



A FOLLOW-UP REPORT

ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

OF THE

EUA EVALUATION REPORT

FOR THE

UNIVERSITY OF MADEIRA

December 2009

Introduction

In December 2008, through the **European University Association (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme**, the University of Madeira received its Evaluation Report. This report produced a number of recommendations on several aspects of our organization that should be improved. This report came at a time when the University had just finished the revision of its own Statute in order to make it compliant with the new legal organization of Portuguese Higher Education (RJIES). This revision of the Statute produced some significant changes in our structure and the Evaluation Committee also produced some recommendations regarding these changes.

A new General Council was elected in December 2008 and, following this election, a new rector was elected in April 2009. His programme, then submitted to the General Council, took as one of its main objectives that of carrying out most of the recommendations of the EUA Evaluation Committee.

One year has passed since the said report, and the new senior management team has been in place since May 2009. We think a follow-up report on how we have been trying to implement the Evaluation Committee's recommendations should now be produced.

This document is an attempt at such a report. It is organized following the order of recommendations that can be found at the end of the EUA report.

Recommendation 1

The team recommends that the exclusion of non-teaching staff from the General Council should be reconsidered at the earliest opportunity.

The matter in question was the subject of much consideration within the Statutory Assembly and in the discussions then held with the EUA evaluation team. This recommendation, to be followed, requires a change in the Statute of the University. This change is the responsibility of the General Council, to which no element of the senior management team belongs. Changes can be proposed by the members of the General Council

and the Rector. However, changes in the first four years after the last revision require a 2/3 majority. Without putting in question the pros and cons of this recommendation, we think that it is too early to proceed to changes in the statute, but we shall revisit this recommendation in three years' time.

Recommendation 2

The levels of devolved autonomy between the General Council and the Centres of Competence should be clearly defined in the university by-laws and sufficiently limited to enable the General Council to be effective in its overarching governance role.

This recommendation requires some comments before we can explain what has been done regarding our compliance with it.

The first, and fundamental, remark to be made is that our Competency Centres (playing roles similar to, but not equal to, those of faculties in more traditional systems) have reduced autonomy. This autonomy is limited to scientific and pedagogical matters. Moreover, pedagogical autonomy is further limited by the fact that our College structures, which manage and coordinate most of our courses, have the main Pedagogical Councils. The Competence Centres have no administrative or financial autonomy. This means that their budget, rules for its execution, and all administrative acts (contracts, promotions, etc.) are always performed at the Rectory level. By the new statute, even the final decision about creation and extinction of course programmes lies with the Rector.

The Statute foresees the possibility of some of these autonomies being devolved to the Competence Centre Presidents, but this depends on the Rector's will and it will not happen during this mandate.

The internal regulations of the Competency Centres have been approved in the mean time (with one exception, which will probably take place in January 2010) and they respect the limitations of our statute.

The following is a resume of the main aspects of how the relationship between the Rector and the General Council and the Competence Centres has been organized.

- a. **Budget** – The budget of the University is prepared by the Management Council (Conselho de Gestão). It has two levels: external (our proposal to be included on the National Budget Law, using our own resources and the financing from the state) and internal (how it is divided internally). The document has a policy basis (strategic areas, policies to support research, staff development, and so on) and a set of execution rules (how every measure is calculated, what criteria have been used to divide it, who is authorized to propose or to approve expenditure, what levels are allowed for certain types of expenditure [travel, for instance], and so on. This set of documents is then submitted for approval to the General Council. The change in government in Portugal has delayed the approval of the budget, but the execution rules and general policy objectives have been approved during the last meeting of the General Council in December.
- b. **Staff openings** – Announcements, selecting juries and contracts have to be authorised by the Rector. The Competency Centres' intervention is limited to proposing the scientific areas for the openings and the constitution of the juries (if they meet certain conditions). But even these are limited by the University regulations. Thus, scientific areas will be defined within the next two months, according to an agreement at the Council of Rectors level, in order to ensure mobility. Competency Centres will, of course, participate in the definition of their scientific areas but their autonomy is limited to a choice from a list to be established by the Council of Rectors (and based on CORDIS). Once these areas are defined, it will be up to the Competency Centres to define the areas for new openings. But this choice will be subjected to final approval by the Rector, in order to guarantee compliance with the strategic objectives of the University. Two other pieces of information are necessary: categories and quantities. These two are linked due to budgetary reasons. The total amount of new openings and the respective categories, by Competency Centre, are the subject of a proposal by the Rector to the General Council which has the final word. This proposal fixes the number of new contracts, their categories, and under what circumstances they can take place. The proposal for 2010 has been approved at the last meeting of the General Council in December 2009. The proposal was based on student/academic ratios (real and estimate).

- c. **New courses and programmes** – Competency Centres can propose the creation of new courses and programs by themselves, in cooperation between them or with other institutions. These proposals have to be considered by the Academic Committee of the Senate (where the Presidents of the Competency Centres and the Colleges have a seat) but the final approval depends only on the Rector. Once approved, these new courses and programs will be endowed with a budget and a management team. Except for third cycle degrees, the management structures can operate independently (as projects) or be placed under the supervision of the Colleges (this will be the usual situation).
- d. **Workload** – The workload of every academic (teaching + research + administration + service to society + personal development) is established by the President of his/her Competency Centre. This must be approved by the Scientific Board of the Competency Centre and it must comply with the internal regulations of the University which are at present under discussion, to be approved in February 2010. The proposal, after approval by the Scientific Board, is submitted to the Rector for final approval. This last approval is not dependent on the previous one.
- e. **Staff assessment** – Staff assessment regulations are at present under discussion. They will be approved in February 2010. Staff assessment will be performed according to a unique regulation to be applied to all Competency Centres. This is a consequence of the new laws regarding academic careers of the Portuguese state. The General Guidelines under which this will occur have been approved at the last meeting of the General Council.
- f. **Relationship among Competency Centres and between them and the senior management team** – these will happen through the Academic Committee of the Senate where the above matters will be discussed. The Academic Committee¹ is an advisory board (it has no mandatory powers) but compliance with its proposals, with the obvious limitations (legal, strategic, for instance) will be the rule.

¹ The members of the Academic Committee are: the Rector, the Vice-Rectors, the Presidents of the Competence Centres, the Presidents of the Colleges, the Presidents of the Institutes, two representatives of Scientific Areas and two presidents of Research Centres.

Recommendation 3

The nature of the working relationship between the Centres of Competence and the Colleges should be clearly set out in the university by-laws.

The Colleges are structures whose fundamental functions are those of managing and coordinating our courses. University first cycle degrees (with a few exceptions) are all under the supervision of the University College president. Polytechnic first degrees are all under the supervision of the Polytechnic College president. Most master programs, by decision of the General Council, at the last meeting, following a proposal by the Rector, have also been placed under the supervision of the University College President. The Colleges have their own budget allocations (calculated to take into account all the degrees under their management) and coordinate course calendars, timetables, and so on. The College presidents will be heard with respect to the allocation of teaching workloads by the Competency Centres in what concerns the courses under their supervision. The Student Assessment Regulation for the courses under management of both Colleges has been approved in August 2009. At the last meeting of the General Council, it was decided that this regulation will apply to all courses in the University. However, the Rector may, on exceptional grounds, decide otherwise for particular courses. We will only have two courses treated as exceptions at this time: Medicine (this is a joint degree with the University of Lisbon – their regulations will apply) and the MHCI program with Carnegie Mellon University.

Recommendation 4

The senior management of the university should set up appropriate reporting arrangements for the new university-wide functions recommended throughout this report.

A significant part of the time spent since May 2009 has been dedicated to the preparation of a number of documents with the aim of making clear the new way the University will function. Some of these documents were concerned with procedures, others were new forms for certain types of activities. Besides this, the central administration has been changed in order to adapt it to the new structure. This alteration was approved by the

General Council during the May 2009 meeting. Besides a number of offices that were created at the central level (Quality and Assessment Office, Marketing and Public Relations Office), two offices were created to support the Competency Centres and the Colleges (one for each group). A Student's Office was also created to support students (besides the Academic office who keeps its traditional objectives). The two supporting offices for the Competency Centres and the Colleges (and course projects) will be shared by all the structures of the same nature. This will allow these bodies to have a better and more coherent functional arrangement with the administration and senior management. It also allows for a better and more economic allocation of non-academic staff and guarantees a better assessment of their work.

Recommendation 5

The university should develop vision and mission statements that are specific to UMa and the island of Madeira.

The vision and mission statements for the University will be developed during the first semester of 2010. The Rector proposed that the General Council should organize itself into specialised committees (Legal, Academic, Financial, Strategic and Image Committees) directed by the external members of the Council. These documents will be developed in close cooperation between the Rector and the Strategic Committee.

Recommendation 6

The university should establish a capability for the collection of data on all its activities.

We created the Quality and Assessment Office in May 2009. One of its main tasks is the collection of data on all our activities. The office also coordinates the preparation of sectoral reports and is in charge of preparing the global reports of the University.

Recommendation 7

The university should establish a University Steering Committee with responsibility for preparing a Strategic Plan for the years 2009-2013. The Committee should be chaired by the rector.

As for the vision and mission statements, we intend to develop the strategic plan for the university during the first semester of 2010. This will be submitted to the General Council at its May meeting. Our intention is to prepare it in three stages:

- a. Main guidelines for the strategic plan (to be defined by the end of January 2010) in agreement with the Strategic committee of the General Council. This would be submitted for the Council's approval at the January/February meeting. It should propose areas of development both at the research and pedagogical levels. It should also set objectives of general policy (international master programs, institutes to be created, for instance);
- b. Development of the Colleges and Competency Centres Strategic Plans under these guidelines and in agreement with a template to be established by the Rector;
- c. Final draft of the strategic plan. This will be based on the previous documents but adaptations are to expected. It will be submitted to the General Council at the May 2010 meeting.

This will be done by a Committee whose composition has not yet been decided, but with the close cooperation from the leader of the Strategic Committee of the General Council.

Recommendation 8

The university should establish overarching internal quality assurance procedures, and a high level Standing Committee to ensure comparability between the Pedagogical Councils of the Centres of Competence.

As mentioned before, the University has a unique Student Assessment Regulation. The vast majority of our courses are integrated into the two Colleges and are, thus, dependent of the Pedagogical Councils of the two Colleges (who work in close cooperation). The Pedagogical Councils of the

Competence Centres have a reduced set of competences. They will, essentially, cooperate in academic and student assessment and course evaluation as these tasks have been attributed to different bodies in the University (as foreseen in the Statute). Comparability at the student level is guaranteed by the fact that most courses are supervised by the Colleges. Comparability at the academic level is ensured by the fact that academic assessment is to be carried out at the central level.

Recommendation 9

The university should establish a Quality Office to oversee the operational procedures for quality assurance.

The Quality and Assessment Office has been created in May 2009. This office is already preparing the global Bologna report. It is also in charge of managing the relationship of the University with the National Agency for Course Creation and Certification (A3ES). It will also be in charge of collecting, organizing and treating all data required at the academic, research and staff assessment levels.

Recommendation 10

The university should develop a fund-raising strategy to increase resources from external non-governmental sources for its academic activities.

This is the hardest recommendation to comply with. We have had some recent successes and some projects are underway, but they cannot be disclosed at present. Overall, 2010 is the year this matter should be addressed with full attention.

Recommendation 11

The university should address as a matter of urgency the high failure and low completion rates.

At this level, we have already introduced some significant changes:

- a. The Colleges have been used in order to guarantee that a reasonable student calendar is approved and complied with. This means that dates for exams, homework delivery and so on are set by the College Presidents and published at the beginning of each academic year, thus allowing for a better distribution of assessment moments and for better planning on the part of students.
- b. Timetables have also been centralized at the College level.

These measures were put in place in September 2009 for a first test. They seem to be working but it is already clear that a tighter control is necessary.

As from the second semester, it will be possible to impose that class attendance is compulsory, as new technical devices will allow us to exert this kind of control over classes, if so desired. This, however, is a matter that will have to be subject to further discussion.

We have also approved a new Student Assessment Regulation to be applied to all students in the University (with the exceptions mentioned above). This regulation limits student assessment modes to four types (the lecturer indicates which ones he plans to use) and each of these types is very specific of the nature and number of assessment moments.

Student reaction to this new regulation has been very positive. It is, however, too early to know if it achieved its goal.

A students' office has been created. Homework, reports, and so on are to be returned to this office which must check that dates have been respected. It also verifies for plagiarism and issues reports on this matter to the lecturer.

Students' evaluations of teaching have become compulsory, but the present forms will be changed in the next few months. Their statistical analysis will be done and the results delivered to the presidents of the Colleges and Competency Centres. The way this is going to be done has not yet been fully defined. However, we think that disclosure of the results must take place at four levels: the Rector, who must have the global picture; the Competency Centre Presidents, who must have the global picture of their own Centre and how it performs relative to each other; each lecturer, who must know how he or she is seen to perform by

the students; the students' union, who must know how, globally, the academic staff is performing. In order to have a good definition of these levels, some discussion will have to take place in the next two months. Compliance with the Portuguese legal system, which has some peculiarities, is to be studied with attention.

Failure statistics will also be elaborated and delivered to the same people.

A full report on this matter will be produced in the summer of 2010 and submitted to the General Council at the September meeting with a set of proposals.

Recommendation 12

The university should organise at once a systematic and routine procedure for the evaluation by students of teaching and courses. Feedback to students on the outcomes of these evaluations should be timely, and follow-up procedures agreed.

See the comments to the preceding recommendation.

Recommendation 13

The university should establish a special unit with responsibility for staff development and training, including new and experimental ways of teaching and learning.

Work on this unit has already started. Cooperation with the leader of the Academic Committee of the General Council (Prof. Robin Farquhar) has been very useful. The work is being coordinated by an academic (Liliana Rodrigues). The objective is to start by providing academic staff with a number of short courses and counselling which, if done, will count favourably for their assessment. The unit will then develop into a full-fledged office, providing services of a deeper level. We expect to see it starting to perform by the summer of 2010 and at cruise speed by the summer of 2011.

Recommendation 14

The university should form a University Alumni Association to maintain and strengthen contact with its graduates.

The University Alumni Association was legally created on the 10th of December 2009. Its ruling bodies are to be elected soon. It is an independent body, but it will work in close cooperation with the University which will provide for space and help in the preparation of their documentation (Newsletter, etc.) and all their activities.

Recommendation 15

The university should:

- **Establish a research database**
- **Provide support for staff in applying for external sources of funding (e.g. FP7)**
- **Join with other universities in applying for large EU and other research grants.**

The research database is underway. The Office for Planning and Cooperation is supporting staff in applying for external sources of funding. The support Office of the Competency Centres has specialised personnel to help with these matters (both for the Competency Centres and the Research Centres). But this area is to be improved further during 2010.

Recommendation 16

The university should continue the good cooperation between staff and students in developing Bologna, and develop further mobility programmes for students to enhance their international experience.

The cooperation is essentially at the same level as previously. A mobility program with Brazil, supported by Santander is to start in January 2010. Further degrees with other universities, under the CMU model, are to be developed during 2010.

Recommendation 17

The university should develop a mechanism for constructive dialogue with regional government.

The relationship with the regional government has reached an excellent level at present. Cooperation in the development of research programmes (Computer Science, CMU program, and Nanotechnology) is being supported by the Regional Government. Cooperation with the Education Secretary has improved. A strong relationship with both the Mayor and the Office of Arts and Culture is to be taken to a higher level of cooperation in 2010. This will happen both at the cultural and economical levels as a Cultural Agenda is to be developed and a University Shop is to be launched. However, the creation of some kind of official committee for constructive dialogue with the regional government has not yet been the object of further thought. Our estimate is that this is going to be a difficult task and unlikely to be successful in the near future (essentially due to the level of intervention of the Regional Government, which is very limited by the Portuguese Constitution).

Recommendation 18

The university should deepen its collaboration with external partners by, for example,

- **Establishing a forum for discussion with local employers;**
- **Closer articulation between student training and capabilities, and the needs of employers in the region.**

This recommendation has not yet been considered. We intend to start working in this direction as soon as the Alumni Association is in place. We will try to work with them and the external members of the General Council in order to devise a plan for this to work.

Recommendation 19

The university should establish a Careers Office.

A Careers Office, as an independent structure or integrated into some other office is in our plans, but we do not expect its creation to be possible in 2010. One possibility is to develop this office as a part of the Students' Office which has been created in May 2009. However, for it to operate to the full extent of its objectives, specialized staff will probably have to be hired. The plan for this year foresees the possibility of some positions (not defined as yet) to be opened by the end of the summer 2010, but at present we are unable to know if one of these positions can be allocated for this specific task.

Final comments

We stress the willingness of the new senior management team to comply with the EUA recommendations and we believe that this can be seen from what has been achieved in such short time. However, a short comment from the Evaluation Committee about what we have stated in this follow-up report would be very useful to us.

As an end remark, we would like to stress that Madeira University would be very interested in having a Follow-Up Evaluation when EUA deems that the time has come for it to occur.

The new team

General Council

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Members:

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- Prof.Dr. António Manuel Dias Brehm

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- Engº David Caldeira Ferreira
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- Prof.Dr. José Manuel Cunha Leal Molarinho Carmo
- Prof.Dr. José Manuel Paquete de Oliveira
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- ProfªDra. Maria Helena Agrela Gonçalves Jardim
- ProfªDra. Maria Teresa Duarte de Jesus Gonçalves do Nascimento
- Prof.Dr. Mário Dionísio Cunha
- Aluno Odílio Freitas Nóbrega
- ProfªDra. Paula Cristina Machado Ferreira Castilho
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