

CHARM-EU Joint Virtual IT Office

Terms of Reference

Version 1.0, 14-11-2023,
Adopted by Executive Board on 23-11-2023

Purpose of the Joint Virtual IT Office

The Joint Virtual IT Office (JVITO) is defined in the CHARM-8 final tender document as follows:

*The CHARM-EU-IT network is closely linked to the existing IT organizations or departments of all partner institutes. Part of this network is the creation and consolidation of a Joint Virtual IT Office (JVITO). **At least two representatives with different and complementary backgrounds** of all CHARM-EU partners will take part in the main JVITO which is formed to answer to different contexts and is made up of smaller international teams that work on needs and challenges for digitalization of each partner institution. IT experts and (enterprise) architects will work together with educationalists, KCT, external stakeholders and find out the needs for the CHARM-EU education and research/research support activities. These activities will additionally closely be connected to the activities of the other alliances and the digitalization agenda of the EC and IT development in Europe.*

The time-horizon of the JVITO is not limited to the duration of the CHARM-8 project but should continue beyond the project phase. By the end of the project (Dec 2026), a structural solution will need to be adopted to cover the costs of the JVITO.

Where the work concerns activities that directly come from the **CHARM-8 project**, the work will take place under leadership of WP7/8, and will address the **needs of the other CHARM-8 work packages**, including opportunities for experiments with new IT-approaches, software and or hardware.

The JVITO has an operational and advisory character. It is meant as a:

- **support-office** for technology enhanced learning and teaching (e.g. key users of relevant applications, such as VLE, feedback tools, etc.)
- a body for **collaboration** on IT-related topics, answering to the needs of CHARM,
- network of staff for **exchange of knowledge and skills** for IT-related topics in the CHARM-EU Alliance in a more general sense.

The JVITO will work on the basis of the following principles: it will

- adhere to the **general CHARM principles**, including striving for sustainability and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, whenever applicable;
- strive to mainstream the **intercultural atmosphere** and incorporate good practices of all partner institutions;
- take into account the **user perspective** of the IT set-up by periodically reviewing operational activities through the lens of user journeys;

- strive for **interoperable solutions** that fit into the larger landscape of the European IT context in higher education, preferably based on open source concepts and/or open standards;
- comply with, and actively contribute to, **European-level policy** around digitalization in higher education (Digital Education Action Plan).

Joint Virtual IT Office composition and management

The JVITO is composed of at least two representatives per institution¹ with different and complementary backgrounds of all CHARM-EU partners.

The role of each JVITO Officer is twofold:

1. to act as main **contact point** for their institution's project staff to assist them for any of their **IT-related needs** in CHARM, or to connect them to the relevant IT-experts at the partner institution if this is necessary for a specific question;
2. to act as **support-office** for IT and technology enhanced learning and teaching for CHARM activities, whereby each partner university takes **leadership responsibilities** for **one or more specific IT-topics**²(for instance, key usership for tools connected to the topic will lie with the institution who has accepted responsibility for the topic).

The **members** of the Joint Virtual IT Office will meet virtually on a regular basis, depending on need, and will have regular exchanges to ensure the delivery of all tasks and smooth communication among its members.

One of the JVITO Officers will be appointed as **Chair** of the Joint Virtual IT Office by the Executive Board. The chair's role is the general coordination of the JVITO: to call meetings, to prepare and lead them and see to the follow-up, and generally to keep an overview of the work that is being done. The chair will work closely together with the lead of WP7/8 for as long as the project lasts.

One of the **CHARM Managers** will be connected to the JVITO on a permanent basis (i.e. not rotating). Their role is to act as the linking pin between the JVITO on the hand and the CHARM-EU Office, CHARM-EU Executive Board and other bodies from the CHARM governance structure on the other hand. This CHARM Manager should have affinity with IT, and preferably also with IT project management. Their responsibility is to advise the JVITO about when and for which decisions to seek approval from the different CHARM governance bodies and how to prepare the decision-making process accordingly. They should also alert the JVITO about developments elsewhere within the Alliance which can be relevant to the JVITO but may be taking place outside of the direct vision of the JVITO.

¹ The argument to have at least two representatives is that there should always a back-up when someone is on leave or is changing position. It can be two persons working for example one day a week for CHARM-EU JVITO.

² The division to be discussed with IT Steering Board and CHARM Executive Board. Though each of these main tasks is the responsibility of a different university, all officers will work on all tasks hand-in-hand, as a unique and united office. Each topic which we identify should have one partner institution as main responsible partner. A second institution will be connected as co-lead/back-up for that topic. This division will be reviewed periodically.

Involvement of CIOs in IT Steering Board

CHARM-EU is an alliance, not an independent institution and not a legal entity, therefore strong links must exist to ensure that activities are aligned as far as possible with the strategic choices of the individual institutions.

In addition to the JVITO, an IT Steering Board shall be constituted. The IT Steering Board shall consist of each partner institution's CIO or a mandated person in the CIO's name. It has an advisory function for any matters concerning IT in CHARM, and it may give solicited or unsolicited advice. The final decision-making remains with the Executive Board or the Strategic Board.

The IT Steering Board meets twice a year (e.g. a month before the sprint meeting) or more, depending on need. It is administratively supported by WP7 initially, gradually moving this responsibility to the JVITO as the project advances.

JVITO Officers profiles

Each JVITO Officer must be fluent in English as well as in the local language(s) of the university, in order to communicate with other Officers and their internal organisation. They should be knowledgeable in the field they coordinate, must be skilled in project management, team management and have basic knowledge of the functioning of a university and higher education programmes. They should have knowledge of the functioning of their own university and be able to quickly identify and communicate with relevant people for any demand.

Their workload is hard to determine in this stage. A preliminary estimate is 1 day per week per person x 2 persons = 2 days per week per institution. This will of course also depend on the specific personal responsibilities. The workload could also shift over time.

Universities responsibilities

All cooperating universities ensure the presence of adequate structures at the local level and at the Joint Virtual IT Office. Each member of the JVITO adheres to their work contract and work conditions in their university. They have a double reporting line: at their own line management and to the local CHARM-EU Managers.

Each university must ensure appropriate resources (financial, physical and human) for the completion of all JVITO tasks, in particular those coordinated by their Officers. The cost of this office is covered by each university from the CHARM-8 project budget and CHARM-EU alliance budget or additional local funds.

Each university decides how the tasks are accomplished internally: the JVITO Officer can be assisted by other university employee(s), the work could be distributed in several offices or unit, or there could be students employed for local support activities. JVITO Officers may also require specialised help from experts in other partner universities (e.g. UB Officer consults experts in programmatic assessment tools in UU).

Periodical review of these Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after 6 months (= in summer 2024) and adjusted where necessary. After this, they will be reviewed annually.