

AVEPRO

D. GUIDELINES
ON
STRATEGIC PLANNING





Index.....	D3
Section A: Introduction.....	D4
Section B: General Framework of Institutional Strategic Planning and Relationship with AVEPRO’s processes.....	D6
Section C: Strategic Planning in its Context.....	D9
→ Structure and contexts of the Strategic Plan (“WHAT”).....	D9
1. Context and institutional environment	D9
2. Institutional vision, mission and position	D10
→ The academic sector (“HOW”).....	D11
3. Education, learning and teaching.....	D11
4. Research and scholarship.....	D11
5. Third mission activities	D12
6. Internationalization.....	D13
→ The non-academic sector: resources and support activities	D14
7. Staff / Personnel	D15
8. Economic resources	D15
9. Student support and services.....	D15
10. Promotion and development.....	D15
11. Structures	D15
→ Governance, management and organization	D16
Section D: The processes of strategic planning (“WHEN” and “HOW”).....	D17
1. Planning and sequence of time points.....	D17
2. Preparation of the Strategic Plan.....	D18
3. Realization of the Strategic Plan.....	D18
4. Monitoring, revision and evaluation	D20
5. Internal operational plans and related public versions.....	D20
6. Suggested index for the Strategic Plan.....	D21
Annexes: 1. Education, learning and teaching.....	D23
 2. Support activities.....	D26



► SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

These **guidelines for the STRATEGIC PLANNING** are part of a **set of guidelines proposed by the Agency** and should be considered as **integrating and providing more detail to complement the *AVEPRO Guidelines*¹**:

A. Guidelines: Nature, context, purpose, standards and procedures of Quality Evaluation (in short: *AVEPRO Guidelines*)



B. Guidelines for SELF-EVALUATION



C. Guidelines for EXTERNAL EVALUATION



D. Guidelines on STRATEGIC PLANNING



E. The Ecclesiastical Higher Education System in the global world The RATIONALE of AVEPRO'S EVALUATION SYSTEM

1. This introduction intends to show how strategic planning has emerged as a clear necessity within universities, and to provide a proper definition of it before going on to consider its technical aspects.
2. Why should the Ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education have a Strategic Plan? Since the early '80s a series of factors have stimulated interest in universities around the world in strategic planning and the adoption of approaches in favour of it. These factors obviously vary according to the Institution and national system, which in turn influence the nature as well as the structure and elements of the process. It may be pointed out that many universities have not prepared Strategic Plans for a long time, despite having a strong sense of the general trend in relation to their position in the academic system. In any case, the adoption of some form of strategic planning by the majority of Institutions of higher education is now strongly advised.
3. There are therefore numerous reasons why Ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education strongly feel the importance of and the need to develop their own Strategic Plan.
 - 3.1. The *internal reasons*:
 - The Ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education have an excellent tradition and history of providing services to the Church and society. However, they risk becoming static entities, closed and slow in responding to external challenges, and incapable of considering new priorities.

¹ AVEPRO, *Guidelines: Nature, context, purpose and procedures of Quality Evaluation*, 2019.



- Economic difficulties are widespread and demand a coherent strategic response.
- The Institutions of higher education are often strongly dependent upon traditional sources of support, while it would be preferable to develop a culture of self-determination that, in collaboration with other subjects, would be more likely to improve the long-term sustainability of the Institutions themselves.
- Decision-making processes can be slow and unclear, and the decisions made are not always implemented, nor are obstacles to their realization always removed.
- The demands and expectations of religious orders, Chancellors and the Congregation for Catholic Education are constantly increasing.
- The culture of such Institutions of higher education is often characterized by didactic activities with diverse outcomes, the absence of a shared outlook and the lack of a common philosophy.

3.2. The *external reasons*

- AVEPRO has the task of spreading the culture and process of quality assurance (QA) among the ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education within its area of competence. This task is made significantly easier if the Self-Evaluation Reports (SER) evaluate the Institutions of higher education in relation to their priorities and explicit objectives in the fields of education, research and other activities. Institutional quality is better comprehended if related to the development and progress of the Institutions of higher education, especially in response to the needs and opinions of their stakeholders.
 - In a rapidly evolving context, each Institution of higher education should take into account the relevance and appropriateness of its mission and academic profile in the light of shifting pressures and demands on the part of the Church and other stakeholders.
 - The benefactors of ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education are increasingly focusing their attention on funding Institutions with clear and well-defined priorities.
 - The field of international higher education is increasingly competitive in terms of students, Faculties/facilities, research and funding; this also applies to “our” ecclesiastical Institutions.
4. Before going into further detail, let us seek to briefly clarify certain **definitions of fundamental importance in understanding what a Strategic Plan is**. The simplest way of doing this is to ask three questions (Davies 2008).
- What are we doing and how well? This demands a deep analysis in order to clearly establish the Institution’s orientation, its activities and effectiveness (A).
 - What we want to be in the future; what type of Institution, doing what and for whom? This necessarily calls for clarity regarding internal challenges and expectations: mission, vision, values and priorities (B).
 - How to get from (A) to (B)? This implies the need to formulate plans of action and development, as well as to allocate responsibilities.

5. A further definition may be:

“Planning is the continuous and collective exercise of foresight in the integrated



process of informed decisions affecting the future” (Lockwood 1984²).

There are numerous popular terms to look out for, which will recur and be expanded upon within these guidelines, i.e.:

- **“collective”**: refers to participation, commitment and responsibility.
- **“continuous”**: refers to an ongoing cycle of planning activities over the course of years.
- **“forecasts”**: implies the forecasts, in the context of the Holy See’s higher education system, regarding financial, political, employment-related, intellectual and social scenarios.
- **“integrated”**: refers to the vertical relationship between the Institution’s purposes and those of its component parts, and the horizontal harmony and mutual support between the various areas that work to support the purposes of the Institutions of higher education (funding, personnel, institutional processes, IT, etc.).
- **“informed”**: implies that the preparation of the Plans is facilitated by precise internal data regarding the Institution’s performance and information regarding external factors.
- **“impact the future”**: the process of strategic planning is of little use if no systematic and conscious effort is made to improve the Institutions and their relationships with stakeholders: its implementation is therefore for primary importance.

These factors can be identified to a greater or lesser extent in the majority of ecclesiastic Institutions of higher education, and it is conceivable that strategic planning related to QA can be of great use in ensuring the Institutions’ sustainability, permitting them to grow, develop and overcome their individual shortcomings and limits.

These guidelines are intended to be used in combination with the quality evaluation processes already provided for by AVEPRO. It goes without saying that, as **the Institutions differ enormously in terms of tradition, scope, size and form, they are certainly not all expected to do all that is indicated in this document.**

Instead, the Institutions **should select what is relevant to them, analyse it in-depth, and prepare an appropriate Strategic Plan, i.e. one that corresponds to their vision and mission.**

Thus prepared, the Strategic Plan should be of **use in ensuring the long-term**

² *Higher Education Management and Development. Compendium for Managers* edited by Jeroen Huisman, Attila Pausits, 2010.



► SECTION B: GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH AVEPRO'S PROCESSES

1. The cycle of the Strategic Plan / SP

It is important to consider institutional strategic planning as a cyclical process, as depicted in figure 1. The cycle should last **5 years** and include strategic planning objectives and the activities through which to achieve them gradually over the course of five years (cf. Section D and annex 2).

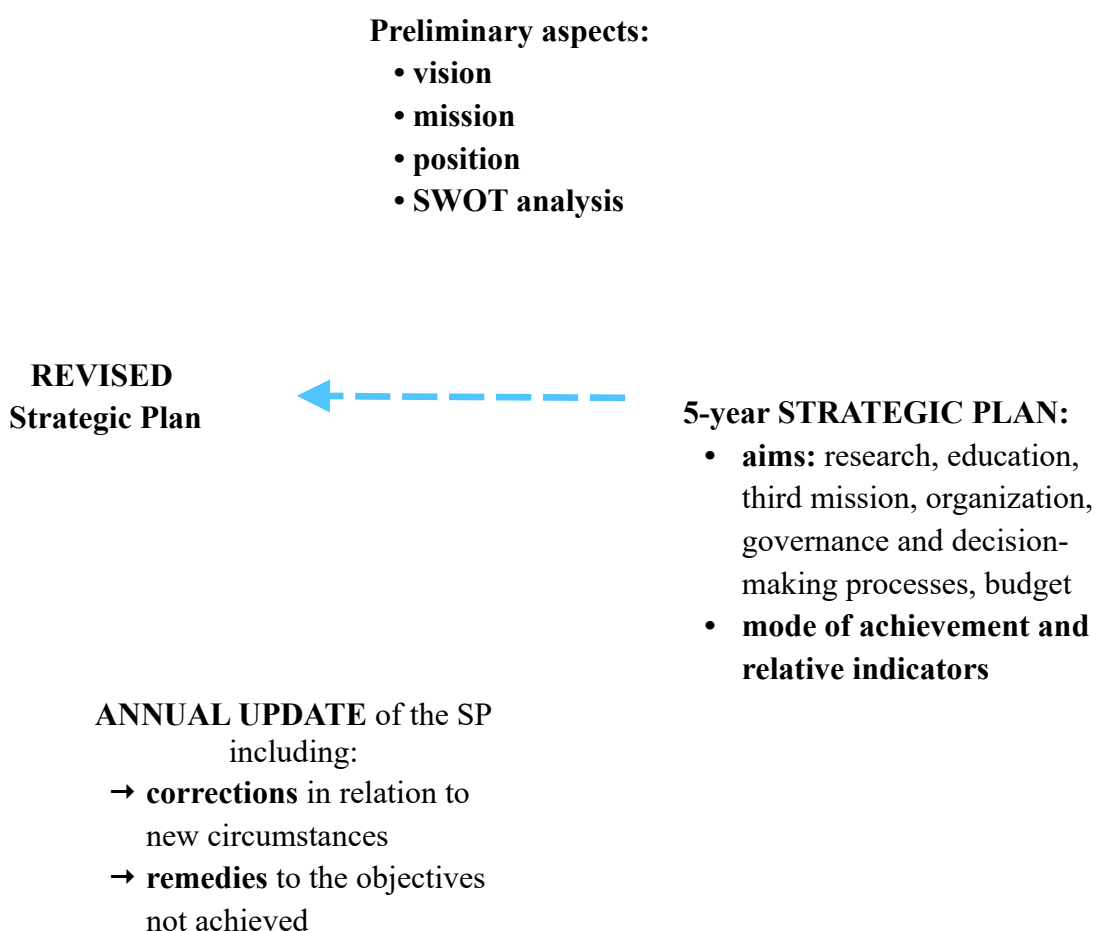


Figure 1: The strategic planning cycle



SELF-EVALUATION and SWOT Analysis

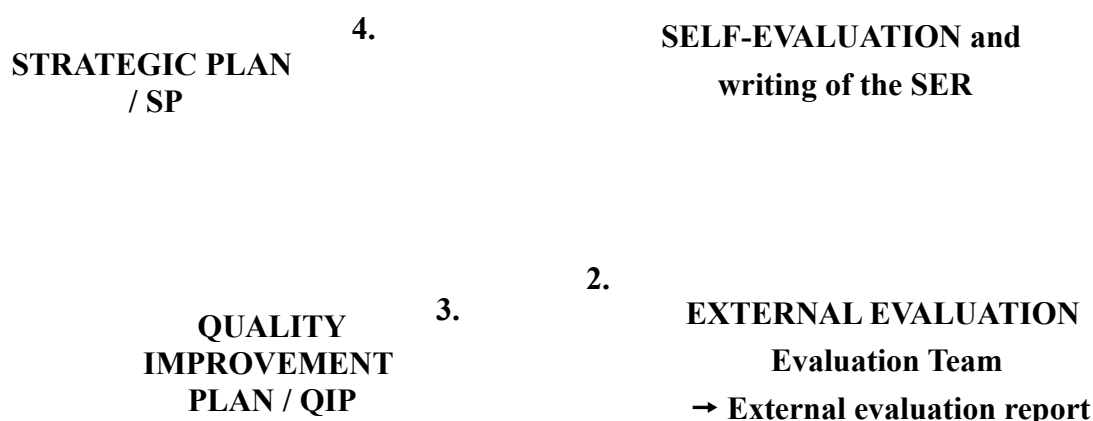


Figure 2: The AVEPRO quality cycle

2. The relationship between the Strategic Plan and AVEPRO's processes

2.1. The model of evaluation used by AVEPRO has the following characteristics:

- it is cyclical
- it is based upon the relationship between self-evaluation and external evaluation
- it is composed of data (cf. annexes) and qualitative evaluations provided by the academic community (SWOT analysis).

The presence of these characteristics is ensured by the centrality of a task that each and every Institution is called upon to perform: the SWOT analysis (i.e. a reflection upon its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This is a key element in both the preparation of the SER and the formulation of a Strategic Plan.

2.2. The SWOT analysis therefore connects self-evaluation to strategic planning

The Institutions need not carry out two separate analyses in a short space of time, but rather (more appropriately and realistically, especially for those who have already completed the first cycle of evaluation) update the materials that they prepared during the self-evaluation phase, integrating strategic issues with the recommendations received in the External Evaluation Report and subsequently “accepted” in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).



- 2.3. Hence, the Institutions that have already completed their first cycle of evaluation in compliance with the AVEPRO guidelines 2019 already possess practically all the elements necessary for the preparation of their Strategic Plan. They simply need to update part of the information and motivate the academic community to draw up a Strategic Plan.
- 2.4. Figure 2 summarizes the elements that compose the cycle of evaluation and confirms **the connection between strategic planning and evaluation**. This connection is even more pronounced for Institutions involved in the second cycle of evaluation (and subsequent cycles). The new SWOT analysis in view of the subsequent SER will take into account the results obtained through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, also underlining any objectives not realized, thus permitting the construction of a stable and coherent procedure for the whole Institution, including its governance. Moreover, once produced, the Strategic Plan will undergo **annual review, including the evaluation of any remedies to be adopted in order to achieve the goals set**. What is learned through the AVEPRO evaluation is therefore directly connected with the Strategic Plan.
- 2.5. Strategic planning and evaluation should not be viewed as mere “bureaucracy”, but rather as an opportunity for the academic community to create “a university life open to greater participation, a desire felt by all those in any way involved in university life” (cit. Foreword (V) to the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*). Participation in and the organization of strategic planning is dealt with in Section D.

It must be underlined that strategic planning is a serious and real activity, not a virtual exercise or mere formality. It **should have an impact and consequences - both when objectives are realized, thus contributing to institutional sustainability, and when they are not**. In the latter case, constructive revision is required to explain why certain objectives have not been realized, and what lessons should be learned to prevent this from recurring.

It is therefore essential to include this process among the Institution’s mandatory tasks (rather than see it as an irksome, as well as superfluous, burden) (cf. Section D).

► SECTION C: STRATEGIC PLANNING IN ITS CONTEXT

→ STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN: “WHAT”

1. Context and institutional environment

- 1.1. This section concerns in particular the dimension of the “opportunities” and “risks” dealt with in the SWOT analysis, in which a critical examination of external factors should bring to light a series of projects and priorities, as discussed in this section.
- 1.2. The analysis should cover a series of factors such as:



- The challenges and conditions deriving from the Holy See's higher education "system", the Institution's network of relations with its religious order or diocese;
- Relations with the State regarding political and economic issues in the field of education;
- The Institution's social and economic background and relations with local actors;
- The context of higher education – educational trends, cooperation and competition with other Institutes of higher education – the so-called higher education marketplace;
- Globalization and its consequences for Institutions of higher education.

You are required to **select and analyze the elements of particular relevance to the Institution**, and to **focus on its degree of openness towards the outside world and related mechanisms**.

All these points should be **considered as being correlated with other sections of the Strategic Plan to ensure the completeness of the Institution's response**.

2. Institutional Vision, Mission and Position

These words are often used as synonyms, but the Institution should state coherently what kind of Institution it wants to be and what it wants to achieve during the planning phase. For example, this section of the Strategic Plan normally includes reference to:

- the Institution's philosophical and theological basis – its general principles
- to whom it offers services – in both ecclesiastic and social contexts
- its academic profile, e.g.:
 - teaching, research, its presence within society
 - the equilibrium between teaching in the first and second cycle and research and post-graduate teaching programmes (doctorates and specialization schools)
 - the main disciplinary area
 - fields of graduate employment
 - analysis of the Institution's size and its role, areas of planning regarding growth or resizing.
- focus on the local, national and international environment and equilibrium (in terms of interests and activities) between these dimensions
- its academic orientation, orientation of services, or both
- its position in relation to other Institutions of higher education, e.g. whether there is cooperation or competition, regarding:
 - vision and internal orientation
 - external factors and potential opportunities.

You are invited to **deal with and develop the aspects relevant to your Institution and add any specific to your situation**.

→ **THE ACADEMIC SECTOR: “HOW”**

3. Education, learning and teaching

3.1 This naturally constitutes the core of the Institution’s work, and the purpose of this section is to state the **strategic priorities deriving from the SWOT analysis and their coherence with the Institution’s vision and mission.**

3.2 Among the priorities, at least some of the following may be included:

- the general profile of the baccalaureate, licentiate and doctoral programmes – new courses planned in the period of reference; changes to existing courses; multi-disciplinarity
- qualification-related competences – academic, personal, professional, and the learning outcomes in general
- educational developments – the use of on-line education, etc.
- the development/maintenance/implementation of on-line education systems
- the recruitment of new students – lay and clerical
- interactions between stakeholders
- the effectiveness of the learning processes – acquisition, capacity to transmit knowledge, etc.
- support for students
- quality improvement / student satisfaction
- students’ active participation in the learning process, the review of programmes and study plans.

3.3 The most useful indicators for the evaluation of performance should include the following for a period of about five years:

- evaluations of quality
- statistics regarding rate of withdrawal and time to graduation
- the ratio of teaching staff /students
- the ratio between student applications and admissions
- the accuracy of information regarding courses.

The Annex 1 further develops the topics dealt with in this section for Institutions of higher education requiring more information.

4. Research and scholarship

4.1 The distinction proposed here is between research, i.e. an original investigation published through various means, and scholarship, i.e. work, not necessarily published, that helps keep teaching staff up-to-date on all aspects of their disciplinary sector.

► **The Institutions differ in their commitment and the amount and breadth of their**



research.

You are therefore invited to **select some of the elements below**, according to your **mission, the various aspects and long-term strategic priorities.**

4.2. The following lists some aspects in relation to which research strategies can be considered:

- the role of research within the Institution
- existing or planned research topics
- the means for exploitation of research products – publications, doctoral theses, research commissioned by stakeholders or by civil society in general
- the number of original research products produced by teaching staff
- staff recruitment and training
- doctoral programmes: sustainability, learning outcomes, dedicated teaching staff
- research partnerships with other Institutions
- organizational responsibilities.

4.3 The following regard the significant areas of teaching staff activities:

- commitment to research, the promotion and development of doctorates; student attendance participation in international partnership activities
- educational commitments and ongoing training
- publications on these topics.

4.4 Possible indicators of use to evaluate the realization of objectives over a five-year period include the following:

- number of teaching staff who are active, not very active, or inactive in research
- publications in peer-reviewed journals and in books with editorial boards
- publications in other media related to the professions present within the Institution
- the acquisition of external funding for research
- commitment to training in research
- institutional support for research.

You are invited to **deal with and develop the aspects relevant to your own Institution and add any specific to your situation.**

5. Third mission activities

5.1 This point is conventionally described in terms of commitment, contacts and participation in activities involving communities external to the academic Institution, in order to disseminate knowledge produced within the Institution to external users, also in non-traditional ways.

5.2 The following constitute the strategic elements in this field:

- a map of actors external to the Institution and potential use of their competences
- the profile of topics and thematic strengths that the Institution is prepared to disseminate and the types of cooperation it is prepared to launch, including those



with the Church, NGOs, companies etc.

- the reasons for taking on this kind of commitment – participation in the social community, additional funding, sense of social duty
- policies for lifelong learning and continuous professional development – appropriate teaching in relation to individual and group learning
- the formation of public opinion in civil society (current issues)
- cultural development
- exchange of knowledge and consultancy projects
- incentivizing the Institution to commit to the third mission, through the preparation of staff, research connections, flexible processes.

5.3 Possible indicators of performance over a five year period could, for example, be:

- research and educational demands, including new courses
- agreements between doctoral schools and stakeholders
- supplementary income for third mission activities
- ongoing partnerships
- impact on issues of public debate.

From the above you are invited to **select the aspects that have an impact in your own context**; it is clear that Institutions exist in different situations, and that the SWOT analysis can identify different needs and areas.

6. Internationalization

6.1 Obviously many Institutions (especially the individual Faculties) were essentially founded to respond to local and regional needs. Others have embraced a strong international and missionary perspective from the very outset. However, all ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education, to a greater or lesser extent, are subject to the dynamics of globalization and, naturally, the Church has always had a universal nature. The following indicates the various dimensions of internationalization and the Institutions are invited to include in their Strategic Plans the aspects that they deem important to their own specific situations.

6.2 Possible elements of a strategy for internationalization could include:

- the definition of the Institution's international position, e.g.
 - why internationalization is important
 - what advantages and outcomes are expected
- policies for the admission of international students to the Institutions of higher education
 - sources of recruitment
 - full time/on a semester basis
 - language of teaching
 - internationalization of the curriculum
 - support for students



- importance of the campus
- policies for sending students of higher education Institutions abroad
 - destination – selection criteria
 - type of learning or work experience
 - credit transfer
 - preparation
- policies regarding students abroad
 - on-line learning
 - importance of colleagues in partner Institutions
- mobility of academic and administrative staff
 - national and international recruitment
 - national and international exchanges
- international research partnerships and related awareness-raising projects
- partnership policies in general
 - motivation
 - level
 - purpose
 - selection criteria
- funding for international activities.

6.3 The indicators in this field could include data for a five-year period regarding:

- flows of outgoing students and their destinations
- flows of incoming students and their origins
- flows of outgoing staff and their destinations
- flows of incoming staff and their origins
- the employment of staff at an international level to create positions
- financial flows.

You are invited to **deal with and develop the aspects of relevance to your Institution** and **add any specific to your situation.**

→ **The NON-ACADEMIC SECTOR: Resources and Support Activities**

Although the main objectives of higher education Institutions are clearly coherent with their intellectual apostolate and realized through research and dissemination, various activities and policies in non-academic areas can either facilitate or inhibit the realization of said objectives: this normally emerges very clearly during the processes evaluation conducted by AVEPRO. These other areas may also require specific objectives and priority actions in order to support the intellectual apostolate.

- **Those drawing up the Strategic Plans are therefore invited to analyse the contents of points 7-11 and identify the most appropriate priorities and actions in relation to their own needs.**



Larger and more complex Institutions will obviously have different interests to those composed of only one or two Faculties.

7. Staff / Personnel

Profile according to:

- age
- lay or clerical
- member of a religious community or not
- academic staff: changes in selection policy
- institutional expectations regarding the role of academics – teaching, research, presence, support for students, etc. – also including any flexible contracts
- recruitment
- models of staff workload
- evaluation of staff performance and quality
- communication
- development and turnover of leadership
- non-academic staff: policies for their employment and career development.

8. Economic resources

- analysis of the economic situation
- general economic strategy
- specific strategies to ensure the Institution's long-term economic sustainability, including the diversification of income
- specific strategies to achieve cost effectiveness/efficiency
- economic management practices
- fundraising.

9. Student support and services

- analysis of the factors that influence the development and the demand for specific services
- functioning of services for students
- efficiency of methods for evaluation of the level of student satisfaction
- students' involvement in institutional governance.

10. Promotion and development

- institutional identity, vision and image
- main users
- marketing and public relations priorities
- organizational aspects
- meetings of alumni.

11. Structures

- summary of accommodation available and its capacity
- student accommodation policy
- leasing strategies
- catering
- respect for the environment
- investments and rental policies.

Annex 2 (Support activities) provides more detail regarding the points above.

→ GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Although much regarding organization and governance may be determined by institutional statutes, rules and regulations, structures sometimes encounter problems dealing with the series of external and internal challenges identified in the SWOT analysis (academic and economic), and also in points C1 (Context and institutional environment) and C2 (Institutional vision, mission and /position) of these Guidelines. In this case, organizational changes may be necessary.

- Also in this case, **you are invited to select the elements relevant to your situation and formulate a plan of organizational review if applicable.**

1. The traditional organizational aspects to be considered are:

- the Board of Administration (if applicable)
- the relationship between the Institution, Grand Chancellor and religious order/diocese
- the nature, composition and profile of the Rector's Office and the mode of attribution of roles
- Academic Senate and any committees/commissions it may have
- the academic structure – Faculties, Institutes, Departments, Centres, etc.
- the Administration and various professional units
- units dedicated to specific functions such as lifelong learning or consultancy.

2. Moreover, some factors/principles applicable to the above include:

- the ways in which decisions are reached
- the transparency and speed of decision-making processes
- processes of administrative simplification
- a clear definition of roles and responsibilities
- effective coordination and a “common philosophy”
- the existence of an effective academic capacity and support for the pursuit of established strategic priorities (e.g. quality strategies)
- a culture sensitive to external factors
- overall economic sustainability



- opportunities for inter-institutional cooperation to realize economies of scale in the sectors of academic and support services
- students' participation in institutional governance and policies on various levels.

► SECTION D: THE PROCESSES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING → “WHEN” AND “HOW”

1. Planning and sequence of time points

- 1.1 The strategic planning process should, as a rule, **take place every five years and be connected to the process of evaluation.**

In Institutions that have already completed the first cycle of evaluation, the Quality Committee should prepare a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) **within 6 months from the publication of the External Evaluation Report**, and the **Strategic Plan within 1 year** of its publication. Hence, a maximum of 12 months should pass between the external evaluation and the “publication” of the Strategic Plan.

- 1.2. Once the Strategic Plan is ready, it should be presented to the academic community, approved and published (e.g. online, on the institutional website), then revised on an annual basis, redefining objectives, purposes and answerability (where necessary and appropriate) and evaluating the results achieved or not achieved.

**Conclusion of the cycle of evaluation:
EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**
(drawn up by the Team)

PUBLICATION of the EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT





5 YEARS

NEW cycle of evaluation

2. Preparation of the Strategic Plan

- 2.1 In order for the Strategic Plan to constitute a positive experience, it must be seen as a shared commitment and all members of the academic community must be involved in its realization. This includes more distant stakeholders, so that the *centre* has the same importance as the *periphery*.
- 2.2 This involvement should begin with those in charge of the academic structures, who are the first interpreters and guarantors of policies and strategies. However, this *top-down* approach represents only half the work: in fact, the process also needs to be supported by a *bottom-up* dynamic that allows everyone – and in particular students – to contribute their viewpoints and proposals in relation to the management of the Institution. This can be done through thematic working groups for specific sections, to clarify and explain terms of reference and schedules with the support of the Quality Committee.

This broad scale involvement also requires a strong sense of identity, to be promoted not only through the sharing of common objectives but also, and above all, by focusing on individuals and their greatest aspirations, considering their studies and their professional careers.

- 2.3 The Strategic Plan must be approved by the competent organs of institutional governance in order to foster its credibility and acceptance. This implies having explicit approval from the highest ranks of the Institutions (Grand Chancellors, Council (if there is one) – Rector, Dean and/or departmental Director), who will hopefully have made a significant contribution to the contents of the Strategic Plan. Such contributions are essential for the sustainability of the whole process over time.
- 2.4 The detailed work required regarding the quality of information and the preparation, control and regulation of the Strategic Plan call for the creation of a specific working group, which should include representatives of the whole academic community, bearing in mind the necessary competences and experience.

3. Realization of the Strategic Plan

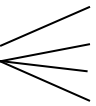
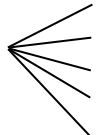
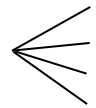

Preparation of the Strategic Plan alone is not sufficient: its implementation is of utmost importance to the process of effective strategic planning. This can be achieved by:

- splitting up the Strategic Plan, subdividing and allocating the objectives and activities in relation to the different years of the plan and communicating them internally (see 3.1)
- assigning the related tasks (see Figure 4)
- ensuring that the Strategic Plan and the institutional Budget are closely connected
- ensuring that the Strategic Plan is effectively disseminated, monitored, and continuously revised.



AVEPRO

3.1 OPERATIONAL MATRIX of the Strategic Plan

Section	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4
I 	X X	X	X	
II 	X X X	X X		X
III 	X X		X X	X
IV 				
etc.				

Critical year: set milestones, e.g.

- evaluation and diagnosis before actions
- definition of infrastructures and key roles in the process
- objective measurements
- policy priorities (institutional/external)
- obtain approval
- other preconditions

Figure 3: OPERATIONAL MATRIX of the Strategic Plan

3.2 Planning: *GUIDE for the ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY ACTIONS*

SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN:					
PRIORITY action	STEPS to take	Person in charge	timescale	evaluator	cost (if applicable)
1. _____	1.1 _____ etc.				
	1.2				
	1.3				
2. _____	2.1				
	2.2				
etc.	etc.				

Figure 4: Planning: GUIDE FOR THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

4. MONITORING, REVISION AND EVALUATION

4.1 **Monitoring is essential to the success of a Strategic Plan.** The state of realization of the Plan must be verified on a regular basis; any objectives that are no longer achievable must be critically re-examined, stating the reasons why and adopting alternative solutions. The involvement of all those in charge in these stages gives the process credibility and strength.

4.2 This “control” should normally be conducted annually, except when particular events (either positive, such as a large donation, or negative, e.g. if the Institution’s reputation were damaged for any reason) render extraordinary revision of the Strategic Plan necessary.

The Strategic Plan contains elements that render it complex and need to be borne in mind in order to establish an efficient system of monitoring:

- a **general objective (the Vision) comprises various other objectives** and is therefore subdivided into specific and operational objectives;
- the Strategic Plan **refers to the medium term** (at least 5 years) and therefore **the monitoring system must be coherent with the life cycle of the Plan**. A monitoring system that did not take this temporal factor into account would risk undermining the reliability of any evaluation. Some objectives must be measured in the short-term, while for others only long-term measurements make sense.
- Many actors are involved, and therefore it is very difficult to gather and organize the information and facts necessary for the purpose of monitoring: this demands the **cooperation of a multitude of people and offices**.

4.3 An alternative (or possibly complementary) solution would be to consider monitoring of the process in terms of the participation and creation of networks. In short, the proposed system of control can comprise three different, but in many aspects complementary, phases:

1. **Monitoring of PROJECTS.** Monitoring the effectiveness of the Plan through the state of realization of its projects.
2. **Monitoring of OBJECTIVES/RESULTS.** Identifying the main objectives of the Plan, attributing different priorities to them, and assigning each of them one or more indicators capable of showing the level to which it has been achieved.
3. **Monitoring of the PROCESS** (participation and networks of cooperation). This model, which is also the most complex to realize, has to indicate whether and how the Strategic Plan has managed to improve the Institution’s governance.

Together these three forms of monitoring provide the academic Institution with a sort of “**Annual summary of the Strategic Plan**”.

5. Internal operational plans and related public versions

5.1 A Strategic Plan drawn up according to the AVEPRO guidelines 2019 allows the academic Institution to verify its general state of realization on a regular basis. The document mainly has an **internal operational value** and may therefore be less easy to understand from the outside.

5.2 Nonetheless, one of the aims of the Strategic Plan is also to be a **TOOL OF COMMUNICATION** – a means through which the academic Institution can, in a simple and rapid manner, inform other parties about itself, its plans for the future, and the strategic approaches it intends to pursue as it develops. Stakeholders can also participate in the preparation of the Strategic Plan to a certain extent.

5.3 To this end, it is suggested that a **“simplified” version of the Strategic Plan** be produced, for information, marketing and communication purposes. This “public” version must be brief (for example in the form of a brochure or leaflet) and contain (for example) the following information:

- Message from the Rector/Dean
- Commitments undertaken for the Institution’s growth
- Strategic priorities, key objectives and the actions to be carried out to achieve them.

6. Suggested index for the Strategic Plan

In line with the contents of the previous sections of these guidelines, the index and contents of the Strategic Plan could be composed as follows:

- ➡ **Foreword**
- ➡ **Introduction**
- ➡ **Part A: Context, mission and vision**
- ➡ **Part B: Academic activities**
- ➡ **Part C: Resources and support activities**
- ➡ **Part D: Governance, management and organization of resources**
- ➡ **Annexes**

In more detail:

- ➡ The Foreword should mention the group of people who worked on the definition of the Plan, which process was followed, and its connection with the whole process of Quality Assurance adopted by the Institution.
- ➡ The introduction briefly presents the academic Institution.
- ➡ Part A defines the external context, the strategic challenges deriving from it, the Institution’s vision and mission and the role that it wishes to play in the light of the interaction between these internal and external aspects.
- ➡ Part B (Academic activities) should analyse, starting from the SWOT, the strategies intended to improve learning, training, teaching, research and scholarship, what the Institution can offer students (in general terms), the third mission and internationalization.
- ➡ Part C (Resources and support activities), again based on the data in the SWOT analysis, takes into consideration the organization of staff, the economic resources available, services for students, development and marketing policies, and the environment and structures available.
- ➡ Part D (Governance, management and organization of resources) deals in a transparent and open way, and not only from a formal viewpoint (compliance with Statutes and



regulations), with the modes and methods of governance, processes, procedures and methods of decision-making adopted, seeking to use the results of the SWOT analysis as a mechanism to facilitate a profound examination of the Institution's conscience, rather than merely reiterating the contents of norms and regulations.

Lastly, an **easy-to-read summary** should be provided, very concisely defining general objectives, actions to be taken and a time schedule for their realization.

1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE											
	YEAR SEMESTER	20xy		20 xy		20 xy		20 xy		20 xy	
		1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd
1.1 ACTION 1											
1.2 ACTION 2											
1.3 ACTION 3											
1) ACTION 3.1											
2) ACTION 3.2											
1.4 ACTION 4											



ANNEX 1

EDUCATION, LEARNING AND TEACHING

When compiling this section, the following list of questions for self-evaluation may help higher education Institutions determine the contents of their responses in the various sections of the Plan.

► You are invited **to select the elements that you deem appropriate**

1. Objectives of the Programmes of Study (PS)

Do the PS establish and document learning outcomes, meaning the knowledge (knowing), skills (knowing how) and behaviour (knowing how to be) students can achieve? Are the learning outcomes well-defined and conceived, as well as being achievable by the students?

2. Needs of the Stakeholders (SH)

Do the PS identify and document the needs of the SH: first and foremost those of all the students and their families, but also those of the local Church and the religious order?

3. Learning focused on the students, teaching and evaluation

Do the PS involve adequate teaching staff and tutors to ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved?

Are the personnel and structures together adequate for the purpose of supporting students' various activities and facilitate their learning (especially libraries, IT facilities, tutors etc.). For each course, is the following information available:

- Who provides the teaching (permanent teaching staff, associate professors, contract professors, etc.)?
- Are the processes for the recruitment of teaching staff transparent and focused on students' learning? Do they combine research and teaching?
- Is the academic position of permanent and contract-based teaching staff (subject taught, class, full time or part time, etc.) known?
- Is the connection between teaching and research underlined?
- Is the use of innovative methods for learning-teaching and of new technologies encouraged?
- Is the flexibility of studies in relation to students' different situations clearly expressed (e.g. students who are part-time / working / disabled / foreign / migrants / refugees, etc.)?
- Are the methods of evaluation of the examinations available to and applied correctly to all students? Is there a procedure for student appeals?

4. External and international relations

Do the PS maintain relations with Faculties and programmes in other countries for the promotion of internationalization, and in particular for student mobility? Are they adequate to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes?

5. Related services

Do the PS organize and manage student administration services, orientation, tutoring,



introduction to the world of work, and periods of work experience outside the Institution during the PS? Have ways to assess their effectiveness been established?

6. Access to PS, management of students' progress, certification and recognition

Do the PS clearly define how possession of the knowledge and/or skills required for access to the PS is assessed and certified?

Are the learning outcomes representative of what the students know and can apply, based on their knowledge, skills and competences, the latter meaning quality, skill and ability to use their knowledge?

Are the Dublin Descriptors used to indicate results, graded by study cycle?

Do the PS define and document procedures, criteria and regulations for the management of students' progress, including non-formal and informal education according to the Lisbon Convention?

Do the PS provide for the Diploma Supplement to be given to students when they obtain their qualifications, the Supplement being a certificate additional to the degree certificate describing the programme contents, forms of teaching used, admission requirements, credits gained, grades, final grade, any professional status awarded, possible areas of employment?

7. Commitment to quality-based management

Have the Programmes of Study and the structures they belong to (University, Athenaeum or Faculty) undertaken a formal and documented commitment to managing the quality of the PS? If so, have they specified the modes and methods?

8. Processes for the management of PS

Do the PS provide for and document study plans which clearly describe the characteristics of courses (e.g. for each course, the credits [ECTS], learning outcomes, modes and schedule for the verification of learning, didactic coordination)?

Are the organizational structure of the PS (and who is in charge of them) clearly defined?

Is the educational process well-structured and well planned?

Is the educational process monitored and are the relative results analysed?

Are the results of the PS collected and published?

9. Communication

Does the institutional website provide complete, up-to-date and easily accessible information about:

- prospects the PS intends to prepare students for when they have gained the relative qualification?
- selection criteria?
- learning outcomes?
- study plans and the characteristics of individual courses and other educational activities, including the final assessment?
- profile of the student population?

10. Monitoring, results and revision of PS

Do the PS provide details of educational activities and monitor them, in order to assess their coherence with the original plans and projects, also via the collection of students'



opinions regarding teaching and other activities? Do the PS provide details of and monitor the ways in which students' learning is assessed, in order to ensure they are correct and adequate to achieve the learning outcomes, and document the relative results?

Do the PS collect and document results regarding:

- incoming students and their profile?
- rates of withdrawal?
- time to graduation?
- entry to the world of work?
- continuing studies in subsequent cycles?
- contents of the programme in the light of the latest sectoral research, ensuring they are updated?
- students' workload and procedures for evaluation?
- levels of satisfaction with the education received following graduation?

Are students and other stakeholders involved in revision? Is it published?



ANNEX 2

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

When compiling this Section, the following elements may be of help in determining which contents to include.

- You are invited to **select those most relevant to the preparation of your own Strategic Plan**

► Personnel, strategies and staff development

1. Age of academic/non-academic staff and policy, based on the outcome.
2. Profile in terms of lay and religious academic staff and the implications in terms of funding and improvement of academic careers.
3. Academic profile and changes in academic policy (e.g. online or lifelong learning) bearing in mind teaching staff needs.
4. The expectations of academic staff and correlations with:
 - skill, competence and adaptability of staff members
 - recruitment
 - distribution within the Institution
 - criteria for promotion
 - career
 - career planning and support
 - significant new skills

The same aspects also apply to administrative staff.

5. The maintenance and recruitment of staff:
 - religious/non-religious
 - pay scales
 - incentives and rewards
 - conditions of employment
 - areas with shortcomings
6. Changes of workload models: relations with staff, reduction of costs in working practices.
7. Quality of staff performance
 - evaluation
 - opportunities for personal growth
8. Communication strategy.
9. Development of leadership and planning the turnover of key positions.

► Financial strategies

1. Analysis of the financial situation (current and future) in terms of:
 - financial trend: income, expenses; budget
 - academic development and implications of costs
 - comparative analysis regarding the economic situation of the units within the Institution
 - what happens in other Institutions or their units
2. General financial strategy in terms of:
 - budget balancing
 - creation of surplus
 - creation of reserves
 - indebtedness
3. Specific strategies to ensure long-term financial sustainability:
 - breadth and range of sources of income – study grants, fundraising, alumni, State subsidies, contracts, rent, etc.
 - contribution of the various sources of funding
 - duration of the various sources of funding
 - investment costs
 - investment strategies
4. Specific strategies to achieve cost efficiency/effectiveness:
 - productivity of processes regarding teaching staff, technical-administrative staff, students
 - staff workload
 - administrative processes
5. The effectiveness of financial management practices:
 - expense planning
 - cost of services
 - cash flow management
 - cost and expense categories
 - financial decentralization
 - reserves
 - management information

► Student services and support

1. Analysis of factors that influence the development of and demand for services in general, and in particular:
 - pastoral support and advice
 - career advice



- medical services
- accommodation
- recreational activities
- canteens
- other

2. Mode of functioning of services for students

- strategies
- quality criteria

3. Effectiveness of methods to evaluate students' satisfaction with services

- users' committee
- surveys
- specific working groups

4. Students involved in institutional governance

- on boards, in committees, in commissions
- in student associations

► Promotion and development

1. The image, vision and identity that the Institution wishes to project

2. Targets (also potential)

- pool of students
- research community
- users of consultancy
- stakeholders
- press (national and international)
- public
- alumni

3. Marketing/public relations priorities for the areas above

- publications
- website
- meetings
- media

4. Organizational aspects

- internal marketing office
- public relations and outsourcing
- department/office for publications
- organization of alumni



► Development of the campus and support services

1. Control of the adequacy of campus accommodation in the light of the number and type of students

- quality in relation to user expectations
- distance/arrangements for those not resident
- use of existing spaces - criteria
- life cycle and maintenance of buildings

2. Accommodation strategies, including:

- new constructions
- adaptation of existing buildings
- renovation or substitution of low-quality structures
- opportunities for purchase or renting of new buildings for academic and student accommodation purposes
- use of external organizations for fundraising

3. Accommodation strategy for students, including:

- buildings managed directly by the Institution
- partnership agreements with rental agencies
- construction cooperatives

4. Evaluation of the demand for catering services

5. Policies for respecting the environment

6. Investments and funding policies