



CONCEPT NOTE

2024 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

CAREER & MENTORSHIP FORUM

THEME: SHAPING FUTURE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY LEADERS FOR GLOBAL STEWARDSHIP

Date: Tuesday, 19th of March 2024 | Time: 09:00 am – 02:00 pm

Venue: Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) Auditorium

1. Background to the Career and Mentorship Forum

The field of international relations and diplomacy plays a pivotal role in shaping global affairs, fostering cooperation among nations, and addressing complex challenges facing the international community. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the demand for adept diplomats, competent policymakers, and expert analysts capable of navigating diverse cultural, political, and socio-economic landscapes continues to grow. Through interdisciplinary approaches, hands-on experiences, and opportunities for intellectual as well as intercultural exchange, education provides students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and exposure, in the process empowering them to make meaningful contributions to international relations and diplomacy.

Research has shown that mentoring can deliver demonstrable impacts on student achievement such as improved academic performance, increase graduation rates, and enhance self-esteem and self-confidence. Besides providing an answer to the most pressing academic decisions for students, mentorship complements classroom learning by offering a personalized, practical, and holistic approach to education. The combination of theoretical knowledge from the classroom and real-world insights from mentors creates a well-rounded educational experience, better preparing students for success in their academic and professional journeys.

Moreover, by connecting learners with mentors, universities and educators can create a more engaging and empowering learning environment that fosters student growth and development. In this regard, structured programs like the 2024 IR and Diplomacy Career and Mentorship Forum become instrumental in fostering an environment where students can thrive academically, graduate successfully, and embark on their professional journeys with confidence and competence. By participating in the 2024 IR and Diplomacy Career and Mentorship Forum, international relations students will have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of successful professionals, develop essential skills for their future careers, and expand their professional networks.

2. About the Career and Mentorship Forum

The **2024 IR and Diplomacy - Career and Mentorship Forum** is organized jointly by the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK). The Forum is aimed at providing International Relations students with opportunities to engage with experienced professionals in their field of study. This forum is designed to help students gain valuable insights, advice, and networking opportunities to enhance their academic performance, career prospects and personal growth. The mentorship event will bring together close to 200 participants, comprising distinguished diplomats, renowned scholars, students, recent graduates and broader IR enthusiasts.

The theme for this half-day event is ***'Shaping Future International Relations and Diplomacy Leaders for Global Stewardship.'*** This theme aligns with the organizers' mission of contributing to the development of a cadre of international relations professionals who are not only proficient in their field but also equipped to contribute meaningfully to global well-being and sustainable development. The choice of this theme also underscores the importance of preparing individuals – particularly the youth – not only for the intricacies of international affairs and diplomacy, but also for the broader responsibility of stewardship on the global stage. The event seeks to delve into multifaceted aspects such as leadership development, diplomatic skills, and a profound understanding of global challenges.

The 2024 IR and Diplomacy Career and Mentorship Forum leverages the unique position that Nairobi holds as the sole UN diplomatic hub the Global South to tap into the wealth of local and international expertise in the IR and diplomacy field present in the city, offering students unparalleled access to the multifaceted world of international relations. By bridging the gap between academia and practice, the forum endeavors to empower students and aspiring professionals with the tools, knowledge, and networks necessary to embark on successful and impactful careers in international relations and diplomacy. In essence, the forum serves as a testament to the collaborative efforts of academia, professional organizations, and industry stakeholders in nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and advancing the field of international relations.

3. Objectives of the Career and Mentorship Forum

The objectives of the inaugural 2024 IR and Diplomacy Career and Mentorship Forum are as follows:

- a) Professional Development:** Demystify the international relations and diplomacy space by providing students with access to experienced professionals and experts in the field, thus allowing them to learn from their experiences, gain practical advice, and develop essential skills for their future careers.
- b) Networking Opportunities:** The forum will create a platform for students to network with a broad array of individuals, fostering connections and friendships that can benefit them throughout their professional journey.
- c) Mentorship and Career Guidance:** Tap into the expertise of mentors who will offer insights to students and aspiring professionals in international relations and diplomacy, helping them navigate the job market, develop effective strategies for career advancement, and make informed decisions about their future career paths.
- d) Skill Development:** Organize skill development workshops, seminars, and panel discussions on key topics such as negotiation techniques, diplomatic protocol, multilateral diplomacy, and crisis management to enhance participants' competencies and capabilities.

4. Outcomes of the Career and Mentorship Forum

Three outcomes or impacts of the mentorship forum include:

- a) **Enhanced Career Development:** By interacting with and sharing experiences with seasoned diplomats and practitioners in international relations, students can gain insights into different career paths, sectors, and organizations, enabling them to make more informed decisions about their future career paths.
- b) **Expanded Professional Network:** Participation in the forum allows students to connect with professionals in international relations and diplomacy, expanding their professional network and increasing their chances of securing internships, job opportunities, and future employment.
- c) **Increased Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Inspire the next generation of youth and women diplomats in Kenya and East Africa Region by providing students with guidance, support, and advice from experienced professionals, ultimately contributing to their personal and professional growth.
- d) **Inspired Leadership:** The forum will inspire participants to become future leaders and agents of change in global affairs, promoting principles of diplomacy, peace, and cooperation in their respective spheres of influence.

5. Format of the Career and Mentorship Forum

The 2024 International Relations and Diplomacy Career Mentorship Forum will feature a series of interactive sessions, including keynote addresses, panel discussions, breakout groups, and networking sessions. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with experienced professionals, ask questions, and seek advice on career development strategies, academic pursuits, and practical insights into the field.

6. Proposed Topics

The IRSK Career and Mentorship Forum will cover a diverse range of topics aimed at addressing the multifaceted aspects of international relations and diplomacy professional and career development. Some suitable topics include:

- a) **Navigating Careers in International Organizations:** Insights into working for international organizations, such as the UN, World Bank, or regional bodies.
- b) **Emerging Careers in IR and Diplomacy:** Exploring the impact of technology on diplomatic practices and international relations.
- c) **Effective Networking Strategies for IR and Diplomacy Professionals:** Tips and techniques for building a strong professional network in the field.
- d) **Leadership in International Relations and Diplomacy:** Developing effective leadership skills for a successful career in international relations and diplomacy.

7. Venue

The 2024 International Relations and Diplomacy Career and Mentorship Forum will be held at the CUEA Auditorium located within the Pope Paul LRC Resource Centre. The CUEA Auditorium is renowned for its spacious and modern design, equipped with cutting-edge audiovisual technology to facilitate dynamic presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops. With comfortable seating arrangements and excellent acoustics, the auditorium ensures optimal engagement and participation for all attendees, fostering an atmosphere conducive to learning and knowledge exchange.

8. The Organizers

About CUEA

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) is a premier private international university whose mission is to produce authentic leaders and upright members of the Church and Society. CUEA's mission is to promote excellence in research, teaching and community service by preparing morally upright leaders based on the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church.

About IRSK

The International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK) is the professional body for the international affairs and diplomacy fields in Kenya. The Society serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas, networking, and programmatic initiatives among those involved in the study, teaching, and practice of international relations and diplomacy. IRSK works to promote policy dialogues on international affairs and diplomacy between various parties, carry out topical and pertinent research, and engage in conversation and collaboration with various actors at national, regional, and international levels.