



**European University Association  
Institutional Evaluation Programme**

**UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO  
BRAGA, PORTUGAL**  
*FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT*

*October 2009*

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## **Contents**

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	KEY CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL AND AT UM SINCE 2007	6
3	ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2007 AND CONTINUING CHALLENGES	8
3.1	Mission, vision and strategic objectives. Polytechnics.	8
3.2	Strategic Planning	9
3.3	Governance at University level	10
3.4	Governance and management at the School and departmental level	11
3.5	Finances	13
3.6	Development of human resources	14
3.7	Internal services	15
3.8	Education and teaching	16
3.9	Bologna process	17
3.10	Quality Assurance	17
3.11	Research	19
3.12	Internationalisation	20
3.13	Services to Society	21
4	RECOMMENDATIONS	23
5	CONCLUDING REMARKS	26

# **1 Introduction**

This report is the result of the follow-up evaluation of the University of Minho (UM) in Portugal. The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) had already evaluated UM in the spring of 2007, and issued its evaluation report in July 2007. The follow-up evaluation took place in September 2009.

## **1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme**

The IEP is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture.

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- a strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- a European and international perspective
- a peer-review approach
- a support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic planning
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic planning as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

The aims of a follow-up evaluation are to allow institutions that were evaluated by IEP two to four years before, to identify the impact that the initial evaluation has had on the institutions' development; to investigate the experiences gained from changes implemented after the initial evaluation; and to give further impetus for change.

## **1.2 IEP and UM in the national context**

UM was one of the first Universities evaluated by the CRE, the predecessor of EUA, in 1997 on invitation of the rector at the time, Sergio Machado dos Santos. In 2006-2007, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Education (MCTES) requested, and supported financially, the evaluation of ten higher education institutions, including public and private universities, and polytechnics, which would be continued in the following years. Under the terms of the agreement between MCTES and EUA, the objective of the national exercise is to provide “both the national quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions with institutional evaluation experiences following the best European practices.” By 2009, most Portuguese universities had been evaluated by IEP.

UM was not among the ten universities whose evaluation was financed by the MCTES in 2007 but nonetheless it requested the IEP evaluation on its own. The follow-up evaluation, however, was conducted with the support of the MCTES. Between the two visits, UM produced a follow-up plan in November 2007 and then a follow-up report in March 2008. It then asked IEP to invite a member of the original team, Professor Dennis Anderson, to analyse the follow-up measures, which he did in a report in May 2008.

### **1.3 The Evaluation Process**

As is usual in the follow-up evaluation procedure of IEP, the Team included two members (the chair and the coordinator) who had participated in the first evaluation, to ensure continuity, and two new members, including a student member, for fresh insight.

The follow-up evaluation Team members were:

- Jarmo Visakorpi, former rector of Tampere University, Finland, Team Chair
- Nejat Erk, former vice-rector of Cukurova University, Turkey, Team Member
- Milica Popovic, student at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law, member of European Students' Union (ESU), Student Team Member
- Christina Rozsnyai, programme officer at the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Team Coordinator

The self-evaluation report for the follow-up evaluation of UM was sent to the Evaluation Team in July 2009. The report had seven appendices focusing on the recent changes in Portugal and UM. They described the changes due to the new higher education law (Law 62/2007 of 10 September), the so-called “Autonomy Law”, including the University’s new statutes and new organisation chart. They also included a package of impressively detailed quality assurance (QA) documents that UM has worked out, including a draft QA plan and a

draft QA manual and encompassing actions and responsibilities within the framework of a comprehensive QA system to be implemented at UM in the near term. These are still being discussed within the UM community. Another set of detailed documents included the 2007 recommendations of the IEP team and the actions UM have taken on them. There were also seven annexes with background information on UM, for the most part facts and figures.

The visit of the follow-up Evaluation Team to UM took place on 14-17 September 2009. To focus on the changes implemented at the University in response to the earlier IEP recommendations, the Team interviewed

- different groups from the leadership of UM (the rector, vice- and pro-rectors)
- members of the General Council (whose president and a business member were able to attend)
- the deans (all but two of whom were available)
- student representatives from all three cycles (including the head of the Student Union)
- the two leading drafters of the QA system (the responsible pro-rector and the external expert)
- financing specialists
- the leading research strategists
- heads of the service departments
- those responsible for branding, information and marketing
- those responsible for internationalisation, and finally
- foreign teachers and students.

Concluding the two-and-a-half-day visit, the Team presented its oral report, outlining the 2007 recommendations, the University's achievements and comments and recommendations for the future. Almost all the persons interviewed attended the forum.

The Team thanks all those who prepared the visit and participated in the meetings for their excellent organisation, kind hospitality and open and informative discussions during the interviews, which reflect the overall attitude of the University. Special thanks go to Rector António Guimarães Rodrigues and Pro-Rector Irene Montenegro for their attentiveness to the Team in the discussions and events. The Team recognised that the months preceding its visit and the ones following it presented a time of great change to the University and its current leaders due to the new legislation as well as the expected change in UM leadership. The Team appreciated the excellent language skills by most individuals interviewed, and the translation provided for those individuals who were not proficient in English.

## **2 Key changes in higher education in Portugal and at UM since 2007**

A new law on the legal status, organisation and functioning of higher education institutions in Portugal was enacted in September 2007. It required UM to review its structures and to write new University Statutes, which were adopted in December 2008. The focus of the new law is on a new system of governance, with a General Council replacing the University Senate as the ultimate decision-making body. The rector is elected by, and is accountable to, the General Council. The law allows for the establishment of a senate as a representative body of a university's organic units, and as an advisory body to the rector.

UM began teaching in 1975 and consists of Gualtar campus in Braga and the Azurém campus in Guimarães. New buildings have been completed since 2007, including the health sciences building. UM continues with eleven so-called "organic units", although some internal reorganisation has taken place. The School of Architecture had already evolved from the 2007 "Autonomous Department of Architecture", while the Institute of Education and Psychology and the Institute of Child Studies had been restructured into an Institute of Education and a School of Psychology just before the 2009 Team visit. The other faculty-level units remain the same. The organic units are listed in the Statutes as follows: the Schools of Sciences; Engineering; Economics and Management; Law; Health Sciences; Architecture; Psychology; the Institutes of Education; Arts and Human Sciences; Social Sciences; the polytechnic-level School of Nursing.

The total student number at UM has remained basically the same as the 2005/06 figure quoted in the previous IEP report, recovering from a slight dip in 2006/07. The overall enrolment quoted in the 2007 IEP report was 15,686 and in 2007/08 it rose to 15,820 students. The internal distribution changed, however, as the Bologna structure of education in three cycles has been implemented. While some old programmes were phased out (CESES, complementary degrees, qualifying degrees) the number of 1,249 students in Master and specialisation programmes has risen to 1,869, and the number of doctoral students from 719 to 1,052. Integrated Master studies did not exist; they now encompass 3,215 students. The persisting financial constraints, however, have forced a reduction of full-time equivalent academic staff from 1,131 in 2005/06 to 1,087 in 2007/08.

Since 2007, UM has made great strides in expanding its research activities. The number of doctoral programmes has increased from six to twelve. Moreover, all but three of the Schools

have research units, to a total of 20 that received a mark of "excellent" or "very good" from the National Foundation for Science and Technology (FTC), whose evaluations are conducted by international experts. Publications registered in the ISI Web of Knowledge rose from 646 in 2006 to 894 in 2008. The UM follow-up evaluation report quotes the ratio of academic staff with PhDs at 61.5% in 2005/06, with a rise to 72.8% in 2007/08.

### **3 Achievements since 2007 and continuing challenges**

The Follow-up Evaluation Team has examined the achievements at UM with a focus on the issues and recommendations discussed in the 2007 IEP report. On the basis of the Follow-up Self-Evaluation Report of UM, which traced the actions taken in response to the report, and the interviews conducted during the follow-up visit, the Team adds its observations on the issues that are still topical. As an impetus for further change, some recommendations follow in the end of this report.

#### **3.1 Mission, vision and strategic objectives. Polytechnics.**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should ask itself key strategic questions about its vision for the future*
- *Intentions to integrate polytechnic schools in Barcelos should be translated into action.*

The mission of UM is fundamentally the same as it was in 2007. With the new University Statutes recently written in accordance with the new law, UM has taken the chance to define a more general mission and the goals it envisions to achieve in accordance with its mission. The mission and goals point to the strategies UM must lay down in achieving its aims of being a research and teaching institution and a player in society in the region but benchmarking itself against international standards. The preamble to the Statutes points out the two elements that define UM, namely that it sees itself as a “University of Projects” and a “University within a Region”. The latter testifies to UM’s regional identity from which it projects itself into the international arena. The former indicates that it is proud of its success with the so-called “matrix structure” of developing and managing teaching and research, which it has applied since its early days and intends to retain.

Thus, UM wishes to stay a comprehensive university. In the future, UM also has plans to expand but only to a limited extent, by focusing on its particular strengths and new competitive areas of knowledge, such as environmental sciences and technology, pharmacy and nursing. At the same time, the planned integration of the Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave (IPCA) has as yet not been supported by the MCTES.

The IEP Evaluation Team believes that the mission, vision and strategic objectives of UM are clear and supports UM in following them as planned. It also believes that the integration of

IPCA would benefit both institutions, providing a synergy for optimum use of resources, and serving the community, and thereby fitting into UM's strategy both in academic terms and in its role as a "University within a region".

### **3.2 Strategic Planning**

*2007 Recommendation:*

- *When each governing authority decides its strategic plan, there should be an overarching University strategy. It should be discussed bottom up and top down.*

The 2007 report already noted the high capacity for change at UM, saying that it is "a first mover in a number of areas of educational and research activity. Both its internal culture and structure give the Team confidence about the sustainability of this dynamism." The culture at UM is remarkably open, and the "bottom up and top down" way of planning seems to be an organic process; it is practised and expected by the members of the University community.

At the same time, strategic planning in its strict sense has – necessarily – been determined in the past two years by the changes in legislation. The discussions leading up to the new law and changes it brought for UM, and consequently the internal tasks following from the law, have consumed a great deal of energy on the part of the UM leadership. The decision to hold early elections for rector, scheduled for shortly after the Team visit, also contributed to the slowdown in specific strategic planning at this time.

A culture of strategic thinking was already present at UM in the past. In 2004 the Rector appointed a strategic council as an advisory body. Now, the writing of the University Statutes, approved by the MCTES in December 2008, has inevitably stimulated the members of the University community to readjust to the new structures. The completion of the statutes of all the UM Schools was scheduled for completion by October 2009.

The Team would like to note, however, that even in this period of change the implementation of several strategic initiatives is proceeding successfully. To point to three prominent ones: UM has made steady progress in attaining research excellence; the matrix structure for teaching and research has been retained within the new legal framework; and a carefully planned QA system has been drafted.

The Team believes that following the election of the new rector and the completion of the School statutes, UM should again concentrate on formulating an overarching University

strategy, from which each governing authority can derive its own strategic plan and each university unit can focus on to optimise resources and enhance competitiveness. A strategic plan is a technique, a tool for communication for leadership to identify and implement key aims, which then apply to all units and projects. There are three key features that could make such a plan successful and its implementation feasible:

- The University strategic plan should show how UM is unique
- The plan should prioritise no more than three strategic areas that the University considers its top values, e.g. internationalisation, research excellence and the implementation of “Bologna”
- The development of the plan should be done quickly after the new rector takes office, before other priorities take precedence.

However, to avoid strategic planning being perceived as another bureaucratic burden by the members of the University community, the UM leadership should engage in rigorous information sharing about what a strategic plan is and what its use would be.

### **3.3 Governance at University level**

*2007 Recommendation:*

- *Consider a more flexible governing structure, keeping in mind the size of the governing bodies for optimum effectiveness and streamlining functions.*

The new law provides for three entities of university-level governance: the General Council, the Rector and the Management Board. It also states that an academic Senate, a body of representatives from a university’s organic units, may be set up as an advisory body to the rector.

UM has elected a General Council, defined in the Statutes as “the highest collegial governing and strategic decision-making body of the University”. The General Council of UM consists of 23 members: twelve academics from UM, four students, one non-teaching staff member and six co-opted external members – a professor from abroad, the others from business and society. In accordance with the law, the president of the General Council is an external member. The Rector sits in on the General Council meetings but does not vote.

The Rector has become the top governing and representative entity of the University. He or she makes proposals to the General Council in strategic matters and is the executive arm of the Council but has decision-making powers in university management. The Management

Board runs the administration of the University, extending to financial and human resources. The five-member body is appointed and chaired by the Rector.

UM has taken advantage of the legal option of setting up an academic Senate as an advisory body to the Rector. The UM Senate has 46 members, including the Rector, the heads of the faculties (“Organic Units”), various councils, students and non-academic staff. The Senate has three committees: Scientific, Pedagogical and Planning.

It is clear that the main function of Senate at UM is to continue with the tradition of ensuring a collegial voice for the academic community of the University. It contributes to decisions in academic, scientific and related strategic matters. In this function, the body’s large size fulfils its purpose, which could be considered too large for a purely advisory function.

In addition to these four leading entities, UM has established a Cultural Council and a Disciplinary Council as advisory bodies.

The Team noted in 2007 that “the existing governance structure is too large and complex, and that it encumbers strategic decision-making. The Team realises that the University does not consider this to be a problem; it has not been discussed in UM’s Self-Evaluation Report and is accepted as traditional and democratic.” With the new law, the top governance has been streamlined, the statutory bodies are smaller than before (where the Team had recommended no more than 25 members in the top governing body, there are, in fact 23 persons in the General Council). At the same time, the size of the Senate – stipulated in the law only to consist of representatives of the organic units – reflects the general collegial spirit at UM that the Team observed earlier. As an advisory body, the Team would imagine a smaller size to be more operative while, even scaled down, a representation of various University units, including non-academics, could be retained. Regarding the new set-up with the General Council as the top governing body and the Rector as top executive, the Team hopes that the two branches of governance will develop a good and close cooperation, which is key to the University’s future success. It will be a challenge for the new leadership to balance the advisory Senate and the General Council in following up the University’s strategic goals by avoiding the establishment of a dual governing system.

### **3.4 Governance and management at the School and departmental level**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *Rationalise the number and arrangement of units, especially since the matrix structure may take over some of the functions*
- *The decision-making structures within Schools could equally be simplified on the principle of subsidiarity.*

The law leaves it up to the higher education institution, specifically its General Council, to create or close organic units, although it requires ratification by the Ministry. Schools and research units have academic autonomy. The law allows a maximum of fifteen members per Unit council, with at least 60% academic and research staff and student representation, and allows for the inclusion of non-teaching staff. The Statutes of UM set up Unit Councils that follow this structure.

On the school-level at a university, the law stipulates a Scientific Council and a Pedagogic Council, whose functions are to set and implement research and teaching strategies for the unit respectively, under consideration of the University strategy, and to conduct other relevant management activities. Polytechnic schools have Technical and Scientific Councils, at this point applicable only to the Nursing School. The statutes allow for a maximum of 25 members in UM's Scientific and Technical Councils, and 24 for the Pedagogic Councils.

While noting the inclusive and collegial nature of members of UM at the various levels of the University, the Team has felt in the past and continues to feel that there is room for rationalisation within UM at the School level of structures and in the size of the representative bodies. Some structures are set in law, others are not, but there is duplication of functions on different levels, coupled with large memberships in bodies (e.g. filling the maximum quota of fifteen members in unit councils) that could be downsized to serve both advisory and representative functions. This is a possibility that may or may not be acceptable for UM, which clearly wishes to balance rational management with collegial participation.

The School statutes were not completed at the time of the Team follow-up visit, and reorganisation of the governance of organic units was still taking place. The Team encouraged the reorganisation of the Institute of Child Studies and Institute of Education and Psychology into two units: Institute of Education and School of Psychology. Although the number of the units is not reduced, this change is obviously a rationalisation of structures. The Team hopes, along with the relevant members of UM, that the long-awaited change will prove fruitful.

As regards the matrix structure of organisation, the law allows organic units to “organise joint initiatives including study cycles and research projects”. The new law has not made provision for the structural peculiarities of the matrix structure organisation into “degree councils” and “degree directors” formerly operating on the supra-school level, which UM was obliged to reorganise on the school level. Nevertheless, the Team was told that management of the matrix structure continues smoothly under the new set-up. As to the matrix structure holding the possibility for streamlining the overall organisational structure within Schools, the Team feels that this may not be an option for UM in the near term, but should not be ruled out in the future.

The Team noted in 2007 that the University’s matrix structure “allows for flexibility and effectiveness in the allocation of human resources” for teaching and research, which it continues to support. The structure seems to entail many advantages, from flexibility in programme design and resource allocation to quality assurance, and to be one of the unique features of UM. The Team is pleased to note that UM is very much aware of the matrix structure also as a competitive advantage and has been fixed in the new Statutes, both in the Preamble and structurally, whereby Course Directors participate in the Pedagogical Councils of the organic units.

### **3.5 Finances**

#### *2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should find ways to increase private funding by professionalising its fundraising, and*
- *Explore ways of increasing its internal efficiency and rationalise its functions in light of its mission.*

UM faces several financial constraints emanating from the national authorities. One concerns the reduction of funding in real terms over the last six to eight years, the other is structural. Following the Team recommendation in 2007, UM has initiated negotiations with government to reduce costs from external cultural units operating under UM and within UM’s budget. UM Statutes list seven cultural units, whose link with the University promotes UM’s interaction with society and allows research access to heritage sites. Support for cultural units is also stipulated in the law. Financial difficulties, nevertheless, lend urgency to a dialogue with the Ministry of Culture but the negotiation process has stalled and following national elections the future of such discussions is uncertain.

The reduction of state funding is a severe constraint for the development of UM at this time. The Self-Evaluation Report states that for all universities in the country, the public budget has decreased by 34% in 2008 as compared to 2002. Given the global financial state any improvement does not seem imminent.

Nevertheless, UM is analysing possible external sources to tap for financing. It has activated its “friend-raising” by establishing links with its alumni, including a website on the UM homepage. The Self-Evaluation report notes that 4300 graduates and over 500 companies registered on the site. The Team also learned that UM is taking steps to improve its carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency, having succeeded in retaining its energy consumption to the same level even after the expansion into four new buildings. These are all good achievements. The Team encourages UM to continue such initiatives and to appoint a professional fundraiser to exploit the existing possibilities in full.

Internal efficiency has been increased through the centralisation of common functions and the revision of functions and circuits in financial management. The new governing bodies are responsible for the redistribution of resources and have to assure that cost reduction and re-assignment of staff are implemented. It would help if UM had a strategic plan to set goals and priorities for financial management. To ensure that the whole University takes responsibility for such a plan, the whole leadership at different levels should be included in the elaboration process.

### **3.6 Development of human resources**

#### *2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should aim to achieve the highest qualifications and skills for its teaching staff*
- *The teaching load of academic staff should be adjusted relative to their research commitments*
- *Pedagogic achievements should be recognised when hiring and promoting academic staff.*

UM has made great efforts to continually improving the quality of its academic staff on many levels. Notable advancements have been made in research (see 3.11 below) and ongoing quality assessment and staff development – both academic and non-academic – are part of the proposed quality assurance system (see 3.10 below). The “Career Statutes” (for academic staff, these were completed just prior to the follow-up visit, for non-academic staff they were expected later) regulate the conditions for staff within the framework of the

University Statutes. The forthcoming School Statutes are expected to ensure that the teaching load of academic staff can be adjusted during intensive research periods within the framework of national regulations. At the same time, the Rectorate reinforced that although UM is also a research-oriented university, teaching, and the focus on high-quality, student-centred teaching, are UM priorities. For that reason, prizes for teaching achievement have been awarded in 2009 and awarding non-teaching staff was also reported to be in place.

The Team commends UM on its achievements in human resources development. It encourages the University to make human resources for both academic and non-academic staff a prominent part of its strategy on the central level and in line with UM's mission, rather than relegating it to the School level.

### **3.7 Internal services**

#### *2007 Recommendation:*

- *UM should build in quality monitoring and reporting procedures in this area as part of its continuous improvement approach. This should include strengthening communications about the quality of University services.*

UM has always been careful to provide good services for its internal community of academic and non-academic staff and students. The proposed quality assurance plan (see also 3.10) contains detailed procedures also for internal services. The Self-Evaluation Report and persons interviewed noted that several services have or are in the process of receiving ISO certification (e.g. Social Services, Food and Safety Management, Information Systems, Documentation, etc.).

UM has traditionally had a good rapport with its students, something the Team has again noted in the follow-up visit. The dialogue between the students and the various services seems to be equally smooth-running. The soon-to-be-implemented quality assurance system can be expected to formalise the identification of gaps and initiate improvements. The Team would like to remark on two issues in this regard. One weak spot in services identified by interviewed students is the short opening hours of the University library. The Team learned that UM is aware of this and is trying to find ways to respond, including the involvement of student-work to ensure extended library access. The Team encourages UM to find creative solutions to compensate for low resources for services. A second observation is that UM takes care to offer special services for handicapped students even beyond the requisites set in law, and the Team realises that there are cost limitations. However, UM should look

beyond disabled students to a larger group of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as those who are socially at risk.

Another example for a high-quality service that the Team noted is the so-called “RepositoriUM”, an open-access database storing all staff publications. In addition to providing a forum and incentive for publication it acts as a compilation of UM research output and is at once accessible world wide.

The Team learned that UM is providing a variety of courses for students and staff to expand various skills. Students are offered special tutoring to enhance learning skills. Staff participation in staff-development courses is tracked by the quality assurance unit and department heads. E-learning is beginning to be incorporated into a variety of courses, and UM seems to be aware of the advantages of this teaching technique. The Team strongly supports that UM develop e-learning to its full potential.

### **3.8 Education and teaching**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *Innovative initiatives in teaching and learning should be supported by the central administration of the University with human and financial resources*
- *Recruitment efforts targeted at secondary-school students and the 23+ group must be reinforced.*

UM has continued its successful development of teaching and learning, which the Team already noted in 2007. The matrix structure enables any variety of multidisciplinary degrees, which is a strength of the University. A Support Centre for Teaching and Learning, to be set up in the near future, should provide coordinated tutoring services for first-year students. Courses for teaching staff in new pedagogic methodologies focusing on student-centred learning continue to be implemented. As noted above, e-learning is being incorporated into a range of services and teaching provision.

As an outreach into the incoming student community, UM has organised several initiatives directed at secondary and even primary schools. The first summer courses for primary- and secondary-school students were organised in 2008.

UM is also addressing the 23+ group and has offered courses for this target group. The legal limitation of 212 students from the selected 318 indicates both the success of this measure

and the legal constraints, which limit this group to 10% of available student places. The Team heard that also 50+ programmes are planned. It encourages UM to proceed with these plans.

With regard to teaching and learning, the Team would like to point to the importance of setting targets with deadlines for teaching staff to learn to use and to apply active learning techniques, which should also be applied in traditional courses. This is important too for the upcoming accreditation process Portuguese universities are expecting shortly.

### **3.9 Bologna process**

*2007 Recommendation:*

- *Continued implementation of the three-cycle education structure as well as other aspects of the process should be supported by the central administration of the University with human and financial resources.*

Since 2007, UM has implemented the three-cycle structure in all its new educational provision. The landscape in course offer is still shifting, as UM foresees a reduction in second- and an increase in third-cycle programmes. To exploit the advantages of the matrix structure and educational modules, a cost-reducing plan mentioned in the Self-Evaluation Report is to revise the degree structure to have common modules for several degree programmes.

UM continues to be a flag bearer of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, where it holds the quality label awards since 2004 and which have been renewed in 2009.

With the European Qualifications Framework completed, and the formulation of National Qualifications Frameworks set as an important goal in the Bologna process at this time, the Team recommends that UM begin to review its programme offers in this light. The key aspects in this process are the design of programmes with learning outcomes and employability, as well as the recognition of prior learning, in mind.

### **3.10 Quality Assurance**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *Provide follow-up measures in response to student comments in their evaluations. This could stimulate a higher response rate*

- *The planned “Career-Path observatory” should be supported also as a quality assurance tool.*

Universities generally practice quality assurance, if only to varying degrees. However, the methodical implementation of a system of quality assurance at higher education institutions is a cornerstone of the Bologna process. In 2005, the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) were published. Part 1 of the ESG sets down seven standards and criteria for quality assurance at higher education institutions.

UM has had many quality assurance measures in place even before the 2007 evaluation by EUA-IEP. With the matrix structure for programme design, for example, students have participated in the Degree Councils that designed and supervised study programmes, and have thus provided immediate quality feedback about the programmes. Student evaluations of teachers were also conducted regularly, even if the systematic feedback-loop was incomplete. Plans for a “Career-Path Data Base”, stipulated in 2007, continue.

In the new University Statutes, UM makes provision for an internal quality assurance system. The university has commissioned an external expert and former rector of the university to develop, together with the pro-rector responsible, the quality concept and the details for its implementation. The outcome is a carefully thought out and elaborated proposal for a quality assurance system, set down in a quality assurance plan and a derived manual. These have been completed and were under discussion at the time of the Team follow-up visit. The quality assurance system was described in the Self-Evaluation Report.

The Team was able to ascertain that the seven standards described in the ESG are covered by the UM plan:

- having a quality assurance policy and procedures in place
- ensuring the approval and review of programmes and awards
- transparency and consistency in student assessment
- quality assurance of teaching staff
- appropriate learning resources and student support
- an efficient information system supporting quality assurance
- public information about the university’s policies and procedures.

The plan extends to targets and responsibilities for all levels of the University. It covers not only the areas set down in the ESG, which pertain first of all to teaching and learning at

higher education institutions, but also all areas of activity of the University (e.g. governance and management, financial management, research management, etc.).

The external element of a complete, national-level quality assurance system is in its initial stages, with a new agency set up and expected to start work shortly. UM can thus expect regular accreditation assessments in the future. In fact, it has plans to volunteer for the pilot phase of the external evaluation by the agency.

The Team commends UM for the meticulously conceived and thoughtfully elaborated quality assurance plan. Because it is very detailed and covers many angles and players, UM must make sure that once the plan is implemented, all members in the lines of command contribute on an ongoing basis to quality monitoring, performance and follow-up actions. It is important that there are no holes in the intricate system. UM should especially make sure that students receive feedback from their evaluations to secure their commitment to the quality culture of the university community.

### **3.11 Research**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should have a more explicitly defined research strategy*
- *Support the development of research careers, starting from PhD and then encouraging PhD students to continue research at the post-doctoral level*
- *UM should develop opportunities for students to gain early access to research*
- *Encourage your excellent researchers to do research during sabbaticals or during similar periods in which they are free from teaching and administrative duties*
- *Prizes for best papers and similar incentives are good tools for the advancement of research activities*
- *Foreign scientists at different levels should be recruited to UM for various lengths of time and the Research Management Services should be strengthened.*

UM has made remarkable achievements in strengthening its research position, of which only some will be mentioned here. A restructuring of research centres took place in 2007, completed after the Team's visit. The number of research centres awarded the marks of "very good" or "excellent" by the FTC – based on international panel reviews – has climbed from 15 to 20 as a consequence, with almost all Schools in this group. Scientific output and publications are internationally recognised, and many publications in the "RepositoriUM" are downloaded in various parts of the world. Also, UM has introduced prizes for research, and

the number of foreign scientists has increased significantly through such programmes as Fulbright, Marie-Curie fellowships and others. Some 100 external scientists were hired through the national Ciencia scheme in 2007 and 2008.

Access to research by secondary-school students and first-year students at UM has been implemented via the “Live Science Programme” and with the support of the FTC, 120 first-year students participated in research projects in 2008/09. UM now has 12 doctoral programmes, six are international, some with renowned universities such as MIT and Carnegie-Mellon University. The goal is to have at least two doctoral programmes in each School.

Concerning the workload of teaching staff to allow time for research, UM offers the possibility for sabbaticals, which are given through the Schools. UM has introduced a process of agreements between Research Councils and Schools to coordinate teaching and research loads.

Research Units are autonomous and have their own strategies. However, the Team points out that a university-level strategy that is also an external requirement for international funding is important for an autonomous university. It is also a useful internal road map expressing the new priorities of university research in applications for new research centres to be funded by the FCT.

Furthermore, the Team believes that it is crucial for establishing world-class research that academic staff can periodically devote themselves to full-time research. It is essential that research time not be taken up by administrative tasks and that administrative assistance for researchers is provided not just in the most prosperous departments.

### **3.12 Internationalisation**

*2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should continue efforts in internationalisation*
- *Have a general language policy*
- *Possibly set up a language centre. Such a centre would be a service centre, not an academic and research-based unit.*

UM has made successful efforts to attract international students in its second-cycle programmes and joint doctoral programmes, and is running a number of schemes, such as Erasmus Mundus. Teaching in a foreign language is encouraged, and the planned quality

assurance system should provide incentives for their participation and establish it as a tool for career progression. Students are also encouraged to attend classes in a foreign language, and only foreign-language-taught second-cycle programmes can take on foreign students. Third-cycle programmes are taught only in a foreign language, predominantly English. UM coordinates two Erasmus Mundus programmes and participates in several others. The Language Centre is near completion and is to be a service and therefore financially self-sustaining.

The Team would again like to point to the importance of a strategy for internationalisation in line with the University strategy. It would define priorities and establish a clear UM profile, e.g. involving links with lusophone countries. To improve language proficiency among students, it should also be a priority for UM to encourage mobility for first-cycle students and that they should be motivated to take classes in their subjects that are taught in English. More effort should be put into encouraging students at UM to participate in Erasmus programmes and to go abroad not only to lusophone and neighbouring countries but also to culturally different ones, e.g. to Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries. This should be preceded by an analysis identifying the main obstacles to outgoing students (language, financial burden, values or other causes) in order to be able to focus on relieving the reasons behind their low numbers.

Finally, in interviews with students it was mentioned that services for non-EU students were not always smooth-running.

### **3.13 Services to Society**

#### *2007 Recommendations:*

- *UM should increase its efforts to link teaching and research projects to the necessities of the geographical region*
- *Monitor the performance of all community linkage initiatives to assess strategic impact, focusing on cost-effectiveness and public relations potential.*

UM has been very active in a number of initiatives linked to business and industry, such as scientific parks (AvePark, CENTI) and a Multimedia Centre and others. The schemes involve researchers from UM and local businesses and provide initial employment opportunities for graduates. The fact that Guimarães will be the European Capital of Culture in 2012 is seen as an opportunity for cultural cooperation with that city.

The Team commends UM's active role in society and its recognition of its regional responsibility.

## **4 Recommendations**

1. Following the election of the new rector and the completion of the School statutes, formulate an overarching University strategy that shows how UM is unique and prioritises no more than three strategic areas, and from which each governing authority can derive its own strategic plan.
2. In order to avoid strategic planning being perceived as another bureaucratic burden by the members of the University community, the UM leadership should engage in rigorous information sharing about what a strategic plan is and what its use would be.
3. Continue to negotiate the integration of IPCA into UM, which would benefit both institutions, providing a synergy for optimum use of resources, and serving the benefit of the community, and thereby fitting into UM's strategy both in academic terms and in its role as a "University within a region".
4. Consider a smaller Senate in the long term, which would be operative in fulfilling its advisory function. A representation of all organic units could be retained.
5. Ensure close cooperation between the General Council as the top governing body and the Rector as top executive, advised by the senate.
6. Consider scaling down structures at organic units level to ensure a more streamlined management. An optimum solution would not have to relinquish fair representation in governance bodies, even if fair would mean fewer academics and researchers in administrative duties. The matrix structure holds the possibility for streamlining the overall organisational structure within Schools.
7. It would help if UM had a strategic plan also in order to set goals and priorities for financial management. To ensure that the whole University takes responsibility for such a plan, the whole leadership at different levels should be included in the elaboration process.
8. Continue the initiatives taken in exploring ways to find external funding, in which the Rector plays an important role, including from alumni. Consider appointing a professional fundraiser to exploit the existing possibilities in full.

9. Find creative solutions to compensate for low resources for services, e.g. set up student-work positions to extend library opening hours.
10. Continue to press for negotiation to reduce the financial burden of supporting external cultural units.
11. Make human resources for both academic and non-academic staff a prominent part of the University strategy on the central level and in line with UM's mission, rather than relegating it to the School level.
12. Look beyond disabled students to a larger group of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as those who are socially at risk.
13. Develop e-learning to its full potential, including expanding e-learning as part of traditional courses.
14. Set targets with deadlines for teaching staff to learn to use and to apply active learning techniques, which should be applied also in traditional courses, and continue to expand into new teaching methodologies.
15. Review its programme offers with learning outcomes and employability, as well as the recognition of prior learning in mind.
16. Once the Quality Plan is implemented, ensure that all members in the chain of command contribute on an ongoing basis to quality monitoring, performance and follow-up actions to avoid holes in the intricate system.
17. Make sure that students receive feedback from their evaluations to secure their commitment to the quality culture of the university community.
18. A university-level research strategy, that is also an external requirement for international funding, is important for an autonomous university. It is also a useful internal road map expressing the new priorities of university research in applications for new research centres to be funded by the FCT.

19. To establish world-class research at UM, ensure that academic staff can periodically devote themselves to full-time research. It is essential that research time not be taken up by administrative tasks and that administrative assistance for researchers is provided not just in the most prosperous departments.
  
20. Formulate a strategy for internationalisation in line with the University strategy. It would define priorities and establish a clear UM profile, e.g. involving links with lusophone countries.
  
21. To improve language proficiency among students, make it a priority to encourage mobility for first-cycle students and that they should be motivated to take classes in their subjects that are taught in English.
  
22. Put more effort into encouraging students at UM to participate in Erasmus programmes and to go abroad not only to lusophone and neighbouring countries but also to culturally different ones, e.g. to Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries. This should be preceded by an analysis identifying the main obstacles to outgoing students in order to be able to focus on relieving the reasons behind their low numbers.

## **5 Concluding remarks**

The new law increases the autonomy of universities, while at the same time limiting structural innovations by specifying very precisely internal governance and management. Experiences about the new governance are needed and it will take time before the University is ready to create new forms of governance and internal structures in the framework of this law. Its implications as well as its implementation are a great challenge for UM and its internal culture.

Commendably, UM has retained its strong areas, such as the intention to develop teaching and learning in the spirit of the Bologna-process; excellent research in a number of fields; and innovative ways to serve society, including a strong contribution to regional development. The IEP Follow-up Evaluation Team hopes that these initiatives will grow and flourish. It also hopes that the Team's recommendations will prove useful for UM toward reaching its goals.