



Universidade do Minho

Follow-up Report
for the
EUA Institutional Evaluation of the University of Minho

July 2009

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1. Preamble

The University of Minho received the EUA Final Report on the Institutional Evaluation by the end of July 2007. The two visits by the External Evaluation Team took place in 18-20 of March and 17-20 of June 2007.

The Report was a concise document, evidencing a deep insight of the Evaluation Team into the Institution.

The Rectorate made a careful reading of the Report, signalling the enhanced positive aspects and recommendations pointed out by the Evaluation Team.

The first concern of the Rectorate was to analyse the recommendations and to make a first interpretation of their meaning, followed by an assessment of the University ability to implement actions leading to the accomplishment of the desired scenarios. A draft of possible proposals was prepared.

The list of recommendations addressed issues which are different in their scope, level of urgency and necessary prerequisites. Some are linked to structural change in the governance model of the University; others, to procedural changes and to functions which, in order to be implemented, require a longer period of time for significant modifications of areas of the University organisational structure.

In November 2007, following internal discussions and analysis of the EUA's evaluation report, the Steering Committee prepared a 21-page progress document entitled: *Follow-up Plan for the EUA Institutional Evaluation of the University of Minho*.

Subsequently, in March 2008, the University updated its progress report in a document titled, *Institutional Evaluation Follow-up Report: Recommendations and Action Plan*, (**Appendix-I**) including an extensive appendix containing an *update of institutional numbers and statistics*. EUA proposed to have a member of the original evaluation team, Dr. Dennis Anderson, prepare a feedback document for the University regarding its follow-up plan and action recommendations. In the preparation of feedback, Dr. Anderson took the opportunity to meet with representatives of UM (Rector, a Vice-Rector, and a Pro-Rector) during his April 2008 visit to Porto (on an unrelated EUA Institutional Evaluation visit) in order to gain a first-hand update on the University follow-up actions and to obtain any necessary clarification on items in its progress reports of November 2007 and March 2008. He also solicited and received emailed input from other members of the original EUA evaluation team for the University. As a result Dr. Dennis Anderson produced a report entitled Response to University of Minho's Follow-up Plan. (**Appendix-II**)

2. The Context

2.1. Financing

The context for the adoption of measures involving increased costs (either operating or staff costs) is quite unfavourable. The level of public budget for the University (as for all universities) in 2008, compared to the 2002 budget, corresponds, at constant prices, to a decrease of about 34%.

The additional public budget that the University should have received in 2007 and in 2008, related to its quality indicators considered and computed by MCTES, was simply erased by the imposed constraint of 3% maximum budget increase. The computed increases of 12% in 2007 and 9% in 2008 turned to be virtual increases.

In 2007, the contribution to the retirement fund set at 7.5%, was paid from the yet existent surplus balance of own revenues. For 2008, this contribution was raised up to 11%, and there was no surplus left in the own revenue funds.

Since the budget for 2007 was already a rupture budget, the budget for 2008 left almost no room for any strategic action.

The public budget for 2008 was approximately 58.8 million Euros. Staff costs amount to 67.8 million Euros. Fee revenues totalled 9.7 million Euros. A provision of 325 thousand Euros was written for the *Quality Programme*. General Operating Costs (energy, security, etc.) accounted for 5.5 million Euros (approximately 79% of the equivalent costs in 2002).

In 2008, the University had to support, from its own revenues, a total of 5 million Euros to cover for the national participation on funds for the buildings of the Health Sciences School and Law School.

By August 2008, the debt to the University from national public and governmental agencies and from European agencies amounted to more than 8 million Euros.

The budget for 2009 represents 98.2% of the correspondent budget in 2002 and, if corrected for the budget associated to the School of Nursing integrated in 2005, represents 95.8%. Staff costs for 2009 have an increase of about 5% relative to 2008 (34% relative to 2002).

The “operating ratio”, representing the ratio between staff costs and the sum of the public budget with the revenue from fees, has evolved from 81.4% in 2002, to 92.6% in 2008. For 2009 this value is 94.7%.

2.2. Autonomy Law

The autonomy law was being debated while the Evaluation Team visited the University in March and June 2007 and was approved and published in September 2007. The central issue of the approved law addresses the governance model that universities must adopt.

The recommendation for the reduction of the number and size of the governing bodies included on the EUA Final Report has been implemented in line with some of the new law determinations.

3. Action Plan

To accomplish the “action plan” under the uncertainties of the present and near future conditions turned out to be a very difficult task.

However, this effort was made, assuming that the same decisions and functions would be located in the appropriate governing and consulting bodies in the new model.

The fact that election periods and election campaigns have occurred first for the Statutory Assembly and, then, for the General Council (which was finally set up in May 18, 2009), implied that the Rectorate has been limited in addressing issues that require the presentation and discussion of specific *programmatic proposals*. This has delayed the opportunity to initiate some of the actions. In all cases where the intervention of the newly formed bodies was not necessary, the actions recommended by the evaluation committee were fully implemented, as will be explained below.

3.1. Dissemination of the Evaluation Report

The Final Report was sent to the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education immediately after being received by the University. The University has thus voluntarily complied with the Ministerial determination that requires all Higher Education Institutions to be subject to an Institutional Evaluation by EUA. The University also considered urgent to address the Report to the Minister since it contained the team assessment on a possible integration of two Polytechnic Schools.

The Final Report was sent to each member of the Steering Committee by the end of August.

The Rectorate decided to wait until the beginning of September to make the Report public, thus guaranteeing that a larger number of staff was back to the University after the usual absence in August.

A Press Conference was arranged for the 3rd of September. The Report was presented by giving a brief overview of the meaning and objectives of institutional evaluations, and the way it fitted into the plan devised by the Ministry. The enhanced aspects of the Institution and the recommendations were then briefly explained. All members of the Steering Committee were invited to the press conference.

At the end of the press conference, several documents were made available to the Academy and to the public in general, through the University internet site: the Rector Determination that announced the evaluation process and nominated the Steering Committee, the Self Evaluation Report and the Final Evaluation Report from EUA.

The publication by the end of July of a declaration from the Strategic Council of the University concerning budget issues, and the interest they raised at the press conference were the EUA Report was presented amplified the interest on the University evaluation. Several radio interviews and two television interviews underlined both the assessment of the University and the limitations on the budget for 2008 were broadcast.

The report was sent to several institutions with which the University has cooperation links and also to individual and institutional development agents. The list includes members of parliament elected by the districts of Braga and Viana do Castelo (the region of the main influence of the University) and to Mayors of several cities in the region (namely Braga, Guimarães, Barcelos and Famalicão). Copies were also sent to the Portuguese President, and to the President of the European Commission.

The Rectorate prepared a draft layout identifying possible measures to respond to the Report recommendations.

This was the basis for convening an open meeting with the Steering Committee which occurred on the 9th of November 2007 in order to promote a general discussion and emergence of suggestions for orientations and for an “action plan”. The frame for a set of proposals to be prepared and submitted to the governing bodies of the University was established.

3.2. Integration of Polytechnic Schools

This is the case for the integration of the two polytechnic schools of Barcelos. The assessment from the Evaluation Team was sent to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in the beginning of July 2007.

The Ministry for Science and Technology did not comment back on the Team’s views included in the Report.

3.3. Cultural Units - Cost reduction

In February 2007, the University addressed the Ministry of Culture in order to envisage ways to reduce the financial burden from the BPB (Braga Public Library) and ADB (District Archives of Braga). The eventual solutions were discussed in February and would be directed towards alleviating the costs associated to the Braga District Archives. The process waits for the initiative of the Ministry of Culture but the appointment of a new Minister has interrupted this dialogue.

3.4. Governance Model / Statutes

This issue has emerged as the main and pressing priority, since the new autonomy law published in September 10th 2007, set a deadline of eight months from October 10th 2007 to adjust the University Statutes to the governance model defined by the new law.

The Law determines that the Statutes preparation is of the responsibility of a Statutory Assembly to be elected from the body of career academic staff, researchers and students, and external representatives co-opted by the former members. The Rector was the chairman of the Statutory Assembly.

The preparation of the Electoral Regulations and their approval by the Senate at an earliest date, enabling elections for the Statutory Assembly to be held as soon as possible, were given the highest priority. This was accomplished in October 2007.

The decision was to promote the occurrence of Candidate Lists and have these submit programmatic guidelines translating the views on the University mission and on the organisational and functional structure.

The Rectorate met with the School Presidents and the Vice-President of the Academic Council, to present a systematic overview of the decision key points that ought to be addressed, thus promoting the reflexion and discussion in the Academy.

The ability to setup measures that provide answers to some of the recommendations in the EUA Report remained limited until the University had changed its Statutes and implemented its new Governing Bodies.

The July 2007 EUA Report stands as a valuable reference for this exercise, since it underlines the positive aspects of the University performance and pinpoints some weaknesses requiring attention and corrective measures.

The University elected an Assembly to prepare and approve the new Statutes. This Assembly met in different occasions for a period of 6 months and finally approved the Statutes in June 2008. These have been sent to the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) and the official homologation has arrived in December 2008. (Statutes in **Appendix-III**)

The recommendation to reflect on the reconfiguration and/or reduction of the number of Organic Units (teaching and research) was on the agenda from the moment the Statutory Assembly was constituted with the elected academic teaching and research staff and the co-opted external members. Hence the new Statutes establish the reorganization of two Schools: Institute of Education and Psychology and Institute of Child Studies. These have been replaced by the Institute of Education and the School of Psychology. They also establish that the Autonomous Department of Architecture becomes School of Architecture.

The Schools Statutes were produced by elected Assemblies and the new School bodies are expected to be implemented soon.

The management structure of the University, according to the new statutes is presented in **Appendix-IV**.

The internal members of the General Council were elected on the 2nd of March 2009, the external members were subsequently co-opted and this body started operating on the 18th of May 2009.

Having the new University Statutes approved, conducting the establishment of the new governing bodies and adapting the University to a new culture, was certainly a big challenge for this Rectorate whose term should end in July 2010.

On the second meeting of the General Council, which took place on the 22nd of June 2009, the Rector asked the President of the General Council to initiate the necessary procedures for carrying out elections for the position of Rector of the University of Minho, and simultaneously published a communiqué to the academy, stating that *“When electing a Rector, it is expected that the General Council becomes co-responsible of a program and its development. In the basic options, and in adopting the most demanding measures, the*

members of the General Council will have to assume their responsibility before the academy that chose them. The opportunity for this commitment to be publicly announced and assumed, and monitored by the academy, must be created in the shortest period of time, providing the necessary space for the new structure of governance to fully assume its responsibilities. Thus, I inform the academic community that I have asked the President of the General Council to initiate the necessary procedures for carrying out elections for the position of Rector of the University of Minho, so that my replacement occurs during the month of October”.

The election for a new Rector has been scheduled for the 7th of October.

3.5. Strategic Planning

The time is not appropriate for the Rectorate to start an overall strategic planning reflexion exercise across the institution in order to establish a master plan and articulated sub-plans for each school, since these issues are included in the mission of the newly formed Governing Bodies, which will be fully operational only by mid-October 2009.

For the time being and under the framework of the 2009 budget the leadership of the Rectorate Team has been essential to guarantee that the building of an articulated plan is pursued. Financial incentives have been maintained, mainly in the quality of teaching and learning.

The Rectorate has prepared a proposal for the Internal Quality Assurance System, based on the ENQA Standards and Guidelines, considering all the activity areas. A Seminar to introduce the key features of the QA System took place in September 2008 for which Schools, Research Units, Course Directors, Services and Offices and Interfaces were invited to attend. A proposal for the Quality Manual and the Quality Plan was distributed by the pedagogical and scientific grid to gather contributions between January and July 2009 (**Appendix-V**). It is expected that the implementation of this system will be completed within one year.

3.6. Centralisation of Human and Financial Resources in common functions

Having identified in the Report areas which require either the reinforcement of human resources or the setting-up of inexistent structures, alternatives must be discussed with Schools (and Services). These have to do either with the concentration of functions and human resources, or with tighter and articulated operational platforms distributed over Schools, but centrally managed by the appropriate Offices.

3.7. Academic Activity Strategy

The preparation of the academic plan and the strategic compromise from Schools are essential elements. This is to be achieved through a participated top-down and bottom-up approach. However, this objective is now delayed by the ongoing definition that will be concluded with the setting up of the new Governing Bodies.

3.8. Qualification of Academic Staff

The new Academic Career Law previously “announced” to be published by September 2007 is not expected to address but minor modifications in the current law. It has not been published to this date.

The re-qualification of teaching staff becomes an issue that has to be included in the Schools development plans.

3.9. Pedagogical performance monitoring and referral

The objective is to enhance the reporting and accountability between Schools and the Pedagogical Councils as a means to give appropriate and quick answers to anomalies.

However, the implementation of such a project requires the pedagogical structure definition, which is established in the new Statutes.

The convergence to the Bologna process has continued and **Appendix-VI** summarises the progress carried out over the period 2006-2008. It should be stressed that in June 2009 the University was once again awarded the ECTS Label and the Diploma Supplement Label and therefore holds these Quality Awards since 2004. Presently, only ten European Universities hold simultaneously both labels. The European Bologna Experts’ reports final conclusions on the University proposals were as follows:

ECTS Label

It is a complete and excellent application. All items were included and well described in the Information package. Similarly all documents related to mobility were correctly completed, accurate, easy to assess. It can be considered as a model application for other applicants.

Diploma Supplement Label

This is an EXCELLENT application in all respects, not only because of the fulfilment of the requirements. The presentation of the application and the design of the Universidade do Minho's DS are outstanding. Congratulations to the applicant!

3.10. Research Strategy

The Research Centres are autonomous and funded by the FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology).

The Rectorate task is essentially to promote the cohesion and qualification of Research Units, and to attract opportunities that can raise the quality of the research carried out therein. Nevertheless, the Rectorate was able to promote merging, reorganisation or networking with other national research centres. As a consequence, the overall number of Research Centres which were awarded Very Good or Excellent in the 2008 National Research Evaluation increased significantly.

The motivation of secondary school students for research is already implemented by the Live Science Programme of the MCTES in eight R&D Units of the University. It is an objective to extend this approach to other R&D Units.

The involvement of 1st Cycle students in research is a more complex objective, since it requires external financing. In August 2008, MCTES announced special funding

programmes through FCT to support this objective. Currently, 120 1st cycle students were recruited and are doing research in almost all the research Centres of the University.

Currently the University offers only 12 doctoral programmes. Another 6 will be offered in the academic year 2009/2010. A culture of doctoral programmes has to be built before considering the establishment of Doctoral Schools. This will not be viable within the next two to three years.

3.11. Service to Society – Interfaces

The University is already involved in the AvePark, in the Science Park (Computer Graphics Centre; Polymer Innovation Centre; Residue Valuation Centre) and CENTI (Centre of Nanotechnology and Technical, Functional and Intelligent Materials).

AvePark covers an area of 65 hectares. The European Institute of Excellence on Tissue Engineering, partially funded by the European Union, has its facilities in AvePark and hosts around 150 researchers. There are also 25 companies already operating in AvePark that is provided with all infrastructures, including road accessibility, buses availability, and optical fibre communications, since the end of May 2008. Over 750 people are already working full-time at AvePark.

The effective follow-up of the impact of all these interfaces will only be possible upon 5 years, at least, of running period.

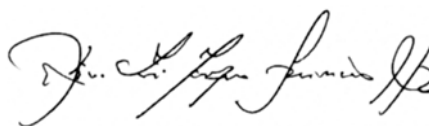
The full operation of CENTI, a semi-industrial facility working on nano-materials, INL (Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory), Tissue Engineering Centre, PIEP (Innovation Pole on Polymers), CVR (Waste Valorisation Centre), CCG (Computer Graphics Centre) and spin-offs, is expected to generate approximately 3,000 jobs for young university degree holders, between 2009 and 2012.

4. Final Note

The University of Minho acknowledges the advice of the Evaluation Team. Tables in **Appendix-VII**, summarize the recommendations in the EUA Report and the achievements of the University upon two years of the Institutional Evaluation.

The present report was discussed and approved in a meeting of the Steering Committee on the 22nd of July 2009.

University of Minho, July 2009



A. Guimarães Rodrigues
Rector

APPENDICES

Appendix-I – Updated version of the document titled, *Institutional Evaluation Follow-up Report: Recommendations and Action Plan*, March 2008

Appendix-II – Report prepared by Dr. Dennis Anderson on the University Follow-up Plan

Appendix-III – New Statutes

Appendix-IV – New organization model of the University

Appendix-V – Proposal of the University Quality Assurance System: Quality Manual and Quality Plan

Appendix-VI – Report on Convergence to Bologna (2006-2008)

Appendix-VII – Tables with EUA recommendations and achievements by the University