

VIENNA STATEMENT

on designing appropriate programs



**International Council for Higher Education
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The ICHE 2004 Triennial Assembly, convening in Vienna, Austria, reviewed the mission and priorities of ICHE and the “Statement of the 2004 Kolkata Conference on Education and Mission,” and responded to presentations from representatives of various global regions and contextual perspectives.

Drawing upon these documents and presentations, conferees identified endeavors to be engaged by the organization and distinctives that are to characterize the design of appropriate programs sponsored by ICHE. These recommendations may be categorized according to the following questions:

- What kinds of programs can/should ICHE start and develop?
- What qualities and characteristics of ICHE programs are important for excellence in education?
- What is needed to build Christian witness into each program?

What kinds of programs can/should ICHE start and develop?

1. General Guidelines:

- a. Terminology is to be carefully defined, seeking to use language that has common meaning and avoiding terms such as “programs,” “courses,” etc. that have varying meaning depending on the context. ICHE may choose to use terms such as “educational endeavors” to refer to a broad spectrum of activities that may include academic courses of study, conferences, networking, etc.
 - b. ICHE should seek to develop endeavors that are sponsored by ICHE specifically, that are collaborative between various ICHE member institutions, and that may be developed by individual ICHE institutions.
 - c. Care is to be given to employing terminology in titles and descriptions of ICHE endeavors that are sensitive to the context(s) in which they are to be offered.
2. ICHE should consider initiating and sustaining a network between ICHE member institutions and organizations for common purposes including, for example, sharing models of education.
 3. Programs of English language instruction are to be initiated in regions where need is identified.
 4. Courses or programs in economics would serve to meet a common need among various member institutions.
 5. Consideration is to be given to providing courses for Christian students in public or private secular universities that provide biblical/theological perspectives and assist in the integration of academic and biblical truth. Bengel Haus in Tübingen,

Germany, and other similar endeavors may serve as instructive models for such courses.

6. ICHE should seek to identify or develop models of co-curricular education and incorporate these perspectives in its educational endeavors. Co-curricular models would include, for example, spiritual formation, understanding lifestyles, student outreach/mission opportunities, etc.

What qualities and characteristics of ICHE programs are important for excellence in education?

1. General Guidelines:
 - a. Characteristics that are both global and local or context-specific should be explicit and implicit in ICHE endeavors.
2. A distinctive of ICHE endeavors is to be the intentional incorporation of values identified as central to a particular academic course of study and a Christian worldview.
3. Opportunities for theological reflection are to be incorporated in ICHE educational endeavors. By this we mean that attention is to be given to models for the integration of the truths of academic disciplines with biblical/theological perspectives. This principle is based on the assumption of the unity of truth.
4. The concept of diversity is valued both in the Body of Christ and educationally, and hence should characterize ICHE's endeavors. Its meaning and limitation for Christian higher education is to be carefully defined.
5. ICHE is to give attention to identifying contexts in which either teaching-centered or learning-centered education may be most appropriately employed. In situations in which learning-centered education is most suitable, learning outcomes are to be identified that are specific and measurable.
6. Educational endeavors are to evidence concern for the learning and development of both the individual and the community of learners.
7. Assessment that is responsive to characteristics inherent in local situations must be incorporated into each endeavor. Such evaluative activities are to give attention either to measuring fulfillment of objectives or of learning outcomes.

What is needed to build Christian witness into each program?

1. An emphasis on discipleship that is thoroughly grounded in the Great Commission and that includes witness as well as spiritual formation/transformation is to be included. Consideration is to be given to how this may be expressed in various ICHE documents as may be fitting ICHE's internal communications or its more neutral face in other contexts.

2. Recognizing the tension that frequently exists between biblical/theological excellence and spirituality, programs should seek to avoid dichotomizing the two, or emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other.
3. In a world of relativism, ICHE programs should present a standard of truth.
4. Helpful lists of textbooks that provide Christian perspectives for various academic disciplines may be drawn from sources such as the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). At the same time, care is to be exercised in selecting texts that are truly integrative of academic research and biblical perspectives, and not only confined to biblical principles.
5. Attention is to be given to identifying the degree to which neutrality may be extended in ICHE programs and where Christian witness is to be boldly and unashamedly proclaimed.