***

What role will they play in the dynamic future we are all stepping into?

Meet the Experts

The Double Degree Effect

Insights from higher education experts on
recruitment, rankings, and global trends.





UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR PIER SANDRO COCCONCELLI

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to introduce this edition of our University's magazine on Double Degrees, which is becoming increasingly popular among universities around the world. Worldbound 8 aims to demonstrate the unique opportunities and advantages of pursuing a Double Degree programme.

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore has partnered with more than 30 universities across 16 countries worldwide to provide our students with Double Degree programmes. We are pleased to declare that these partnerships have been established with some of the most prestigious universities.

As an educational institution, we are committed to providing our students with the best possible opportunities to achieve their academic and professional goals. Our Double Degree programmes are a testament to this commitment. Through these programmes, our students can study at some of the top universities in the world and receive degrees from both institutions upon completion, allowing students to broaden their knowledge and gain a unique perspective on their chosen field of study.

Our Double Degree programmes are designed to provide students with a truly international experience. They offer the chance to immerse themselves in different cultures, learn from different academic perspectives, and make invaluable connections with students and faculty members from all over the world. This exposure to different ideas and ways of thinking is a key component of our commitment to producing well-rounded graduates who are prepared to tackle the challenges of the globalised world.

In addition to the academic benefits of our Double Degree programmes, they also offer a range of personal and professional advantages. By studying at two different institutions, our students gain a unique set of skills and experiences that are highly valued by employers. They develop a level of adaptability and cultural awareness that is essential for success in today's global job market.

In this magazine, you will find stories from our students and alumni who have participated in our Double Degree programmes together with insight from experts in the field. They will share their experiences, insights, and advice.

I hope that this magazine will inspire and inform our readers about the unique opportunities and benefits of pursuing a Double Degree at our institution. I look forward to seeing the many successes that will undoubtedly emerge from our Double Degree programmes.

Sincerely,

Professor Pier Sandro Cocconcelli
*Vice-Rector and Delegate for the
Coordination of Internationalisation Projects*



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Double Degrees: Expanding Horizons and Broadening Perspectives in Higher Education

Double Degrees: the key to a global academic journey. In today's ever-changing Higher Education landscape, it is crucial to embrace cultural diversity and cultivate collaboration. In partnership with over 40 top institutions worldwide, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore offers an exceptional academic journey that exemplifies the essence of Higher Education today.



IS ONE DEGREE ENOUGH?

Whether you are a university student or a higher education professional, you might find yourself asking this question while witnessing the rising recognition and rapid increase of **International Double Degrees in universities all over the world.**

But **what's the purpose** of Double Degrees and **who does it benefit?** Simply stated, these questions can be answered with two key concepts: **learning mobility and cooperation**, and it turns out that this is not only crucial for higher education but embodies direct and tangible advantages for the students deciding to take part in that exciting journey.

WHAT are Double Degrees?

A Double Degree is an **integrated curriculum** organised **between two partner universities.** This means that students will have the opportunity to **study in two different countries**, gain a **broader perspective on their field**, and in the end having **earned two separate degrees** from **two different higher education systems.**

WHY are Double Degrees important?

Employability

From a student's perspective, not only do they **earn an additional degree**, which is a merit in itself, but this degree can greatly **enhance a graduate's employability.** This is particularly true for those who earn their Double Degree in different continents, such as in Europe and the United States, as it can open up job opportunities on both continents. With a degree in hand, individuals are **better positioned** to pursue careers in their desired fields and make valuable contributions to the workforce.

The benefits of earning a degree extend beyond just acquiring knowledge in a particular area of study since Double Degrees inherently offer **opportunities to develop soft and transferable skills.** Graduates often have a competitive edge over those without a degree, as employers tend to view them as more qualified and better prepared to handle the challenges of the job. This is especially true in **today's globalised economy**, where businesses operate across borders and **require employees with diverse skills and backgrounds.** Not to mention, it provides a unique opportunity to **broaden** the student's **professional network** with professionals and students from all over the world.

Collaboration within Higher Education

From a higher education perspective, **collaboration** amongst universities is key to creating a **shared knowledge base, advancing research** and to continue striving towards the goal of **providing an academic offer with recognised quality.** The European Union is currently highly involved in supporting and financing cross-border cooperation between higher education institutions, which is vital for the creation of a European Education Area by 2025, in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. An increasing number of **academic institutions across the globe** are acknowledging the significance of **incorporating Double Degrees** into their academic offer.

DOUBLE DEGREES IN CATTOLICA

A Double Degree programme at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore allows students to **split** their **academic career** between **Università Cattolica** and an **international partner university**, with a wide selection of destinations to choose from. This experience offers an extended study experience abroad, lasting one or two academic years, to obtain a **recognised qualification** in both **Italy** and the **host country of study.**

SINCE 2003

Università Cattolica has been offering **Double Degree** programmes **since 2003** and is at the forefront of using these programmes to **enhance the student experience**, encompassing faculties such as Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, Arts and Philosophy, Banking, Finance and Insurance Sciences, Economics, Economics and Law, Education, Law, Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures, Medicine and Surgery, Political and Social Sciences, Psychology.

Since the launch of these programmes at Università Cattolica, there has been a

90% increase in domestic students

who decide to undertake a Double Degree at one of the partner institutions and another

80.4% increase in international students

who chose Università Cattolica as the destination for their Double Degree.

The extensive range of Double Degree programmes offered is in **collaboration with more than**

40 TOP INSTITUTIONS

around the world, in countries like Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Australia, China, Colombia, Mexico and more. It is an opportunity to gain **exposure to different cultures, languages, and academic systems:** invaluable competencies in a globalised world, where cross-cultural communication skills and intercultural competence are essential. This puts Università Cattolica in a unique position to **provide students with an exceptional academic journey** and **prepare them for a globalised world.**

Double Degrees are becoming increasingly prevalent in higher education and for good reason. As they enhance learning mobility and cooperation, they set the tone for **what is essential** for a **student's future employability** and the advancement of what higher education strives to be.

Looking back at the initial question, it is not about a single degree being insufficient, but what **profound benefits a Double Degree has to offer.**

In this edition of Worldbound magazine, we will explore these perspectives further through interviews with students and higher education professionals, highlighting the **current impact of Double Degrees** and what **role they will play** in the **dynamic and exciting future** we are all stepping into.

Our Double Degrees

Partner Universities

Double Degree programmes offer students the possibility to obtain a double qualification by the end of their studies and a chance to study part of their degree programme at one of the 40 partner universities shown on the map.



A Truly Global Education:
The Impact of
Double Degrees at
Università Cattolica

We interviewed the Deans of Università Cattolica Faculties to gain insights into the current and future impact of Double Degrees on faculty staff, employability outcomes, and academic offering. The article highlights the importance of offering a global education experience to students through Double Degree programmes, which can enhance their career prospects and equip them with skills to thrive in a global workforce.



Professor Marco Trevisan

Dean of the Faculty of
Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences

Double Degree programmes contribute to internationalising our classrooms and those of our partners. In your opinion, do these partnerships also have an impact on the internationalisation of the Faculty and research-related aspects?

The Faculty of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences is, by definition, a very international faculty, thanks to its study abroad programmes, but also thanks to international, European, and non-European research projects that involve the entire faculty. Double Degree programmes certainly allow for an increase in the number of international students in our classrooms, and the faculty aims to increase the number of visiting professors from other institutions to further internationalise not only the research component but also the teaching component.

Currently, we already have visiting professors from the University of Wageningen and ISARA-Lyon, our Double Degree partners and we would certainly like to expand this opportunity to other institutions with whom we collaborate. The internationalisation brought about by Double Degree programmes allows our students to engage with different cultures and academic approaches. Knowing and understanding different cultures can open often unexplored horizons. The advantage of participating in this type of programme is primarily cultural and academic. The second benefit, in my opinion, is a competitive advantage for entering the job market. In addition to language skills, we should not forget that our classmates today will become our professional network tomorrow, reaching prestigious positions in companies, organisations, and institutions in Italy and abroad.

This type of connection, often based on the exceptional expertise acquired through these programmes, is what makes these collaborations increasingly prestigious and effective.



Professor Andrea Canova

Dean of the Faculty of
Arts and Philosophy

In 2016, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and the Beijing Language and Culture University signed the first complete Italy-China Double Degree jointly activated by two faculties of humanities. What are the most relevant aspects of this experience from the perspective of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy?

This is a programme that, despite the difficulties related to the pandemic, has brought many students from the Beijing Language and Culture University to study in the courses of our Faculty over the past seven years. So, they have not only spent a semester with us but there has been greater continuity in their presence. A significant improvement in their language level allows for a leap in the quality of learning and mutual enrichment as well as stimulates new reflections in our faculty members on a truly inclusive teaching approach.

The initial interest and curiosity of young Chinese students in Italian literature, theatre, and art during their stay in Milan at Università Cattolica, transformed into a more mature and profound knowledge of the cultural reality of our country. It is certainly a very demanding programme that pushes them to immerse themselves in a world that is not easily decipherable for them. Overall, I would say that we are satisfied with this programme, and we hope it can continue in the future, but above all, we hope to have provided our Chinese students in the Double Degree programme with good foundations to become the Italianists of the future, having developed critical and communicative skills that are adequate to make them effective interpreters of the growing efforts towards internationalisation of universities and educational systems, diplomacy, as well as the economic sector.



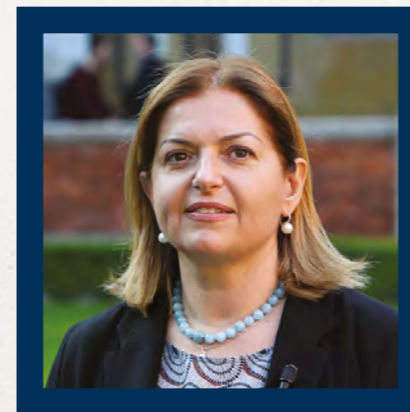
Professor Elena Beccalli

Dean of the Faculty of
Banking, Finance and Insurance Sciences

Your Faculty has been very active in seeking and promoting Double Degree agreements with universities in the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. How did you come to select these universities as partners and what benefits did signing the agreements bring to the faculty in general?

Over the years, we realised that many graduates of the School of Banking, Finance and Insurance Sciences were looking for an international degree to add to their curriculum. The degree awarded by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore is a very prestigious title and proof of this is the excellent placement rate joined with the fact that many of our Master of Science students come from other universities from which they transferred after their bachelor studies. The objective has been - and continues to be - to make our University even more attractive to potential students, through a cutting-edge academic offering that brings into the Master of Science course an international pathway that in the past students did ex-post.

Hence the choice of destinations in the USA, the UK and the Netherlands, which were the most popular destinations among our students. From the experience gained at the graduate level, an additional Double Degree experience also emerged at the undergraduate level, replicating the model on the bachelor's programme with a Double Degree partnership with Bangor University. Naturally, a strong driver in the development of this international agenda was the fact that the programmes involved in this Double Degree path at our University were entirely taught in English. Currently, four out of five Master of Science programmes in our School are taught in English. An English-taught degree programme generally attracts a student population with a strong international vocation, thus also fostering relationships with international partners.



Professor Antonella Occhino

Dean of the Faculty of
Economics

Within the framework of Double Degree programmes, the Faculty of Economics collaborates within the Master of Science in Management programme with the University of Western Australia in Perth and Boston University. Both universities have a prestigious international reputation and are ranked 90th and 108th respectively in the QS World University Ranking 2023.

As a Faculty with a strong international vocation, how do you think the landscape of Double Degree collaborations will evolve?

The Faculty of Economics has invested heavily in both mobility for individual semesters or short programmes and Double Degree programmes, based on its strong international vocation. The differentiation of the various programmes is aimed at adapting to the individual needs of students. These opportunities are available in both English and Italian degree courses. Currently, the Faculty has two Double Degree active agreements with the University of Western Australia and Boston University, both within the Master of Science in Management programme, which recently received EFMD accreditation for five years. The development of these Double Degree programmes represents a unique opportunity to position our degrees internationally. The common denominator is that both semester mobility and Double Degree programmes are placed in a perspective of mutual exchange and enrichment. This type of opportunity represents the best way to achieve double-valued internationalisation. Moreover, the Double Degree programmes can be attractive for both international and domestic students and a stimulus for the evolution of teaching activities to be positively influenced by international styles without losing the local peculiarities recognised as prestigious by employers.

Professor Anna Maria Fellegara

Dean of the Faculty of
Economics and Law

Professor Fellegara, your Faculty was the first at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore to launch and promote a Double Degree programme in 2003. What is the added value of being an active partner within such an extensive network?

There are several benefits of being an active partner within an extensive international network.

Double Degree programmes are one of the most visible results of network cooperation. We currently run Double Degrees within the International Partnership of Business Schools (IPBS), a network to which our Faculty of Economics and Law belongs together with another 12 leading business schools around the world: Brock University (Canada), Elon University (USA), Northeastern University (USA), North Carolina State University (USA), University of San Diego (USA), Fundação Getulio Vargas (Brazil), DCU Business School (Ireland), ESB Business School (Germany), NEOMA Business School (France), Universidad de las Américas Puebla (Mexico), Comillas Universidad Pontificia (Spain), Lancaster University (UK); we also have Double Degree programmes with other non-IPBS universities: Avans University of Applied Science (Netherlands), California State University San Marcos (USA), Université Catholique de Lille (France).

Double Degrees represent a very valuable academic opportunity for students of the Faculty of Economics and Law in Piacenza. These are top-notch programmes broadening the scope of management and law studies, increasing the diversification and internationalisation of the curricula as well as fostering international careers for our graduates.

Double Degree programmes are the result of an intense collaboration involving curricula design, academic and operational coordination, physical and financial support for mobility, students' global engagement and depending on close-knit relations with valuable and selected partners. In addition, these relations open international knowledge, experience and research to faculty members. Systematic benchmarking between network partners on the assurance of learning processes, content innovation, teaching methodologies and evaluation methods serve to ensure our faculty keeps abreast of advances in management and business disciplines, focusing on both their local and global implications.

Furthermore, active collaboration with our partners leads to joint research initiatives and peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge. For example, visiting professorships is one way to link faculty members in different locations worldwide.

Being active in a network builds reputation, and so increases the visibility of the Piacenza campus with its strong international vocation, typical of Università Cattolica.



Professor Domenico Simeone

Dean of the Faculty of
Education

The Faculty of Education is currently hosting a Double Degree student from Universidad de La Sabana. Could you tell us about the impact that this type of experience is having on the faculty and the university as a whole?

The commitment to building Double Degree programmes is proving that the Faculty of Education, despite being mainly focused on training people who will work at the national level with specific skills of the Italian educational system, can be equally attractive to international students coming from countries whose educational and social system is very similar to ours.

In particular, we are noticing a very interesting aspect for teachers who are involved in laboratories because the practical formative dimension proves to be particularly stimulating when developed taking into account the similarities and differences between different educational systems.

Through participation in the Double Degree project, international students can experience different pedagogical approaches and compare the different objectives of training and laboratory activities.

These differences, far from being factors of division, become an element of great importance for the development of the internationalisation of the Faculty.

Professor Stefano Solimano

Dean of the Faculty of
Law

The Faculty of Law currently has two Double Degree agreements in place with Boston College and Fordham University in New York. What are the impacts on the employability of Law graduates who have taken part in one of these programmes?

In terms of employability, the Faculty of Law of Università Cattolica has always been at a very high level, thanks to the prestigious degree awarded by our University, its reputation and the solid professional networks that the faculty has cultivated over the years with the world of law firms, the judiciary, but also the corporate world. In recent years, however, we have noticed a growing demand in Italy, with particular reference to the case of Milan, for graduates with international skills. Hence the need to enhance certain partnerships so that they could evolve into Double Degree courses. In particular, students with a greater international vocation can acquire specific skills by characterising their profile and broadening their competencies to include the American sector. These types of profiles are in great demand in many international law firms in Italy and abroad. Thanks to this successful experience we are naturally working to increase this kind of opportunity by including new international destinations, such as Australia.



Professor Giovanni Gobber

Dean of the Faculty of
Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures

The Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures offers its students the opportunity to participate in a Double Degree programme at universities in the Czech Republic, France, the Russian Federation, and China. In your opinion, what are the main differences between a semester-long study abroad programme and a Double Degree programme in terms of benefits and employability skills for graduates in Linguistic Sciences?

Study abroad experiences provide students with the opportunity to establish, activate, and cultivate relationships, both from an academic and a professional perspective. A Double Degree programme offers greater visibility for a student's future career, primarily owing to an acquired markedly international profile. The validation of acquired competence, jointly made by two universities, provides greater depth to the student's learning path, as well as to the profile of those who are preparing to enter the job market. It is imperative to note that the relationships established during such programmes are crucial for the student's future professional network and can be leveraged both internationally and locally.

Additionally, the intersectionality of academic paths at the two institutions participating in the Double Degree programme allows students to broaden their academic, cultural, and linguistic spectrum. Noteworthy examples include the Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures and the Faculty of Italian Studies at the University of South Bohemia, as well as the prestigious Double Degree with Sorbonne University in Paris. Other examples include Double Degree programmes with Beijing and Novosibirsk, two destinations that enable our students to acquire non-European degrees that hold value both locally and internationally.

In conclusion, the Faculty of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures has made a substantial investment in this type of programme, as we firmly believe that the acquisition of academic skills and competencies will be significantly expanded, thanks to the professional network established with the faculty, fellow students, and other stakeholders.



Professor Antonio Gasbarrini

Dean of the Faculty of
Medicine and Surgery

In 2019, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore signed a Double Degree agreement with Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, the first example of a recognised Double Degree in Medicine and Surgery in both the European Union and the USA.

What impact has this collaboration had at the academic level and how do you think it influences the appeal of our University to international students?

The collaboration began with the Sidney Kimmel Medical College, the private medical school with the highest number of graduates in the USA, and where 20-25% of all students apply for admission. The international degree programme in Medicine at Università Cattolica taught exclusively in English, started with the first cohort of students in 2013. Its curriculum has been modelled on the best international medical schools and has an interdisciplinary approach with early integration of basic and medical-surgical disciplines.

Due to the expectations of international students for post-graduate training, the two medical degree programmes began to explore some integration possibilities. A team of experts from both institutions worked for two years to create an unprecedented educational project that allows successful students to obtain two medical degrees in six years and nine months, valid for medical practice in North America and throughout Europe.

The increased attractiveness of the Medicine and Surgery programme at Università Cattolica appears to be partly due to the popularity of the Double Degree path with Thomas Jefferson University. The Double Degree project has acted as a catalyst for academic collaboration that has begun to involve several faculties and degree programmes.

The collaborative exchange has not been limited only to international medical students but has also involved residents, staff from the University Hospital, and many professors from the Faculty of Medicine. Exchange mobility programmes have been funded through Erasmus+ projects generated by scientific collaboration between colleagues from both institutions in the fields of Public Health, Vascular Pathology, Neuroscience, and General Medicine.

These programmes have encouraged mutual understanding and sharing, resulting in the establishment of clinical case discussion boards, joint research projects, scientific publications, and various meetings. Collaboration in the field of Neuroscience has been particularly successful, with funding for research and the construction of a new building (Brain Center) on the campus where all research and clinical activities in the field of Neurosciences will be centralised.

The Double Degree programme is undoubtedly the highlight of the collaboration with Thomas Jefferson University, but it is part of a visionary project that establishes the two institutions as pioneers of new forms of academic collaboration and exchange at all levels.



Professor Guido Merzoni

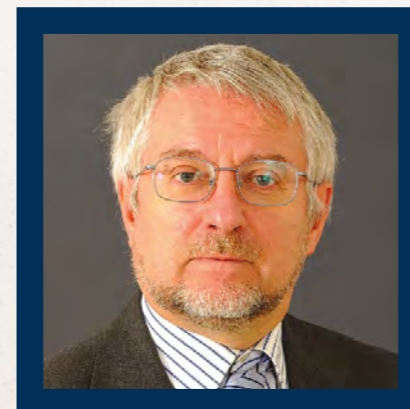
Dean of the Faculty of
Political and Social Sciences

The Faculty offers its students the opportunity to obtain a Double Degree of a Master of Science in European and International Policies from our University and the Master of Science in European and International Economics from Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, an agreement signed 10 years ago. What do you think the impact of these collaborations will be on the faculty and its graduates in the next 10 years?

The agreement with the University of Halle-Wittenberg was signed in October 2009, and the first student enrolled in the programme the following year. The first students to complete the programme, two from Università Cattolica and one from the University of Halle-Wittenberg, graduated in the academic year 2010/2011.

To date, around 100 students have participated in the programme, with the number increasing over the years, except for the most recent ones, which were marked by the pandemic. Most of these students, after a year of studying in Italy and a year in Germany, found employment very quickly, especially in companies involved in commercial exchanges between the two countries and in institutions that promote and facilitate such exchanges. The multidisciplinary and linguistic skills of the graduates, with a particular emphasis on economic profiles, make their profile particularly interesting for such realities, in a context in which Germany and Italy are among each other's top trading partners. An exchange that focuses on industrial production, particularly in machinery, automotive, chemical/pharmaceutical, and electrical/electronic sectors.

But the value we attach to this initiative is rooted in profiles that go far beyond its, admittedly very appreciable, success in terms of educational and occupational outcomes. Because it is a small sign, a small contribution, if you will, to the path of European construction. A fundamental process for the contribution that a stronger and more cohesive Europe can make to the common good within and on a global scale.



Professor Alessandro Antonietti

Dean of the Faculty of
Psychology

For years, the Faculty of Psychology has welcomed students from non-EU universities who obtain a Double Degree from their home institution and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. What is the benefit of being able to obtain a qualifying degree from a European Union university, and what impact has it had on the internationalisation and composition of the classes?

Undoubtedly, studying at an international university offers several benefits, such as improving language skills, developing adaptability, and cultivating an open-minded attitude. However, a Double Degree programme in psychology offers a unique opportunity to gain insights into different approaches to practising psychology. Each country has its own study path to becoming a psychologist, depending on the local regulations, culture, and history of psychology. Pursuing part of one's studies in another country means encountering diverse perspectives on psychology and a distinct professional world with its own organisational structure. This exposure to alternative views of psychology helps students appreciate that there is no standard way of being a psychologist. Rather, tools and practices are relative to the needs of a specific context. In a rapidly changing world where professions often require reinterpretation based on new needs and demands, a Double Degree programme helps students avoid absolutising their knowledge, evaluate practices concerning their context of the application (which is an aspect of critical thinking), and develop the necessary flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Importance of Internationalisation in Higher Education and Double Degrees

*As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the need for internationalisation in higher education has become more pressing. In this exclusive interview, we spoke with **Professor Giovanni Marseguerra**, Vice-Rector for Academic Programmes at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, about the importance of internationalisation and how it can contribute to the academic, personal, and professional development of students and faculty.*



Q: When we talk about internationalisation, what does it mean to you?

A: When we talk about internationalisation, we are referring to a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that involves bringing an international perspective to all activities carried out by the university. This includes teaching, research, and third-mission activities, and it requires a transversal approach that considers all dimensions of internationalisation.

Q: How can we measure the internationalisation of a university?

A: Traditionally, the internationalisation of a university has been measured by factors such as the number of courses taught in English, the number of international students, and the number of students who have had an experience abroad. However, these measures can be reductionist and fail to capture the full scope of internationalisation. We should also consider the internationalisation of the faculty, the composition of the faculty, and the integration of the international perspective into all aspects of the university's activities.

Q: How can internationalisation benefit students and faculty?

A: Internationalisation can have a significant impact on the academic, personal, and professional development of students and faculty. For students, internationalisation can provide them with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in an increasingly globalised job market. It can also help them develop soft skills such as flexibility and problem-solving, and expand their network of relationships. For faculty, internationalisation can provide opportunities for collaboration and research, and offer a wider perspective on their field of study.

Q: What role does a Double Degree play in internationalisation?

A: A Double Degree programme can be a powerful tool for internationalisation. It provides students with a degree recognised not only in their own country but also in the country where the partner university is located. This allows them to acquire skills and competencies that they might not have had the opportunity to develop otherwise. It also widens the perspective and vision of both students and faculty and creates opportunities for collaboration and research.

Q: How can internationalisation be integrated into all aspects of the university's activities?

A: As previously stated, internationalisation should be viewed as a cross-cutting dimension that encompasses all aspects of the university's operations. University services play a critical role in this regard, which necessitates the fostering of intercultural competencies among technical administrative staff who provide these services to international students.

Q: What is the importance of formally recognising international experiences in the student's curriculum?

A: Recognising international experiences is essential for promoting internationalisation and providing students with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in a globalised job market. This can be achieved through initiatives such as open badges, which formally recognise the international experiences of students and enrich their curriculum. Università Cattolica is currently starting to introduce its open badges programme, as we firmly believe that international experiences significantly enhance the conventional academic experience.

Q: What is the ultimate goal of internationalisation at Università Cattolica?

A: The ultimate goal of internationalisation in higher education is to prepare students and faculty for success in an increasingly interconnected world. The new strategic plan of the University has decided to further focus on internationalisation, both from the perspective of the academic offering and services provided to students, so that this global vision increasingly becomes a driver of attraction not only for international students but also for domestic ones.

As this interview has shown, internationalisation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires an integrated approach. By promoting internationalisation in higher education, we can prepare students and faculty for success in an interconnected world and promote the development of skills and competencies needed to succeed in a globalised job market.

Driving International Excellence

Professor Stefano Baraldi,

the former coordinator of the MSc in Management at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, discusses the impact of Double Degree agreements on the reputation of the Faculty of Economics and the role of internationalisation in EFMD accreditation.



agreements

Professor Baraldi, during your tenure as coordinator of the Master of Science in Management you signed Double Degree agreements with prestigious universities such as the University of Western Australia in Perth and Boston University. Can you tell us how these agreements have improved the reputation of the Faculty of Economics both internationally and nationally?

These types of agreements represent an **invaluable experience for our University**. It was an opportunity for us to work collaboratively with international partners to develop and design educational programmes at our respective universities. We asked ourselves: what are the **objectives** we want to achieve with these programmes, what **approaches** should we take in designing and delivering them, what **makes** these **programmes unique**, and how can we use **e-learning technologies** to enhance the learning experience? In short, it was an **opportunity for us to learn from each other** and benchmark ourselves on vital issues in education. While **Double Degree agreements** may not immediately impact the reputation of the University, they become a **factor once** we **communicate the benefits** of these collaborations **to the outside world**. Additionally, the relationships formed through Double Degree agreements can become a **vital network** for many activities, including **facilitating collaboration and research** between faculty members, which can have a **significant impact on the University's reputation**.

accreditation

In 2022, the Master of Science in Management received EFMD accreditation for five years. This is an exceptional achievement that recognises the excellence of this degree programme. How has the internationalisation strategy contributed to this recognition?

The impact has been twofold. Initially, our University's decision to **invest in an international development strategy** triggered the accreditation process. Implementing a genuine international development strategy requires **embracing the logic of global competition**, and accreditation is one aspect of this. The internationalisation strategy created the need for and gave birth to the project that led to the **accreditation of the Master of Science in Management**. During the accreditation process, the theme of internationalisation emerged transversally. Therefore, after the initial trigger, the accreditation process and the contents that were deemed compliant with EFMD standards had **internationalisation as a common thread**.

driver

In your opinion, are Double Degree programmes a significant driver for students when choosing their academic path?

The Master of Science in Management has both inbound and outbound Double Degree agreements. **Inbound agreements** may not be a direct factor in our students' choice, but they are certainly an **indirect factor**. Through inbound Double Degree agreements, we can bring **prepared students from all over the world into our classrooms**. This creates a context of **multiculturalism** that is essential for a master's programme like ours, which deals with management. Companies are exposed to a global dimension, and the people who come out of our programme must be prepared and aware of what it means to **work in teams** where there are people from **different cultures**. Being able to **guarantee a classroom with an international profile**, thanks to inbound Double Degree agreements, is a **significant factor** in my opinion.

On the **outbound side**, the possibility of **obtaining a Double Degree** is a **direct driver of choice**. Over the last 10 years, during various Open Days, more and more students have been asking for information about this type of programme. Over the course of **two years**, they can obtain **two degrees** by studying in a **different context with different approaches**. I believe they benefit significantly from a **process of personal and academic maturation**. Today's prospective students are interested in knowing how many **international faculty members** we have, and what kind of **study abroad programmes** we offer to understand whether their expectations are being met by an internationally focused programme like the one in Management.

MEET THE EXPERTS

THE DOUBLE DEGREE EFFECT

Double Degrees promote internationalisation in higher education and provide benefits for institutions and students, including staff mobility, collaborative research, enhanced reputation, and improved competencies for success in a global labour market.





Dario Consoli

Can a university's ranking be positively influenced by the availability and prominence of Double Degree programmes they offer?

Most definitively so: **major rankings** (QS, but also THE and others) directly **measure** the percentile of **international students enrolled at ranked universities**. Double degree programmes naturally attract students from different countries; those represented by the respective hosting universities but also many others, who wish to experience different models of education and lifestyles while they study or research.

Moreover, international rankings like QS measure academic reputation, employer reputation, international collaborations at academic and scientific levels, the number of students exchanged, etc. All these factors are **enhanced by Double Degrees**, which by default bring together students, professors, and administrative staff from different educational systems.

To what degree do rankings impact the selection of an international partner for establishing Double Degree agreements?

Faculty from all around the world use **international rankings to compare and measure the impact and quality of potential partners worldwide**. People compare and take strategic decisions according to the knowledge we assign in concentric circles: the further away we go from the context we operate in and know well (locally, nationally, regionally, etc.), the more we need to get help from guides or classifications.

Other than the usual, pre-packaged ranking filled with different parameters, these classifications give us **information specific** to the area of study we operate in (**subject rankings**); the level of research in each specific subject (scientific output), the quality of services provided (staff to student ratio), and the level of internationalisation (percentile of international students and faculty).

It is only human to choose peers, people and institutions which operate in a similar manner to ours. **Rankings are a good guide** to discovering and weighing up the similarities – but also the differences – between programmes which can best merge together.

DARIO CONSOLI has an Advanced Diploma in Intercultural Management from Cambridge University in the UK, an MBA from St John's University in the US and a bachelor degree in International Relations from the University of Catania in Italy. Dario has 20 years experience working in the internationalisation for the Higher Education marketplace. He has implemented, managed and advised international processes in American, Italian, Belgian and Maltese universities, successfully recruiting students in over 50 countries.

He has been invited as speaker at international panels worldwide covering issues related to international students' recruitment and exchange; rankings advancement; universities international relations; international students services and careers; academic credit harmonization. Dario operates through his own small consulting firm, StudentsWorld, in Italy.

Currently Dario is Business Development Partner at QS. He also actively consults for several universities on matters related to internationalisation policies, including the recruitment of international students, the launch of new international programmes and reputation analysis.

Catherine Pereira Villa

How has the increased interest in establishing Double Degree programmes stimulated stronger relationships between institutions?

The terms **Joint and Double Degrees** are used to refer to **articulation agreements between programmes**, particularly between two undergraduate programmes or an undergraduate and a postgraduate programme which involves **two universities** and on occasion a third one. Another way to understand joint and Double Degrees is that the student reads **at the same time** courses that lead to **two awards** of the same academic level or simultaneously for an undergraduate and a master's degree.

The importance of offering Joint/Double Degree programmes lies in the added value perceived by students in their academic and professional development, related to the **enhancement of global competencies**, the **strengthening of a second or third language**, and the **consolidation of a worldwide professional network**.

The development of Double Degree programmes involves a **high degree of trust and commitment between institutions** since they come together to: offer unique and complementary programmes to their students; work hand in hand in the revision of their curricula, academic and professional benefits, as well as to articulate budgets for two degrees. Once these aspects are reviewed, the result is a **smooth credit transfer system** in which students can choose to enrol in a specific academic pathway with flexibility and the **certainty of the value added of each programme**.

The long-lasting relationship between **La Sabana** and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore demonstrates how two high quality institutions of higher education from different regions of the world can work collaboratively for the benefit of their students.

The specific form of this collaboration is detailed in **memorandums of understanding (MOU)** as well as specific **cooperation agreements**. Students from a diverse set of La Sabana's undergraduate programmes such as Management, Psychology and Communication have been able to complete their studies abroad with a Double Degree with a Master's from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. These graduates have succeeded in **building a truly international profile** that has given them a **competitive advantage in the labour market, a wide professional network, and personal development** which is part of the mission of both Università Cattolica and La Sabana.



CATHERINE PEREIRA VILLA is Associate Professor and Dean of the International School of Economic and Administrative Sciences at Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia.

Catherine has researched and written about international trade, business legitimacy, Business and Human rights, and has teaching experience in those fields. In addition, Catherine has published several book chapters and articles in academic journals and acted as head of two top ranked research groups in Colombia.

Prior to joining La Sabana, Catherine served as Head of Economic Research and Intendent for Private and Public pension funds' Supervision at the Financial Superintendency in Colombia, Vice President of Finance at the National Institute for Social Security, as well as founding partner of a company that pioneered the commercialisation of cellphone communication products in the country.

She holds an M.A. in Economics and International Relations from the University of Aberdeen, an M.Sc. in Economics and M.Phil. in International Finance from Glasgow University in the United Kingdom and holds a DBA.

Catherine is also a member of the International Advisory Board of the Faculty of Economics of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore 2021-2022, as well as the International Advisory Board of Kedge Business School in 2022. Catherine is also a member of EFMD Accredited Committee and the EOCCs Board at EFMD since 2022.



Melissa Banks

Articulations/Joint/Double Degrees are considered to be a fundamental part of the internationalisation process of higher education. What are the most important benefits for institutions promoting these kinds of programmes?

From the **Australian government's perspective**, these types of initiatives contribute to **advancing our international engagement**. The people-to-people ties developed through the internationalisation of education drive our connectedness across borders and build mutual understanding and respect. **Transnational education and internationalisation of education** overall, as well as training, have a lot of support from the Australian government because it's a **key enabler of our international relations**. Our quality assurance and regulatory framework that we have in Australia allow these initiatives to build the reputation and recognition of the Australian higher education system.

In terms of the **benefits for institutions**, based on my previous experience, I would like to mention the following:

1. Staff mobility is a key one, particularly within the confines of initiatives such as Double Degrees, Joint programmes etc., because it's key to **training and development for staff**, as well as **co-curricular innovation**. **Developing the curriculum together with partners** we found that built capacity on both sides, particularly because it **internationalises content and gives the programme an international perspective**. It also allows for an **exchange of international teaching methodologies and assessment methodologies**. We were also particularly keen on the arrangements that go towards deeper engagement.

2. Joint Degrees in particular can lead to **deeper engagement** in the form of **collaborative research and joint research projects**, which tends to **joint publications**, the establishment of **joint research centres**, and the development of **joint or partnered PhDs**, all of these have been the result of **really successful engagement** in the form of **Dual and Joint Degrees** in my experience.

3. Reputation: by collaborating it's possible to **enhance the reputation of both institutions**, and that can drive **enrolment growth** through the attraction of students that you would not otherwise enrol at your institution. An example could be an Australian institution partnering with a Chinese university: we were able to attract students into our programme on the basis that they would spend a period at the partner institution as part of our mobility programme. Again, that's part of that deeper engagement, but it's also a tool to attract and drive enrolment growth. When we are producing joint publications and other types of collaborations, we feel that this can improve the global rankings particularly the ranking systems that take into consideration international partnerships and collaborations because international publications are more highly cited than publications that are not international.

In terms of students getting access to the internationalisation of the curriculum, it's a real benefit, as well as access to international teaching and assessment methodologies. I think these kinds of programmes just **expand their learning experience**, and that's important. In the case of Double Degrees, the opportunity to **gain a local degree and an international degree**, I think is attractive and can help students build their competencies for **success in a global labour market**, which is becoming more and more competitive. It gives them that **added attribute to bring to the workplace**. I also think just the opportunity to study in another culture or with another culture is important and often that is done in a different language, and so you acquire **personal growth benefits**, as well as competencies such as **cultural and language competencies**. I would also say that these arrangements can provide **greater access to students** who couldn't possibly afford to **undertake a full degree in an international country**, because often these types of arrangements see students starting their education at home and then spending part of their studies in the host institution, by making a more economically viable situation for many students that would otherwise just not have the opportunity to study abroad. At the end of the day **Articulation, Double Degrees, and Joint Degrees** are the products of **collaborative partnerships** between two institutions, and they must be grounded in **deep engagement for mutuality and advancement**. If we can tick those **three core ambitions**, then the **partnership** will be **successful for everyone**.

MELISSA BANKS is the Head of International Education in Austrade, providing national industry leadership and stakeholder engagement to drive innovation, collaboration and capability development.

An experienced leader, Melissa brings a rich background in international education spanning over 30 years and including multiple education sectors. She was most recently the Pro Vice Chancellor International at James Cook University.

Throughout her career she has contributed to international research forums and publications to advance the international education sector in Australia and globally, including as former President of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA).

Melissa is a recipient of the prestigious Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Field of International Education (IEAA).



Vik Kanwar

In my view, to **design and implement** a successful Dual Degree programme today, it is essential to **ensure congruence, completeness, and complementarity**. Congruence means that the programme goals should be communicated clearly to participants so that **students can enter with fair expectations**. Completeness means that, even if there is increased efficiency in time or money, the **degree requirements** according to the standards in both countries are **fully satisfied**. Finally, complementarity means that **each side** not only **adds value unavailable to the other side** but also helps create a **harmonious whole** that is greater than the constituent parts. These three themes have separate meanings, but they also tend to merge in the sense of compatibility.

Boston College Law's partnership with Università Cattolica serves as an example of a dual degree programme that successfully balances these themes. While the Legal Masters (LLM) degree programme at Boston College Law is intentionally small and diverse, it maintains congruence with its partner institutions by ensuring that students are aware of the programme goals and requirements. Meanwhile, completeness is ensured by **satisfying the degree requirements** according to the standards of both countries. Finally, complementarity is achieved by fostering a mutually supportive core community of diverse students, each adding value to the programme.

How do you see the landscape of Double Degree programmes evolving in the coming years, particularly considering global trends in higher education?

The landscape of Double Degree programmes **will continue to evolve** in response to **global trends in higher education**. Institutions like Boston College Law are embracing internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, experiential learning, technology integration, and career preparation to adapt to these trends. Boston College Law's partnership with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore exemplifies how **institutions can successfully implement Double Degree programmes** focused on some or all of the following: integration, immersion, access, customisation, flexibility, choice, community, support, care, intimacy, scale, recognition, and excellence.

Today, even **careers** such as law, which seem so nationally specific, are **re-textured by the realities of globalisation and rapid technological development**. As we grapple with artificial intelligence, global pandemics, and financial and climate crises, we are already partly in that future. A generation of lawyers who are fully qualified in multiple jurisdictions, with an adaptable, interdisciplinary and broadly comparative perspective will be well-prepared to address the complex legal challenges of a rapidly changing world. As Double Degree programmes continue to evolve, the wisdom gained from these experiences will play a crucial role in preparing future legal professionals for success in the global arena.



THE PURSUIT OF SUCCESS:
AN INTERNATIONAL
JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Three Università Cattolica Alumni share their journey of success after obtaining a Double Degree and now pursuing careers in Norway, Uzbekistan, and the Netherlands.



The Heartfelt Art of Understanding: A Story Listener's Journey

Meeting **Olga Lehmann**, a scouter for compassion and empathy with a passion for researching that turned her into a story listener and brought her to discover her interests inside the field of psychology and the importance of vulnerability and fragility to create connections.



Photo credit:
Steinar Leite at NTNU

PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

When we sit down and talk to a mother, a friend, a partner, or a sister; **how much do we listen?** Not referring to hearing the words and phrases but **diving** into what they say, **empathising and understanding**. Being able to tell stories is a talent but knowing how to listen to them? **It's a virtue, a gift**. Olga developed a great curiosity in people: in their behaviour, in their way of thinking and in how they feel. For her, it was a **privilege** to be able to **listen to stories and learn from them**. Each one carried with it a teaching, something important that made it unique.

Olga also had an interest in reading and research. From **academic books** that nourish her thoughts to fantasies and wonderful stories such as one of her favourite books **"The Little Prince."** This expanded her imagination and she realised that she wanted to continue learning not only from books. She wanted to **know more** about the individual, **about people**. By listening carefully, there is so much that can be understood and learned, and Olga realised that to do this, you must give others a space where they can be vulnerable and express themselves freely. In this way, be able to empathise with them.

Olga now mentions that her way of working, "...is **trying to put people first** and that's also something that I hope to do well with the students or with everyone I work with." When she guides people sensibly to where they should go, with understanding, empathy and compassion, things become easier to lead. With her passion to work in academia due to her love for books and stories, she recently received a job opportunity as an **Associate Professor**, which will allow her not only to fulfil a long-standing dream but to apply her work philosophy and put her students first.





HER VIRTUE QUICKLY BECAME A PASSION.

Perhaps this same capacity of understanding led her to choose **psychology** as her university major at **Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia** when she was 16 years old. It is a wide field where books, analysis and story seekers reign. As a writer, Olga also thought that being in psychology would allow her to **write about people's world**, about their minds and how their different ways of acting and thinking could affect their lives. Olga is resilient and persevering, and she had to find a way to continue doing what she loved so much because **her virtue quickly became a passion**. Being at her university, Olga used her ability as a story listener as a daily occurrence, always trying to learn from each one of the stories she heard, treasuring and seeking to comprehend the person behind it.

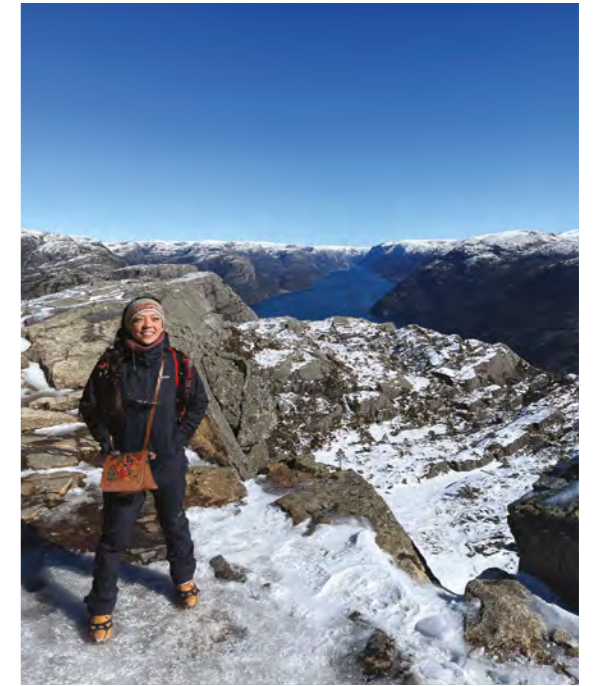
As time passed, Olga felt that there was more. More stories, more places, more people to meet. In this way, her university offered her the opportunity to go to Milan to carry out a **Double Degree at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore**. Olga remembers how when she was a little girl, she dreamed of going to Italy. The ambience in places like this is not only different from what she's used to, but it's magical. It is something as magical as the virtue she possesses to listen to stories, but Olga would discover that later.

Arriving in **Milan**, Olga envisioned everything she had imagined as a child. The historical buildings with their timeless windows and their facades decorate the city landscape. The aroma of freshly made pastries and cafés perfumed the air. Countless shops with beautiful showcases. She recited in her mind a **love letter to the city** and as time went by, she fell even deeper in love with it.

Exploring her interests in psychology, she got into the **field of Cultural Psychology** where learning about the integration of multiple perspectives helps her to continue to fulfil her desire of **understanding the individual in his everyday life**. Olga began to understand that being a story listener served her not only to gain knowledge but also to **help others deal with their matters**. "That's why I say that I'm a story listener. Because when you are sitting in the therapist's chair, then you get to see, to listen to all the things that many people don't even tell anyone else. So, you'll get first contact with the real thing, the people, the things that people are ashamed or scared about." Graduating from her degree in psychology, Olga began to develop an interest to work with grieving and death and from these topics, she wrote her master's thesis.

Her desire to continue growing her understanding of people and the world around her consequently led her to **Norway**. Here, never satisfied with the amount of knowledge she held and wanting to develop further her outlook on the world, she obtained a **PhD in Psychology** and continued to do what she's passionate about – **building human connections** through listening, through letting people be vulnerable and helping them take off their masks and learning what's hiding behind it.

"I'M A STORY LISTENER."



Finally, Olga understood when she looked back and saw all that she had learned in her academic journey, in her professional life all combined as a student, a friend and above all: a story listener, that **the more we let people be honest** and remove that facade of strength that the world imposes on us, **the better we will reach connections** with each other, and with ourselves and our values. By becoming story listeners, we not only open our ears to listen, but we **open our minds and hearts to understand**, and that is, undoubtedly, the greatest capacity that a true listener of stories can possess.



REDEFINING GOALS: EMBRACING SMALL ACTS WITH IMMENSE IMPACT

Discover how a young man's passion for languages and the world rewrites the narrative as we know it. A journey defined by a unique outlook on life, learning, and finding inspiration in unexpected places.

We read about people's success stories. We watch movies, reassured that the protagonists will overcome any obstacle thrown their way, and always reach their – clearly defined – goals.

But are we taught that our **mistakes hold valuable lessons?** That learning is messy. That life is not linear. When – in a society built up on milestones to reach, exams to pass and promotions to chase – do we get told that **disappointments ought to be cherished?** Because at the end of the day, **they teach us something. And guide us somewhere.**

"I WANTED TO READ BOOKS IN GERMAN."

Around his neck hangs a small, discrete cross. It was a gift from two close friends and now, reaching for it as he speaks, it follows him everywhere he goes around the world. It has seen mile-long deserts, mountain ranges and horseback riding, big conference rooms for political affairs; a silent observer in everyday conversations.

Right now, it is with him in Central Asia. In a country where East meets West and where the main routes of the Great Silk Road used to converge. And there he is, **Alberto Cerri**, sitting in his office talking to us via a screen. He is there on a mission: he is working for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as Junior Professional Officer in Uzbekistan.

Could it be that it all started with something so – seemingly – simple as a love for languages? Originally from a small town in the hills of Piedmont, Italy, Alberto was always **passionate about foreign languages**, particularly German. "The reason why I chose German is a long story, but simply put, I wanted to read books in German. Read philosophy in German and understand it directly. It is a language that has always fascinated me."



"I TRIED TO COMBINE
MY TWO GREAT
PASSIONS IN LIFE:
LANGUAGES AND
THE WORLD."



Therefore, as an 18-year-old with his passion as a driving force, Alberto decided to study **Foreign Languages at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore** for his bachelor's degree. And not only did he learn from the pages inside a textbook but during his second semester, Alberto embarked on **an Erasmus experience** to study **in Halle, Germany at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg**. "I liked it there, and when the Erasmus ended, I left and said, "I wonder if I'll ever go back?"

After graduating, Alberto had the urge to expand on his interests even further. "From there, I tried to combine my two great passions in life: languages and the world. So, for my master's degree, I chose to study **International Relations.**"

Call it chance, during his master's degree at Università Cattolica, his German language professor had just initiated a special project. It was a **Double Degree collaboration**, with a university Alberto knew very well: Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. A coincidence that was almost too good to be called coincidence.

"THROUGH
UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA,
I WAS
TRULY ABLE
TO LAUNCH
MYSELF."



So, without any doubt, off he went. Returning to the country for which language he had always loved so deeply. "Through Università Cattolica, I was truly able to launch myself: **half of my international experiences are thanks to Università Cattolica**, so for that, **I am extremely grateful.**" Because, as Alberto continues, **his experiences abroad** gave him something more than just theory. "It allowed me to learn the language from within, and not from the outside." **He got to live the language he loved.**

With this unique outlook, to seek out inspiration, and guidance even, in what was presenting itself around him was not just a temporary mindset guiding Alberto, it was a motto of his. Even during difficult times.

Because, as he is about to tell the story of how he ended up where he is today, he does not shy away from sharing where it originated. He smiles, "This is a funny story because **my job actually stems from a "failure,"** from a huge disappointment," Alberto continues by explaining how he had the dream to try the diplomatic competition, and after working hard towards that, he failed to pass it.

But, at that point, Alberto did not despair. He simply asked himself, "So, what could I do instead?"



And, one day, as he was casually walking at the university campus, he saw big posters that caught his attention. They were promoting a **Toniolo Institute programme** related to projects with the **Holy See**. And it just felt right.

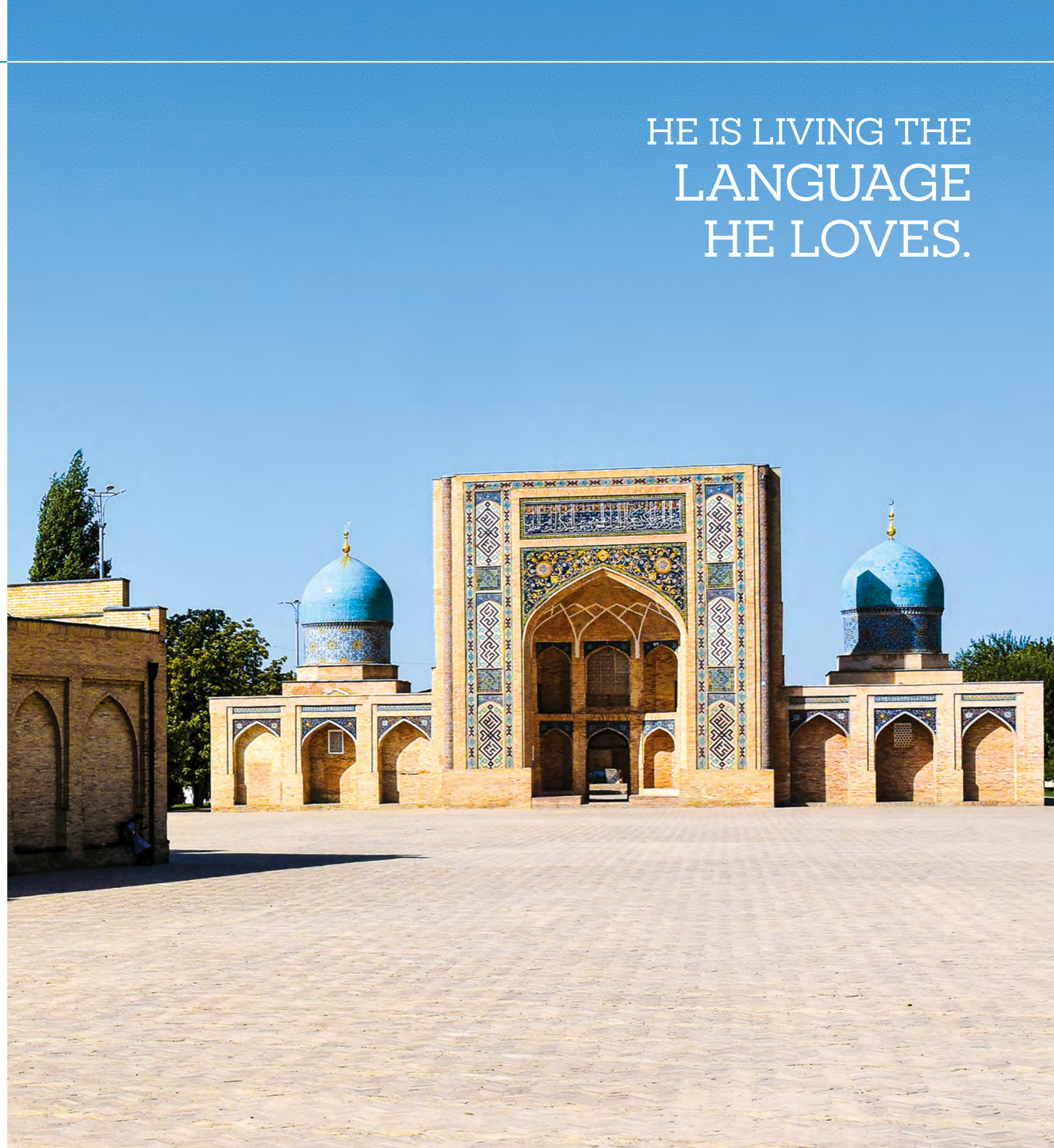
Seeing those posters, turned out to be the stepping stone to all events unfolding afterwards. He applied for the **Vienna position**, and he got it. He was supposed to stay for a year but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, he had to remain for almost two. "During that period, I learned so much of what I do today. So, something great came out of that, too."

Indeed, after this, unveiled a new opportunity. There was a position opening: the **Junior Professional Officer Programme of the OSCE**. The Permanent Mission of the Holy See in Vienna was asked if they had anyone to propose, and Alberto was the first one they thought of.

His journey within the OSCE then launched off with him working at the **Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**, and then, he got the job he holds today. Here, he deals with the communication and political reporting at the **Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan** and tries to bring storytelling into the work of informing people about the mission and projects of the OSCE.

IT JUST
FELT
RIGHT.

HE IS LIVING THE
LANGUAGE
HE LOVES.



"I WANT TO MAKE MY CONTRIBUTION."

But what motivates you? we ask him. Curious to understand the inextinguishable fire in this young man as he speaks.

"It's difficult to define why I do what I do, but I have always tried to be in the world because I want to make my contribution. That's where I feel fulfilled. For example, we launched a campaign called **"Be Safe,"** to raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking for those displaced by the war in Ukraine. And it is extremely satisfying to think that I was part of a process that protected people in emergency situations. How can you not wake up satisfied?"

But even with the profoundness of his story, and all that he has accomplished, Alberto tells us that the idea has always just been **to let life unveil itself; to stay open and curious.**

And even in something so – seemingly – simple as a love for languages. Doesn't it lie, underneath, a desire to put those words into practice? To connect with people. Or, to read the original language of a book, to get into the mind of another thinker.



"I HAVE A PASSION FOR THE LIFE OF OTHERS."

Speaking through a slightly blurry web camera, Alberto finishes telling his story: "I just want to discover and hear stories of people; I have a passion for the life of others. So, that is why **I always seek out encounters with people,** and not necessarily places."

It is impossible to identify a fool-proof, perfectly crafted plan. We cannot see the future and define a "perfect outcome." Because there is no such thing. **Life takes you places.** You encounter people along the way, who makes you grow. Setbacks pave the way for unexpected opportunities and, step by step, **you build your perfectly unique perspective.** Perhaps all we can do is **continue moving forward.** Seek inspiration in the – seemingly – smallest of things: in daily interactions, in book passages, and even in our own disappointments. Alberto's story tells us that **it might be time to redefine success.**

BEYOND BORDERS: A RESEARCHER'S MISSION TO UNITE AFRICA AND EUROPE

ELISABETH OBENG

From a wish to explore the world, to becoming a specialised researcher. With a focus on making a meaningful impact, Elisabeth's story reminds us that anything is possible when pursuing one's dreams with an open mind and a strong commitment to what we believe in.

"THERE IS NOT JUST ONE PATH IN LIFE TO REACH YOUR GOALS".



In the bustling crowd of people, rushing or slowly walking, alone, in couples, with friends or family; all in motion. The lit-up boards tell us where to go. The signs show how much time we have left. Which gates are opening? Which gates are closing? It smells like coffee and baked goods; of early mornings and orange skies. Aeroplanes take off, and they arrive.

In the middle of it all, we spot a woman standing. With one hand, she holds onto the handles of a suitcase. Her gaze is steady, and her presence is calm.

"Ever since I was a child, my dream job was something that would unite Africa and Europe."

And here today, in front of us stands: a woman, researcher, consultant, daughter, wife, and mother. All of that, and more.

Her name is Elisabeth Obeng.

Born and raised in Italy, in the province of Parma, she speaks with great fondness about what her upbringing gave her. Delicious food, the unwavering warmth of the locals, being surrounded by family and friends and an atmosphere which perhaps only a small Italian town can exemplify. But she has always had an unmistakable feeling of wanting to reach further out, curious about what is outside of her immediate context.

"Above all, I wanted to get a different experience. I had been studying in Italy for 18 years at that time, and I wanted to see how the world was outside of my bubble."

She recounts one decision she made, which grew steadily out of this feeling. In 2015, studying at **Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore**, she had the opportunity to do **something unique**: a **Double Degree**. Of the many destinations Cattolica offered, one caught her attention in particular.

She was on a path to earn, not only, a **Master of Science Degree in Agricultural and Food Economics** from **Università Cattolica**, in Italy. She would now also earn a **Master of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Policy**, from **Wageningen University**, in the Netherlands – a university globally known for its important output in agricultural research – within the framework of the **Double Degree Programme in Sustainable Agri-Food Economics and Business**.

"IT ALLOWED ME TO BECOME MY OWN PERSON."

So, she headed to the airport. Standing alongside her suitcase in the busy crowds, she didn't know when she would come back to Italy next.

Upon her arrival, she found herself in the historic, small and charmingly green city of Wageningen, renowned for its university which serves as the heart of the community. Elisabeth was immediately thrown into a new setting: far away from family and friends and working part-time alongside her studies. *"I missed my family and friends very much, and that was not easy. But at the same time, for me, this was a time in my life when it was good for me to live by myself. It allowed me to become my own person."*

She learned how to effectively manage her time, become self-reliant, and she explains that, in many ways, she got to re-evaluate what she is capable of.

*"There was a course called **Academic Consultancy Training**. As part of a student simulation, you collaborate with others to act as a consultancy firm and offer feedback to a real client regarding a real issue. I think that course helped me understand that I'm quite good at that."*

After graduating, Elisabeth came back to Italy and had the opportunity to work not only in one but in two completely different sectors. First, working



in a more **research-led environment** and then, in the **sphere of business**. Thanks to this time in her life, she gained important insight that would guide her future choices and shape her career path ahead.

Her **Double Degree experience** had **opened her eyes** to not only what she was capable of, but what environments she thrived in. What she particularly loved was how she had gotten the opportunity to **experience new cultures** when **studying abroad**. *"I loved having **daily interactions with people with diverse backgrounds**, not only in the culture itself but character and history, even interests."*

Reflecting on this, she followed her intuition and once again a decision was made. She packed her bags. But this time, Elisabeth was not boarding a plane to earn a Double Degree. She was **going back to Wageningen**, to begin building her life



Her role is to support the public and private sectors in initiating and leading the transformation to more sustainable food systems. From engaging with small business owners in Africa and the European Union to effecting change on a larger scale – always aiming at getting the most humane perspective out of any conversation with attention on **rebalancing the power in North-South collaboration**. She says that what she loves about the job, is too many to count.

She feels blessed to work with what she does, as it not only channels her desire to make a difference in the world but it echos a bigger part of her. **It brings her back to her roots.**

Over 40 years ago, Elisabeth's parents took a big leap of faith when they moved across continents. **From Ghana, Africa**, to a small town in the province of **Parma in Italy**, extending and rooting, finding their way in a new country. And now, Elisabeth is starting her own family in **the Netherlands**. As a beautiful matrix, **there is nothing that doesn't belong**. Nothing excludes the other, and perhaps that is the way she chooses to live – with a desire to be in a context where **inclusion is promoted**, and **diversity encouraged**.

"I don't know where I will be 10 years from now, and that is ok. All I know is that I never want to be detached from the real world and real issues. I want to stay present, rooted in the daily lives of people."

She continues, *"What I didn't see when I was younger, was that there is not just one path in life to reach your goals. All we can do is stay open-minded and accommodate whatever change comes our way. That is what I would tell my younger self: that **you will reach your dream, but there is more than one way to get there.**"* And we once again look at the woman standing tall and proud in the ever-moving crowd. Shaped by the experiences that, step by step, brought her where she is today. With one hand, she holds onto the handle of a suitcase. With her other hand, she steadily holds on to what is dear to her. And she knows and has perhaps always known: **if she doesn't let go of that, she is on the right path.**

"I WANTED TO WORK IN APPLIED RESEARCH."

Once back in the picturesque city, Elisabeth embraced this period as a time for reflection. And just as the greatest ideas come when we are least expecting them, this is also when she realised what she wanted to do next.

"This was the time I made a big career decision. I came from having worked in research and business. But I wanted something in between: I wanted to work in applied research."

Today, this is her profession at **Wageningen Economic Research**. She aims to **bridge the gap between theory and real-world outcomes** by combining her passion for research with a strong drive to apply research findings in practical settings. And not in any field, but in the growing and more important ever **field of Sustainable Food Systems**. Elisabeth possesses **specialised** knowledge of **international agri-food trade**, and she jokingly says that it's a "perfect photocopy" of her degree – she is now putting into practice what she learned during her university years.

ACHIEVEMENTS

INSIDER NEWS

The new QS World University Rankings by Subject results, our Rome campus University hospital achievements and the Forum on Education Abroad EMEA Conference are some of our latest news.



POLICLINICO GEMELLI BEST HOSPITAL IN ITALY FOR THE 3RD YEAR IN A ROW

For the third year in a row, Policlinico Gemelli University Hospital ranks among the 50 best hospitals in the world and the best hospital in Italy, according to the Newsweek World's best hospitals list. This is a great honour for our institution. The General Director of the Fondazione Policlinico Gemelli, Professor Marco Elefanti, has recently stated: "It is with great pride that I share this news with the whole community of Policlinico Gemelli and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. I express my deepest gratitude towards all the people who work with us and to the patients who trust our hospital every day."

ARWU RANKING

The last edition of the ARWU Ranking of the best universities in the world was released in August 2022. Università Cattolica ranks among the top 400 institutions in the world. Among the subjects included in the ranking, Università Cattolica ranks in the range 51-75 for Food Science and Technology. It also ranks among the top 150 universities in the world for the subjects of Dentistry & Oral Sciences, and Medical Technology.



THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD – EMEA CONFERENCE 2022

In October 2022, Università Cattolica hosted the Forum on Education Abroad's EMEA Conference on its Milan Campus. The Forum provides training for education abroad professionals and its Standards of Good Practice are recognised as the definitive means by which the quality of education abroad programmes may be judged. Franco Anelli, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Rector, has said that "hosting the Forum on Education Abroad's Annual Conference is a great honour for us. I am sure it will help us open new and stimulating perspectives for our international students."

QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS BY SUBJECT 2023

In March 2023, the QS World University Rankings by Subject were released. Università Cattolica ranks in 17 different subjects. Among the Italian universities, Università Cattolica ranks first in the country for Communication & Media Studies, Theology, Divinity & Religious Studies, and Nursing. On a global scale, Università Cattolica gained 12 positions in Classics and Ancient Studies from the past year's edition, moving to 38th place in the world. It also ranks among the top 150 universities in the world for Agriculture & Forestry, Modern Languages, Law, Philosophy, and Psychology. For the first time this year, the subject of History is featured and Università Cattolica is among the top 230 universities in the world.



WORLD BOUND



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No. 8

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Dear Colleagues & Friends,

Meet Università Cattolica Staff at the upcoming EAIE Annual Conference and Exhibition in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, in September 2023.

We look forward to meeting you!

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