

University Pastoral

Framework:

The Pastoral of Higher Education is a service of the Catholic Church present in all the Dioceses of Portugal.

Its intervention focus the different academies (through students, faculty and staff) located within the geographical area of each Diocese.

In every diocese, it is generally formed by an executive team of volunteers, to which members of the respective Academic communities will freely volunteer to participate in actions that will be developed.

The activities that the Pastoral of Higher Education, in every diocese, develops throughout the year are diverse and very different: in many of them, there are often cultural meetings, seminars, training, volunteering, youth meetings, hiking, adventure activities, gatherings, concerts, theatrical performances, multicultural festivals, poetry meetings, movie nights, retreats, reflection meetings, moments of prayer, cultural evenings, intercultural indoor soccer tournament, photo contests, etc. In several dioceses, it also marks its active presence in social action with the university community, supporting university students in precarious situation: delivery of food supplies, counselling and spiritual guidance. Volunteering is one of the key milestones of its activity, with the promotion of different voluntary actions of the students: the elderly, drug addicts, the mentally ill, children.

In certain dioceses there are also support projects for the integration of foreigners, particularly students coming from Portuguese-speaking African countries, who face an academic requirement to which they were not used to and, in addition, they look for social integration in an entirely different society and culture. In this regard, the Pastoral seeks to guide these students in the new community where they are, thereby addressing their adaptive and relational needs.

There are also, in some dioceses, the concern for meeting students who come to Portugal with the Erasmus Program, though, the Pastoral has not major projects for these students. However, it seeks to invite them and insert them in their various activities, particularly hiking, Christmas dinner, cultural debates, etc. The Pastoral wants to, thereby, reduce the pain of departure from the country, the family and their living context, providing them moments of interaction, exchange, sharing and building relational foundations that will enable them to feel more secure and confident in the purpose that brought them to Portuguese universities

Objectives:

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The Pastoral has the fundamental objective of raising awareness of the Academic Community for Christian values, promoting actions leading to building rich personalities in Faith, Solidarity and Culture.

As the University is the prime location for the development of talent and knowledge, the Pastoral seeks to channel the acquisition of information for a search for the meaning of life, of joy and ethical achievement.

Thus, the Pastoral of Higher Education not only welcomes people in the academic life, but also stimulates a dialogue between faith, culture and science, seeking openness to new ideas and horizons.

The main goals of this Pastoral can be defined as:

- Development of collaboration and dialogue with the Academic Community, aimed at promoting the intellectual, cultural and spiritual human being;
- Supporting and welcoming all Catholics and non-Catholic Christians as well as representatives of other religions and cultures within various universities, while maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect and ecumenism;
- Providing to all members of the Academic Community, spaces to help them build a physical and emotional balance;
- Supporting voluntary projects, in several areas.