

UNIVERSITY OF MADEIRA

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

April 2012

Team:
Lothar Zechlin, chair
Tatjana Volkova
Miroslav Jasurek
Don McQuillan, team coordinator

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme	3
1.2 The Follow-Up Process	3
1.3 The Evaluation Team	4
2. Internal and External Environment	5
3. Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan	5
4. Governance and Organisation	6
5. Finances and Internationalisation	8
6. Teaching and Learning, Student Care	10
7. Quality Assurance	12
8. Research	12
9. Regional Cooperation	13
10. Conclusion	15

1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of the University of Madeira. EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated the University of Madeira in 2008 with the report submitted to the University in December 2008. In 2011 the University subsequently requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation. The follow-up evaluation site visit took place on 1-4 April 2012.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (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, research or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management 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?

1.2 The Follow-Up Process

The aim of the follow-up process is to identify the impact that the initial evaluation has had on the institution's development, investigate the experiences gained from changes implemented after the initial evaluation, and give further impetus for change. Depending on the specific situation in each institution the follow-up takes account of new changes in the institutional environment, and reviews challenges and obstacles that have been faced in the implementation of the recommendations in the original review report, etc. As with the original evaluation the cornerstone of

the follow-up review is the university's self-evaluation, which allows the university staff to understand their institution's strengths and weaknesses. In the follow-up review the self-evaluation report focuses on progress made since the first review, possibly indicating barriers to change. However, since the overall review process is dynamic rather than static, the follow-up review should take into account new developments and reforms, both within the institution and in the wider environment.

The follow-up Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the University of Madeira, together with its 10 appendices, was sent to the evaluation team (team) on February 29, 2012. The SER gave a clear account of the extensive developments in the university since the IEP report in 2008, and the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. In general the university accepted the main recommendations, and has implemented many of them successfully. In addition UMa has begun a process of change and development in the intervening years that is extremely impressive. The General Council is now in place; new administrative offices have been established with clearly stated functions, including one for internal quality assurance and internal accreditation of courses; management structures have been reorganised and the Competence Centres and Colleges are functioning. The Strategic Plan for 2012-2014 is an important document, precise and scientific in its formulation of goals.

1.3 The Evaluation Team

The site visit took place on 1-4 April, 2012.

The team consisted of:

- Professor Lothar Zechlin, former Rector, School of Economics and Politics, Hamburg, University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany), and University of Graz (Austria)
- Professor Tatjana Volkova, former Rector, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia
- Mr Miroslav Jasurek, Student Representative, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic
- Professor Don McQuillan, former Chief Executive, Irish Universities Quality Board, Ireland (Team Coordinator)

The team would like to acknowledge warmly the co-operation and hospitality we received throughout the visit. We thank the Rector, Professor Jose Manuel Nunes Castanheira da Costa, who signed the invitation letter to IEP, the vice-rectors and other university leaders who actively supported us during the visit and all the staff and students, as well as stakeholders from outside the university, for their helpful contribution to our discussions.

We wish especially to thank Professor Joaquim Jose Sanches Pinheiro for his efficiency in organising the documentation, liaising with the evaluation team and maintaining our daily schedule.

2. Internal and External Environment

Like many European countries today Portugal is facing severe financial difficulties. The country is in recession and inevitably the universities are feeling the effects. State funding for UMa in 2012 is at a level comparable to that in 2007, with a steady decline over recent years, apart from the year 2010 when the government introduced financial incentives to increase student numbers and graduates in order to meet the criteria of the 2020 agenda of the European Community. Nor are financial projections for the immediate future more hopeful. Furthermore, given the continuing national decline in the number of students under eighteen, attempts to increase revenue by enrolling more students face strong competition from other Portuguese universities.

The Portuguese government has introduced wide-ranging laws which have brought about fundamental reforms in the university sector. The first of these, the new Legal Regime of Higher Education Institutions (RJIES), passed in 2007, imposed important changes in the by-laws of all Portuguese universities, but its full effects were not felt until 2009. Indeed the first evaluation of UMa by the IEP team in 2008 coincided with the very lively debates on the new structures then under way in the university. Further changes took place with the introduction of the Faculty Career Frameworks for Universities and Polytechnic Schools in 2009, and Degree Evaluation by an independent agency in 2011.

With the university in the process of developing a strategic plan for the years 2012-2014 this is a good time for UMa to review how well the new legislation is functioning, to take a hard look at the effectiveness of the new internal structures and the offices put in place since the 2008 evaluation, and to map out strategies that will fulfill its hopes to create a distinctive space in the higher education landscape, both nationally and internationally. We hope that our report will make a contribution to these developments.

3. Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan

The university has developed vision and mission statements specific to UMa and the island of Madeira as recommended in the 2008 evaluation report. In addition a list of the university's values has been set down. The team congratulates UMa on these initiatives.

The university drew up a strategic plan for the years 2009-2013, but this first plan has been overtaken by the rapidity of subsequent developments and the SER now

includes the embryo of a plan for the years 2012-2014. This is a carefully prepared document based on a detailed SWOT analysis and the associated TOWS Matrix, a PEST analysis which examines the impact of Political, Economic, Social, and Technological factors on the university, and an analysis of the external forces i.e. competitors, customers, suppliers, new competitors and new products that may significantly affect the competitive dynamics of the sector.

The end result is that Teaching and Learning, Research and Internationalisation will be the key development areas for UMa for many years to come, and not just in the period 2012-2014. It is clear that the work in each of these three areas will be ongoing and will require, certainly in the case of the first two, a senior officer of the university to oversee and take responsibility for it. We will return to this in the section on Governance and Organisation.

The university is aware that the final version of the strategic plan must set down precise targets with success indicators that include measurable outcomes; a designated person who will be responsible for achieving the goal; what new resources, if any, will be required to achieve the targets, and so on.

The role of the Competence Centres will of course be crucial to the success of the plan, especially in setting precise and achievable targets. Discussions should begin at once in each Centre, and between the Centres and the rectorate, to achieve agreement.

4. Governance and Organisation

The basic structures required by law are now in place: the General Council, the Rector and the Management Council. The university has grouped the academic departments into five Competence Centres, and there are two Colleges that are transversal units, designed to manage and coordinate the university's first and second cycle courses, and the nursing course together with the technological specialisation courses, respectively.

General Council. As noted in the 2008 report the inclusion of six external stakeholders in the General Council is an important and highly welcome innovation. The recommendation made then, that the Council should also include a non-academic member, will require a change in the statute, but the team is satisfied that UMa will look into this at the appropriate time.

In our meetings across the university, and in particular with representatives of the General Council itself, it was apparent that there are unresolved tensions related to how the Council functions and carries out its business. Perhaps this is to be expected in a newly formed group that represents competing interests in the university, as well as outsiders for the first time. No doubt similar scenarios are being played out in other Portuguese universities. To help alleviate this situation

the team recommends that:

- **The General Council have a retreat day, with a facilitator, to discuss and reflect on its operational procedures**
- **Once a year there should be a meeting of the Presidents of all General Councils or a general conference of the Councils of Portuguese universities to exchange experiences**

The team noted that by law all members of the Council have the same term of office, so that as things stand now, after each election a totally new team takes over. This is surely detrimental to the continuity of the Council's work. The team would therefore like to suggest that UMa bring the following recommendation to the attention of the Ministry.

The team recommends that the election of members of the General Council should be staggered in an agreed manner to ensure continuity.

Rectorate. We come back now to the points made in the previous section, that Teaching and Learning, and Research, are the overriding functions of the university. In light of this, and a variety of recommendations that will be made in the coming sections, we strongly advise that the vice-rector for academic affairs take a more prominent leadership role in the area of teaching and learning. In addition we will recommend, in the section on research, that the university appoint a vice-rector for research.

Competence Centres. The team recognises the important and difficult role carried out by the Colleges in a university system where, by comparison with norms in many other European countries, the teachers have an extraordinary level of independence in their teaching, assessment of students, and other duties. We will come back to these matters in the section on Teaching and Learning. Here we are concerned with what might be called the responsibilities of line management and teaching roles. We recall that the 2008 report noted the possibility of future tensions between the Competence Centres and the Colleges and recommended that "the nature of the working relationship between the Competence Centres and the Colleges should be clearly set out in the university by-laws". The SER points out that measures have been taken to reinforce the role of the Colleges. However it is evident that questions remain as to where ultimate responsibility lies. The team feels strongly that this ambiguity should not be allowed to continue. It is bad for students and bad for the good name of the university. The team is firmly of the opinion that teachers are answerable, in all aspects of their teaching role, in the first place to the president of their Competence Centre, and then to the vice rector for academic affairs.

The team recommends that Presidents of Competence Centres and the vice rector for academic affairs should take responsibility for the functions carried out now by

the College Presidents. The role of the College Presidents should be maintained but performed by a person within the office of the vice rector and answerable to the vice rector.

In addition, in the interest of efficient organisation, and the harmonisation of good practice in teaching and learning across the university,

the team recommends regular meetings of the presidents of competence centres and the vice rector for academic affairs, chaired by the vice rector.

Finally the team found it difficult to understand the rationale behind the composition of the university Competence Centres. Different people offered different explanations. We understand that nursing cannot be joined to health sciences for legal reasons. It is therefore a matter for the Portuguese government to reconsider this problematic situation. As for the others it may be time for the university to reconsider their composition.

The team recommends that the university reconsider the composition of the Competence Centres.

New Units. The team met with representatives of five of the seven new units established in the past few years. We congratulate the university on this important initiative. Three are already fully operational: Psychological Counselling, Validation of Non-Academic Experience, and the Academic Development Centre. The Employment Observatory and the Cultural Council are about to get under way. These units are organised and run by young academics, all assistant professors, on the invitation of the rector. They give their time and talents selflessly for the good of the university while carrying out their normal academic duties. The team warmly commends their dedication.

While this type of administrative work is officially taken into account in the matter of promotion to Associate Professor, it is nevertheless true that these teachers are at a disadvantage in the open international competition required by law where research achievement tends to trump all other service, however meritorious. The team would therefore like to suggest that UMa bring the next recommendation to the attention of the Ministry.

The team recommends that some promotional posts to associate professor should be reserved for competition among internal candidates only.

5. Finances and Internationalisation

We have already referred to the budgetary restrictions resulting from the present economic downturn. The financial problems have been compounded by a change in the way the government decides on the funding of universities. Before 2010 the

Funding Law used as its main criteria the number of students and the nature of their degrees (by a weighting system). Since then UMa's funding has been calculated on an historical basis, with the percentage cuts applied across the board to the funding of the preceding year. This has caused serious problems of internal management since this crude device makes it extremely difficult to allocate funds internally to Competence Centres and degree directors.

The SER notes that in the present financial crisis the basic rules of funding of Portuguese universities will have to be changed. There is not much information about the changes that will certainly happen, but it is known that quality will play a more profound role than it did previously. We will return to this point in the section on quality assurance.

The 2008 report recommended that UMa should develop a fund-raising strategy to increase resources from external non-governmental sources for its academic activities. This is of course extremely difficult given the present financial climate.

Nevertheless there have been notable successes. The Santander Bank financed two professorships (for a 4-year period). One of these was in nanotechnologies and was awarded to a Chinese professor from Donghua University. This has helped the Chemistry Research Centre (CQM), and as a result further funding was given to the Centre by UMa for equipment and fellowships. An agreement has been signed with Donghua University and further developments are being studied, especially attracting Chinese postgraduate students. The head of CQM visited Donghua in March 2012.

An Institute has been created, Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute (M-ITI), which will be a fundamental instrument in the internationalisation strategy under way in UMa. It is cosponsored by the University and the Regional Government of Madeira. Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) is an honorary partner. The institute manages and coordinates the joint professional Masters in Human Computer Interaction and Entertainment Technologies with CMU. Two thirds of the Institute's students and half of its staff are not Portuguese.

We suggest that extra funding could be generated by exploiting the Madeira 'brand' which for a variety of very positive reasons is well known around the world. For instance UMa could successfully emulate many European institutions which generate significant funds by attracting students from the US to study for a semester or an academic year as part of their Junior Year Abroad programme. These students pay fees that cover the real cost of their tuition. Of course this would require the university to offer a significant number of its courses in English since US students are normally required to follow the same subject courses as the local students. The role of the new Academic Development Centre would be crucial here.

The team recommends that the university initiate a process to attract

international students, especially U.S. Junior Year Abroad students, to study at UMa.

6. Teaching and Learning, Student Care

The team congratulates the university on implementing many important initiatives in the area of T&L and student care. They are in keeping with the high ideals set down in the university's mission and values. Two important recommendations in the 2008 report have been implemented. First, the university has organised a systematic and routine procedure for the evaluation by students of teaching and degrees. Second, a special unit, the Academic Development Centre (CDA), has been established with responsibility for staff development and training, including new and experimental ways of teaching and learning.

The key issue of effective follow-up to the student surveys has still to be addressed by the university. All universities find this difficult. In the IEP 2008 report we noted: It is crucial that this process should be formative and directed at improving the quality of teaching and learning and must never become a blame game. This can lead to continuing dialogue between teachers and students, an important element in developing a climate where real improvement can take place. The Academic Development Centre could be of immense benefit in acting as a bridge between students and the teachers who need assistance in developing their communication skills. The CDA should act in concert with the leadership of the Competence Centres who should play a wider role in promoting the T&L agenda of the university. All this should be coordinated by the vice rector for academic affairs.

The team recommends that

- 1. Follow-up to the student surveys should be facilitated by the Academic Development Centre, acting as a bridge between students and the teachers who need assistance in developing their communication skills or their teaching methods.**
- 2. Competence Centres should meet at the end of the academic year, under the chairmanship of the vice rector for academic affairs, to discuss survey outcomes and establish improvement plans**

Another important new initiative is the Students' Office. It has a staff of three and supports the students at the academic level e.g. scheduling exams and appointments, counselling, plagiarism control devices. In addition a students ombudsman has been appointed.

A Careers and Appointments Office has not yet been established as was recommended in the 2008 report but there is a will to do this. However the Employment Observatory has been formed to collect, manage and publish information about employment of graduates and to make recommendations on

UMa's degrees.

We have remarked in a previous section on what seems to us to be the extraordinary level of independence enjoyed by teachers in UMa in their teaching, assessment of students, and other duties. In this context the team noted the important and difficult role carried out by the Colleges and made a recommendation on the integration of this role into a more usual academic management system through the office of the vice rector responsible for T&L. We were told of an important intervention by the university College in the crucial area of student assessment by teachers.

Of particular importance in this context is the information provided by the university to students concerning the content of subject courses, or modules as they are commonly called. The 2008 report made lengthy suggestions about this, but they have not been fully acted upon. We repeat some of them here in the form of a recommendation.

The team recommends that student handbooks should be produced that include a description of the content of each module taught in each semester in each degree course, properly organised with prerequisite modules clearly indicated. The handbook should contain an explication of the overall aims, learning outcomes and purpose of the modules, benchmarks for student learning and achievement each year, with clear guidelines on written and project work

We would like to suggest that these issues are merely part of the wider issue of how to focus on and regulate systematically the totality of relations between students and teachers in a higher education institution. This has already been done in many universities, especially in the U.S. The solution that has evolved there is to agree a code of good practice that sets out the rights and responsibilities of both teachers and students, a framework by which behaviour can be assessed according to agreed norms. The vice rector responsible for T&L should take the lead here. Examples of such codes are easily found on the internet.

The team recommends that the university agree a code of good practice that sets out the rights and responsibilities of students and teachers.

The Faculty Career Framework for universities has undergone important changes since 2009. There are three categories of Professor: Assistant, Associate and Full. Appointment and recruitment procedures are open and transparent and carried out to the highest international standards.

Workloads are now being measured with reference to teaching, research, administration, extension and personal improvement. To help achieve accuracy a 'credit unit' has been defined. In addition Performance and Assessment Procedures have been introduced.

To an outsider the system looks very complicated. It is not perhaps surprising that many academics are unhappy with this scheme. It seems to have the potential to take time away from the real work of an academic.

7. Quality Assurance

A Quality Assurance office has been established and the university has begun the process of establishing an internal QA system covering all the work of the institution, both academic and service. The team congratulates UMa on this initiative. We recall some of the key elements in the process.

- Self-assessment by unit being evaluated
- Review and site visit by peers, including external peers
- Publication of the peer review report
- Effective follow-up on recommendations for improvement
- Minimal bureaucracy
- Quality improvement
- Involvement of students and stakeholders

We recall what we wrote in 2008: Establishing such an internal system takes time and commitment, and there may be an initial reluctance on the part of some staff to face the challenge of change or even to accept that change is necessary. Dialogue between all members of the university community is central to creating good will, if not total and enthusiastic acceptance. It should be stressed that the goal is to create a quality culture in all activities of the university through continuous improvement, and not to apportion blame for perceived shortcomings. The role of the university leadership is crucial in driving the process and in facilitating the missionary work necessary to convert the doubters.

We stress that detailed instructions on how to organise the work of self-assessment, what is to be included in the self-evaluation report, the type of questions to be addressed, etc. must be available to the units. At all times the fundamental difference between accreditation and quality assurance must be emphasised.

Finally it appears that the effectiveness of the QA system in place will play a role in the government's future thinking on funding for the university. This should focus all minds on the importance of doing good QA work.

8. Research

The team congratulates the university again on its achievements in research over

the sixteen years since it was established. As we noted in the introduction this is perhaps a good time to take stock and to look to the future in the context of the university's strategic plan. It is important that UMa move forward in a concerted and well-organised way. A balance has to be found between the natural desire of researchers to concentrate on their own particular line and the goal of the university to become a serious actor on the international stage, a development that will require the kind of external funding only granted to teams working on a common project.

This vision of the future can only be achieved by working together. The importance of collaboration and dialogue cannot be overemphasised, and will require a well thought-out research policy with someone appointed to drive that policy. Not a dictator, but a facilitator with energy to organise and implement agreed procedures and plans, in other words a vice rector for research, as recommended in the section on Governance and Organisation.

The team recommends that the university

- 1. Should formulate a precise research policy, and appoint a vice rector for research to drive that policy**
- 2. Provide office space to facilitate applications for research grants and to support the work of the vice rector.**

9. Regional Cooperation

The team met for an hour with representatives of stakeholders and partners from industry, business, society and local government. There was general agreement that the reputation of the university has been enhanced over the past four years, that there was a new openness on the part of UMa to the needs and aspirations of the island. The team congratulates the university on this welcome development. It is gratifying to see this since UMa was founded for the cultural and economic development of Madeira. However the team would like to see this commitment to the region more precisely spelled out in the strategic plan.

The team recommends that the region should be given a prominent place in the strategic plan.

In the 2008 report we made two recommendations aimed at helping UMa to constructively and more effectively engage with the region. The first of these was to establish a forum for discussion with employers on closer articulation between student formation and capabilities, and the needs of employers. The university has admirably responded by establishing the Employment Observatory designed precisely for this purpose.

The second asked the university to develop a mechanism for dialogue with regional government. We were told that UMa's attempts to carry this through have failed. Nevertheless we urge the university to renew its efforts in this direction.

10. Conclusion

In its Strategic Plan the university points to the need for UMa to develop strategies that create differentiation in relation to its competitors. In conclusion we would like to point to two areas we believe are central to this goal.

The first of these is the critical matter of student satisfaction and loyalty. The best public relations representatives any university can have are its own graduates. The Plan cites several indicators to measure student satisfaction, and these are obviously of great importance. However we suggest that central to all this is the quality and transparency of the teaching arrangements in UMa, the dedication of teachers to their profession, and the treatment students receive from all staff across the institution, both teachers and administrators. Students must be convinced that the university cares about them at an ordinary human level, that it will at all times do its best to help them achieve their goals. In this context we urge the university to continue and expand its efforts in this direction, and to implement as soon as possible the recommendations in this report dealing with these crucial matters.

The second area is quality assurance, and the system of internal quality assurance that UMa will develop over the coming years. The goal should be to create the best system in the country and thus produce an important differentiation in relation to competitors, visible not only internally to UMa students and the region, but also visible nationally with obvious consequences for government funding.

Finally we want to thank the Madeira university community once again for the warm reception we received and for the open and frank discussions we had with university leaders, staff, students and external partners. We wish you well in your important work.