

THE FOUNDATION OF AN ECS UNIVERSITY

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Conforming to the GoSS's Statutory Requirements – The vision and mission of a new ECS University would be decided by the ECS itself, as the official sponsoring body. Nevertheless, if the university is to gain GoSS validation as a recognised, formally regulated private university, the ECS will need to ensure that the university complies with the formal regulatory requirements laid-down by the GoSS for *private* universities. At the time of the university feasibility study such regulations were in the process of preparation and, therefore, unknown. However, the apparent intention is that the GoSS will close private universities which fail to comply with the statutory requirements unless they can demonstrate that they have the intention and capacity to comply with the regulations. When ratified, the GoSS requirements for private universities will become mandatory as part of the programme to regulate all private universities in South Sudan. In practice, compliance with the GoSS's regulatory requirements will potentially be advantageous to the ECS. It will not only assist the ECS in setting goals for the university, but also - in marketing terms - will indicate the university's commitment to providing quality.

Relative to the establishment of a geographically dispersed ECS University, compliance with GoSS regulations and requirements will need to be consistently implemented across all constituent faculties. In practice, regulatory compliance with these regulations is not a one-off matter: it is ongoing. Therefore, it will require the formulation and implementation of policies and practices focused on ensuring regular monitoring, evaluation and review procedures across all the university's faculties.

The Formal Means by which the University's Christian Foundation is to be expressed - At an early stage of its deliberations it will be important for the ECS to decide whether the proposed university should be a *Christian university* **or** a *university with a Christian foundation*. The university feasibility study research did not clarify this since this is clearly a matter for determination by the ECS. Fundamentally understood, although both models are Christianly inspired, they are neither the same nor interchangeable. Both models exist elsewhere in the world and are regarded as having their own relative merits.

- ***The Model of a Christian University*** – By definition the implementation of this model implies a commitment to the appointment of *only* Christian staff, the admission of *only* Christian students to the university and the delivery of a curriculum involving only a Christian perspective. Accordingly, such a model would require the whole life and work of the university to be viewed, monitored, evaluated and reviewed strictly through the prism of Christianity.
- ***The Model of a university with a Christian foundation*** – This model embodies *incarnational theology* and *inclusiveness*. Accordingly, it has the potential to promote and develop appropriate relationships between the role of the church and the role of society and to welcome staff and students of other faiths and none, who wish to study in a university founded on Christian values, principles and beliefs and where the teaching and learning paradigm accords with a Christian worldview. In support of the appropriateness of the adoption of *Christian foundation model*, the university feasibility research data indicated that an ECS University should

- welcome Christians, those of other faiths, and those with no religious faith
- contribute to the development of South Sudan and the nation's social and economic development goals by developing the requisite understanding, knowledge and skills
- contribute to social development and tribal integration.

The Potential of a Christian Foundation Model – Such a model would serve both church and nation. It would fulfil the need identified by research participants for future national leaders to be educated in a Christian context in order to uphold the values implicit in South Sudan's status as a Christian nation. In addition it would contribute to the mission and ministry of the ECS through the provision of education in accordance with a Christian worldview. Its adoption would potentially fill a niche in the university sector market since it would be the only university in South Sudan obliged by its foundation principles to function in accordance with a Christian worldview.

The adoption of the *Christian foundation* would be intellectually challenging since it requires *responsible Christian scholarship* and the *interpretation of a Christian worldview in the context of contemporary/postmodern culture*. Interrelated with this would be the need to develop scholarship in all disciplines and blend good professional practice and theological thinking with the recognition that all knowledge is inextricably interconnected. Such an understanding does not imply the dominance of subjective opinion, but that humans are influenced by deeply held beliefs which influence how learning is processed.

Nor does such an understanding of the rationale for a Christian university imply either defensiveness or exclusivity. To the contrary - it implies a *Christianly inclusive* institution responding to its calling in Christ to provide educational and academic excellence in a context of justice and equality. In practice, this involves an acceptance that all beliefs – whether religious or secular – can co-operate in the educational process when a diversity of beliefs is considered to be a resource and not a problem.

The Centrality of a Theology Faculty - The University Feasibility Study research clearly indicates that the proposed ECS University's Theology Faculty should be *central* to its overall faculty structure and to its academic integrity. Epistemologically and practically understood the Theology Faculty would potentially be instrumental in exemplifying, influencing and manifesting the university's Christian foundation and constitute a practical, fundamental expression of the University's Christian foundation. Such exemplification is important because no institution can be a value free zone. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the body of knowledge transmitted by various faculties is influenced by the Christian theology and ideology upon the ECS University is founded.

Research Status of an ECS University - A further decision regarding the model for an ECS University would involve decisions about whether it should adopt a primary focus on research, or on the faculty's teaching ability. Whilst in practice these are not necessarily mutually exclusive alternatives, they nevertheless represent two different approaches/models – the first being traditional, the second more liberal. In making such a decision there are implicit implications regarding funding e.g. research can be a major source of income generation; research based universities are usually more highly regarded than other institutions; whereas non-research/liberal universities are usually more academically and socially inclusive.

Ensuring the Integrity of an ECS University – Ensuring the integrity of the university is a matter to be considered from the outset and should be a fundamental consideration underpinning the decision-making process. Accordingly, the ECS would need to ensure that in all respects an ECS University would be capable of:

- Facilitating faculty and students in personal and collective consideration of what constitutes objective truth.
- Enhancing students’ comprehension of the scope of human knowledge and its consideration from a Christian, and other, perspectives.
- Providing a quality student experience focussed on the spiritual, educational and academic development of students – collectively and individually.
- Facilitating cross-cultural and cross-cutting academic interaction between individual faculties.

How the ECS University is to be Achieved in Practice

Clearly it is for the ECS to make decisions regarding the physical form and location of an ECS University’s faculties and how this is to be achieved. Accordingly, the following models – considered to comprise the major viable alternatives- are offered for consideration.

The push model: The adoption of this model would facilitate the building of the ECS University from ‘grass roots’. Its implementation would be a means of capitalising on, and extending existing ECS educational institutions – physically, educationally and academically - by utilising these buildings and facilities for the initial establishment of the university.

Potentially this model would enable ECS to realise the proposed university more immediately than the alternative models. Furthermore, its adoption would strongly coincide with the feasibility study research outcomes by facilitating the establishment of an ECS University with geographically dispersed faculties. Potentially, in the context of the long term strategy to create a framework for the provision of Higher Education throughout South Sudan, this model would offer the ECS opportunity to develop the initial discrete faculties into fully fledged multi-faculty universities: thus potentially contributing to a national framework for Higher Education throughout South Sudan.

The pull model: The adoption of this model would involve starting-up the university with a small body of elite staff and students. However, it would not be possible for an ECS University to be created *only* around Bishop Gwynne Theological College, since it is understood that formal recognition by the GoSS will stipulates the minimum number of faculties needed to be in existence for a Letter of No Objection, authorising a private university, to be issued.

Examples of the implementation of the *pull model* include St Mary’s University, Juba, and also Warwick University, UK, where this model was used to build-up a powerhouse to accelerate the university’s academic and educational development.

Joint Investment in a Shared University Infrastructure with Another/Other Christian Providers - Examples of this model include

- a shared ECS/ Roman Catholic University, with the possibility of having separate theological faculties
- a university founded jointly with another Christian denomination(s)

Whilst both the *push* and *pull* models has distinguishing features, they are not, necessarily mutually exclusive: most importantly, both are Christianly inspired. On the basis of the university feasibility study research, evidence indicates that the *preferred model* would be a university with a *Christian foundation*.

An ECS University's Faculties - Given that the *calling* of the proposed ECS University is to *serve*, the question of *which* and *how many* faculties should initially be established, and where they should be located, comprises a core issue - educationally and otherwise. Whilst it is obvious that students cannot pursue every discipline offered by a university, it is widely accepted that they nevertheless benefit from encounters with the interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation generated by the intellectual intercourse and discourse between the various disciplines offered by the institution.

The Theology Faculty - The University Feasibility Study research clearly indicates that the proposed ECS University's Theology Faculty should be central to its overall faculty structure and to its academic integrity. Epistemologically and practically understood the Theology Faculty would potentially be instrumental in exemplifying, influencing and manifesting the university's Christian foundation and constitute a practical, fundamental expression of the University's Christian foundation. Such exemplification is important because no institution is a value free zone. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the body of knowledge transmitted by various faculties is influenced by the Christian theology and ideology upon the proposed ECS University is founded.

Geographical Implications of Founding a Dispersed University – Whilst pragmatically understood it makes economic sense for the ECS to capitalise on its existing assets by establishing a geographically dispersed university, this a model is highly dependent for its realisation on the implementation of the GoSS's plans for the development of the country's infrastructure, e.g. roads, transport, etc. Accordingly, the ECS will need closely to liaise with the GoSS in determining the timetable relating to the establishment and development of each of the university's faculties, in order to ensure the maximum access for faculty and students.

ECS University Admissions Policy - The University Feasibility Report recognises that there will be those in South Sudan who have had their education interrupted or have been educated in schools with severely limited resources such as unqualified teachers, limited facilities, textbooks and materials may wish to have a university education. Accordingly, the report advises that the proposed ECS University's Admission Policy should take cognisance of, and seek to accommodate, this situation.

Recommendations

The GoSS's Forthcoming Statutory Requirements for Registration as a Recognised University – Determining whether the ECS can comply with these requirements should be a primary consideration when deciding whether to proceed with the new university.

University Status - The ECS should consider the establishment of a university with a *Christian foundation* rather than the establishment of a *Christian university*. The *Christian foundation model* accords with the views of the majority of research participants, and was the

model most extensively researched in the feasibility study report on the basis of such evidence.

University Faculties -Which faculties are initially to be established and the proposed geographical location of each should be identified as soon as possible and related indicative costings produced. Such decisions will potentially assist in grounding the ECS's vision for the university, and form an important part of the documentation required when making applications for start-up funding.

Maintaining the Foundation – The ECS should identify the ways in which it will actively support the *overall* life and work of the proposed university. In particular, it should identify the ways in which it will both oversee and contribute to its Christian foundation.

Collaborative Partnerships – The ECS should consider establishing global partnerships with other Anglican universities. Accordingly, consideration could be given to the possibility of the university joining

- The Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion (CUAC). This organisation comprises a worldwide association of one hundred and twenty Anglican higher education institutions in America. For further information see <http://cuac.anglicancommunion.org>
- The Cathedrals Group of universities, UK - all of which have a Christian foundation, e.g. Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist. For further information see <http://cathedralsgroup.org.uk>
- **Student Admissions** - It is recommended that these should be based not only on examination certificates and the number of courses an applicant has successfully completed, but also in accordance with considerations about how to facilitate such students by modifying entry requirements by, for example:
 - Accepting applications from those who have completed their Senior Secondary School education and have Senior Secondary School Certificate (or its equivalent) gained at a school for refugees or internally displaced persons.
 - Requiring applications for admission to be accompanied by two references, one of which should be from a senior teacher in the secondary school attended by the applicant and another from a respected member of the applicant's community.
 - Facilitating those educated outside of Sudan, by accepting international equivalent qualifications.