

CENTRE OF ADVANCED STUDIES 'A.S.CENT.' · UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO

Three-Year Plan of Activities

September 2022 – December 2025

Dear Colleagues,

To the **Scientific Council**
Centre of Advanced Studies 'A.S.Cent.'

1 How the Centre came about

The proposal for a Centre of Advanced Studies at the University of Palermo was first presented to the Rector, and then to the University's governing bodies, in 2021. Following the procedure set out in the University's *Statuto*, A.S.Cent. took shape over the summer of 2022: the Rector appointed its Director in July and its Scientific Council in August.

The Centre's Regulations were adopted on 22 September 2022, and the Scientific Council held its first meeting the following day, with the Rector in attendance.



A.S.Cent. joins a well-established international community of centres and institutes for advanced study. In shaping the Centre, we have drawn on the experience of five institutions in particular, each of which offers a model for what A.S.Cent. aims to become:

JRC Centre for Advanced Studies

European Commission · Ispra

Links visiting researchers, doctoral partnerships and exploratory, interdisciplinary research in a single framework.

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

European University Institute · Florence

Works across disciplines and departments, and funds much of its research through competitive grants.

Center for Advanced Studies

Eurac Research · Bolzano

Combines international fellows with public engagement and close dialogue with local institutions.

Centre for Advanced Studies

University Canada West · Vancouver

Builds visibility through a flagship lecture series, a journal and an annual conference.

School of Advanced Study

University of London

Supports researchers through fellowships, research training, seasonal schools and public engagement.

This plan sets out the Centre's priorities for its first three-year planning period, from September 2022 to December 2025.

19 Jul 2022 Director appointed	5 Aug 2022 Scientific Council appointed	22 Sep 2022 Regulations of the Centre adopted	23 Sep 2022 First meeting of the Scientific Council
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2 Our mission



A.S.Cent. brings leading scholars from around the world to Palermo to think, teach and carry out research alongside the University's own academic community.

The Centre is designed to strengthen the University's research capacity: to bring its departments and research groups together, to encourage collaboration between them, and to help develop and share new scientific and technological knowledge. It does so, above all, through the international exchange of people and ideas.

Three principles guide the Centre's work: internationalisation, interdisciplinarity and the open sharing of knowledge and expertise. Together they shape how ideas are debated, how projects are developed and how new findings emerge.

In short, A.S.Cent. aims to be a meeting place where distinguished academics from abroad work side by side with the University of Palermo's professors, early-career researchers, research fellows, postdocs and doctoral students.

Internationalisation

Bringing leading scholars to Palermo and connecting our researchers with international networks.

Interdisciplinarity

Supporting research that crosses the boundaries between the sciences, the humanities and the social sciences.

Knowledge sharing

Turning expertise into seminars, schools, publications and public engagement.

FROM WELCOME HUB TO CENTRE FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH

In its first phase, A.S.Cent. will act primarily as a **hub for Visiting Fellows**, offering them accommodation, a place to work and access to the University's facilities, and introducing them to colleagues in the relevant departments.

This is only the first step. Like its counterparts in Ispra, Florence, Bolzano and London, the Centre's long-term ambition is to become a place where research is not only hosted but produced: a centre that runs its own **coordinated research programmes** and organises **conferences, seminars, master classes and seasonal schools** for the University's early-career researchers, all built around the presence of its visiting professors.

PHASE ONE · 2022-2025

A welcome hub

- Hosting Visiting Fellows and Senior Visiting Fellows
- Housing, office space and access to University services
- Introductions to UniPa departments and research groups



LONG-TERM GOAL · BEYOND 2025

A centre for advanced research

- Coordinated interdisciplinary research programmes
- Conferences and seminars
- Master classes and seasonal schools for early-career researchers
- All built around the visiting professors

3 Strategic objectives

The Centre has five objectives:

- Strengthening research.** To build on the University of Palermo's scientific, economic and intellectual strengths by developing lasting international links, in particular by inviting Italian and international scholars of outstanding reputation to spend extended periods in Palermo as Visiting Fellows or Senior Visiting Fellows.

- b) **Raising the University's profile.** To raise the national and international profile of the University's departments, researchers and scholars by streamlining and coordinating its internationalisation support services.
- c) **Joint research.** To design and carry out research projects together with visiting researchers.
- d) **Partnerships.** To develop long-term partnerships and joint initiatives with universities, research institutions and industry, in Italy and abroad.
- e) **Innovation and advanced training.** To promote interdisciplinary research, technology transfer and the spread of innovation, and to run seasonal schools and other forms of advanced training.



4 Programmes and activities

The Centre will pursue these objectives through the programmes and activities listed below. The underlying principle is simple: visiting scholars should not just give a lecture and leave, but stay long enough to do research with colleagues, teach, and build lasting working relationships with the University's young researchers.

- a) **Visiting Fellowship Programme.** Through open international calls, and within its own budget, the Centre will award *Visiting Fellowships* and *Senior Visiting Fellowships* lasting from one month to one year to scholars, researchers and professors from universities and research organisations worldwide. Fellows will work on research themes set by the Scientific Council, in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Palermo.
- b) **Support for visiting scholars.** Fellows will receive a full support package: subsidised accommodation or guest rooms; travel expenses; access to University canteens; free use of libraries and research facilities; an office with a computer workstation; internet access and a University e-mail address; a Senior Common Room or meeting space; a University ID badge; access to MyUniPA and the University's social media channels; and a welcome pack.
- c) **Communication and outreach.** Promoting the Centre internationally and sharing the results of its research and activities with academic and public audiences.
- d) **Support for scientific events.** Co-funding conferences and other scientific events organised by the University of Palermo.
- e) **Early-Career Researchers' Think Tank.** Creating a think tank for the University's recent PhD graduates, postdoctoral researchers and teaching assistants.
- f) **Seasonal schools.** Organising interdisciplinary seasonal schools, taught together with the Visiting Fellows, for selected students from the University's graduate programmes.
- g) **Lectures, workshops and master classes.** Running lecture series, workshops, focus groups, master classes and advanced courses with the Visiting Fellows. These are aimed primarily at early-career researchers, research fellows and postdocs and, in partnership with the University's Doctoral School, at doctoral and Master's students, particularly those on the University's excellence tracks.



"L'Universo nascosto", a public event with Alessandro De Angelis, Sala Lanza, Orto Botanico, Palermo, 25 September 2024, co-promoted by A.S.Cent.

5 Director and Scientific Council



DIRECTOR

Prof. Avv. Antonello Miranda

Full Professor of Comparative Law and European Private Law · Department of Political Sciences and International Relations (DEMS)

Professor of Comparative Law and European Private Law since 1983, he was Dean of the Faculty of Political Science from 2005 to 2013 and chairs the PhD programme in Dynamics of Socio-Political, Economic and Legal Systems. A law graduate of the University of Palermo, he trained in English law at the London School of Economics. He was appointed honorary judge in 1998, was admitted to the Bar (*avvocato*) in 2002 and qualified as a mediator in 2009. He has been Honorary Consul of Estonia since 2018.

His ties with advanced study go back to his time as Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the School of Advanced Study and Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London.

He is the author of more than 90 books and articles, most of them in English, on comparative private law (property, family law, succession, contract, torts, the right to information, human rights and mediation), with particular attention to English and common law, and on the evolution and harmonisation of EU law. He is editor and author of a treatise in English on the Italian legal system. In the 2020–2024 national research assessment (VQR) his publications received the highest rating, and his research group ranked first in Italy in comparative law.

SCIENTIFIC ACADEMIES AND SOCIETIES

Academia Europaea – Member; Vice-Chair of the Law Section

International Academy of Comparative Law – Member

Society for Advanced Legal Studies, University of London – Fellow

International Society of Family Law – Member of the Council

Italian Association of Comparative Law – Member of the Board

EDITORIAL AND REVIEW ROLES

Child and Family Law Quarterly – International Committee

Comparazione e Diritto Civile – Editorial Board

Opinio Juris in Comparatione – Editorial Board

Temida 2 publishing house, University of Białystok – Scientific Board

Referee for Poland's National Research Council; reviewer for the *Journal of Financial Crime* (Emerald)

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL



Rosaria Cancila

Full Professor of Early Modern History
Department of Culture and Society

Full professor since 2006, after a PhD in Modern History (Catania, 1993). She directs the journal *Mediterranea – Ricerche storiche* and its book series, has taken part in several national research projects (PRIN) and works with international networks on the Spanish monarchy, with links to universities in Madrid, Valladolid, Seville and Barcelona. Her research covers early modern Sicily in its Mediterranean and Spanish context: fiscal history, feudal nobility, warfare, Baroque Palermo and the history of medicine. Her book *Fisco ricchezza comunità nella Sicilia del Cinquecento* won the Premio Rhegium Julii; recent works include *Palcoscenici del mondo nella Palermo barocca* (2018) and *Palermo giornate cruciali* (2023).



Francesco Cappello

Full Professor of Human Anatomy
Department of Biomedicine, Neuroscience and Advanced Diagnostics

A specialist in pathological anatomy, he trained at research centres in New York, Pittsburgh, Maryland and Geneva, and has served as Scientific Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Institute of Science and Technology (IEMEST) in Palermo. He is internationally known for his work on molecular chaperones, in particular Hsp60, and on extracellular vesicles, and their role in cancer and in neurodegenerative, inflammatory and cardiac diseases. His recent research extends to patient-derived glioblastoma models, the health effects of micro- and nanoplastics, exercise and the microbiota, and innovation in anatomy teaching.



Antonio Chella

Full Professor of Robotics
Department of Engineering

Founder and director of the University's Robotics Lab (1998) and associate of the CNR Institute for High-Performance Computing and Networking, he is a leading figure in cognitive robotics and machine consciousness. Honorary Professor in Machine Learning and Optimisation at the University of Manchester, he received the James S. Albus Medal of the BICA Society, which he co-founded, and is a Fellow of the Italian National Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts. He founded and edits the *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness* and co-edited *Artificial Consciousness* (Imprint Academic).



Serena Marcenò

Full Professor of Political Philosophy
Department of Culture and Society

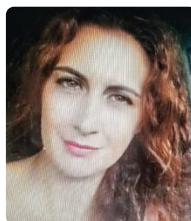
PhD in Human Rights (Palermo, 2007), after a degree from the University of Bologna. She has served as the Rector's Delegate for Internationalisation, coordinated the Master's programme in Cooperation, Development and Migrations and led the Erasmus+ MIGRANTS project (almost €1 million). She has held visiting positions at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (DAAD), Hanoi University and the University of Tunis El Manar. Her books include *Biopolitica e sovranità* (2011), *Critica alla cooperazione neoliberale* (2018) and the edited volume *Migrations: Governance, Policies, and Rights* (2023).



Giovanni Marsella

Full Professor of Experimental Physics
Department of Physics and Chemistry – Emilio Segrè

PhD in Physics (Lecce, 1999); full professor at Palermo since 2020 after a career at the University of Salento and INFN. An experimental astroparticle physicist, he was run coordinator of the ARGO-YBJ observatory in Tibet (2004–2013), led the electronics-upgrade work package of the Pierre Auger Observatory in Argentina, heads a local group in the DAMPE space mission and coordinates the Catania unit of the Cherenkov Telescope Array. A CERN affiliate since 2014, he has more than 200 peer-reviewed papers (Scopus h-index 46) and has led projects worth some €13.6 million.



Maria Giovanna Parisi

Associate Professor of Zoology
Department of Earth and Marine Sciences

PhD in Animal Biology (Palermo, 2008), with the national habilitation as full professor (2023). She coordinates the degree programme in Biodiversity and Technological Innovation, co-coordinates the marine spoke of the National Biodiversity Future Center and was Secretary-Treasurer of the Italian Association of Developmental and Comparative Immunobiology (2016–2024). Her research covers marine immunobiology, invertebrate bioindicators, bioactive marine molecules, tissue regeneration and the One Health approach, with projects funded by Erasmus+, PRIN and PNRR. Author of some 60 indexed papers (Scopus h-index 18).

6 Organisation and staffing

The Centre's day-to-day running will be shared between two roles:

- an **Administrative Officer**, responsible for finance and administration together with the Director;
- a **Technical Secretariat**, responsible for communications, events, promotion, marketing and fundraising, and for managing the Centre's internal and external relations.

The Centre will also offer internships to students completing work placements as part of their degree.

7 Priorities for 2022–2025

STAFFING AND PREMISES

The first priority is to recruit the Centre's core staff: an Administrative Officer and a Technical Secretariat officer (see Section 6). The Centre will also need someone to act as the main point of contact for international Fellows, and someone to manage its website, which should go live as soon as possible.

The Centre will also need dedicated premises. The preferred option is the former Hotel de France, and in particular its six top-floor rooms, which have long been earmarked as accommodation for visiting professors and could be converted into self-catering studio flats.

BUDGET

€100,000

initial budget

€60,000

set aside to furnish guest accommodation

The Centre's initial budget of €100,000, of which €60,000 was set aside to furnish the visiting professors' rooms (to be converted into self-catering studios, as foreseen in the Centre's development plan), could not be spent in 2022. The Centre only became operational at the end of September; no Administrative Officer had yet been appointed; the financial year was about to close; and, above all, the arrival of a new Director General led to a reorganisation of the University's administrative and accounting procedures.

The Centre will therefore draw on its budget allocations for 2023, 2024 and 2025.



ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Council members are invited to announce the Centre's launch to their academic communities and, through the Heads of Department, to publicise any initiatives they plan to propose.

The Centre will also reach out to city, provincial and regional authorities, research institutes, professional bodies, business associations, the diplomatic community and other stakeholders, to explore partnerships and joint seasonal schools that make the most of the Visiting Fellows' presence in Palermo.

The Centre will work closely with the President of the Med-Or Foundation to develop a Foundation-funded seasonal school and/or Master's programme in EU project design and management for researchers and doctoral students from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as from Europe and further afield.

Together with the Pro-Rector, Prof. Beatrice Pasciuta, the Centre is contributing to the launch of the PhD programme in Gender Studies and to the work of the Gender Equality Observatory.



Finally, the Centre will apply for international competitive research funding and, from the outset, seek formal agreements with international scholarly associations, taking part in their activities and organising joint research and outreach initiatives.

TIMELINE

PHASE 1

September 2022 – February 2023

- Announce the Centre's launch across the University, including meetings with Heads of Department and presentations to Department Councils.
- Recruit staff.
- Identify spaces to convert into self-catering flats for Visiting Fellows.
- Set up the Centre's institutional e-mail accounts.

PHASE 2

February 2023 – April 2023

- Launch the Centre's website.
- Draft guidelines for the calls and for the selection and hosting of Visiting Fellows.
- Prepare separate calls for Senior Visiting Fellows and Visiting Fellows.

PHASE 3

April 2023 – September 2023

- Adopt guidelines for co-funding international research events organised by the University, and publish a dedicated call.
- Open talks with local and regional authorities, research institutes, professional bodies, business associations, the diplomatic community and other stakeholders on possible partnerships.

PHASE 4

September 2023 – December 2024

- Publish and promote the Visiting Fellowship calls internationally; select the first Fellows.
- Hold seminars, lectures and conferences with the Visiting Fellows.
- Gather feedback from Fellows on their stay and on the collaborations developed with colleagues at the University.
- Take part in the activities of international scholarly associations and organise related research and outreach events.
- Apply for competitive research funding.

PHASE 5

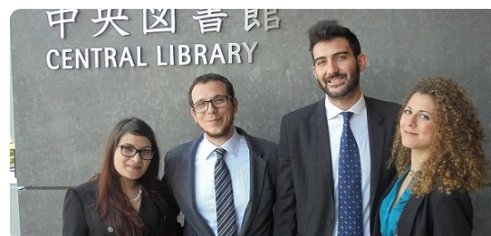
December 2024 – December 2025

- Select the next cohort of Visiting Fellows.
- Hold seminars, lectures and conferences with the Visiting Fellows.
- Run seasonal schools and master classes with the Visiting Fellows.
- Continue to work with international scholarly associations on joint research and outreach events.
- Apply for competitive research funding.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Avv. Antonello Miranda

Director, Centre of Advanced Studies 'A.S.Cent.'
Full Professor of Comparative Law and European Private Law



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PALERMO

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