

INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DE CASTELO BRANCO

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco. The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco in 2008 with the report submitted to the Polytechnic Institute in December 2008. In June 2010 the President of Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco subsequently requested that the IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

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.

In line with the EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

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

1.2 Institution and National Context

Established as a public higher education institution, by Decree-Law, in December 1979, the Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco (IPCB) is part of the national network of Portuguese higher education institutions. While planning, governance, and policy making for higher education in Portugal are under the authority of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, for the purposes of internal governance and executive management, the Polytechnic Institute's senior authority is its President. As a public higher education institution IPCB is self-governing, with autonomy in financial and administrative affairs. Apart from the requirement to seek Ministry approval for new programmes of study, the Polytechnic Institute also has autonomy in learning and teaching matters. Though dependent on national funding for the large part of its income, the Polytechnic Institute actively explores opportunities for diversification of its income by generating additional revenue from other sources.

Portuguese higher education operates under the aegis of the national Higher Education Coordination Council (CCES), a body which provides advice to the Minister, and which was

established in 2007. The period covered by this follow-up IEP evaluation, and that covered in the 2008 IEP evaluation, have each been characterised by significant changes at national level in terms of the prevailing legal framework and arrangements for the governance and institutional autonomy of Portuguese HEIs, and polytechnic institutions specifically. The legal context of IPCB is defined by the legislation of September 2007 (Law no. 62), and the Polytechnic Teaching Staff Statute of August 2009 (Decree no. 207), together with the Polytechnic Institute's own IPCB Statute of November 2008, and the more recent Statutes of the Schools (January 2010). These matters and other changes relevant to the IEP follow-up evaluation are discussed more fully in sections 2 and 3.

1.3 The Self-Evaluation Process

In accordance with the IEP methodology and guidelines, and in advance of the IEP Team's visit, a 14-page Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the Polytechnic Institute was sent to the evaluation team. The SER analysed the Polytechnic Institute's development since the 2008 IEP evaluation, and also provided helpful accounts of how the recommendations made by the 2008 team had been received and responded to. The SER presented information on IPCB's revised vision and mission and on governance, management, and strategic planning arrangements at the time of the IEP Team's visit. It also discussed the changes introduced since the 2008 evaluation and since the appointment of the new President in September 2010, together with the Polytechnic Institute's capacity for change. The SER was accompanied by five annexes, including IPCB's recently developed *Strategic Plan (2010 – 2013)*. Other annexes provided information on organisational structures and functions; student numbers and demographic trends; staff profile and qualifications; funding and finance; and infrastructure.

The self-evaluation process was directed by a Self-Evaluation Team appointed by the President, and coordinated by the IPCB Vice President, Professor Coordenador Doutor José Carlos Gonçalves. The team included teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and students, and was representative of all of the Polytechnic Institute's schools and services. This reflected a desire to achieve the greatest possible involvement and contribution of the IPCB academic community to the self-evaluation process. The self-evaluation methodology adopted by the team involved a comprehensive and iterative communication strategy, and included input from key representatives and post-holders from the Polytechnic Institute's committees, and management and operational units. The SER was also published on the University's intranet, with an invitation to comment and provide feedback. The IEP Team greatly appreciated the work done in the SER and the accompanying documentation, and found them to be of great assistance in enabling them to undertake their deliberations.

1.4 The Evaluation Team

The visit of the follow-up evaluation team to Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco took place on 23rd to 25th May 2011.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Régis Ritz, former President, Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, France (Chair);
- Gülsün Saglamer, former Rector, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey;
- Urs Brudermann, ESU Student Experts Pool, Switzerland;
- Jethro Newton, Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement, University of Chester, UK (Team Coordinator).

The team would like to express its sincere thanks to the President of the Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco, Professor Carlos Maia, for the welcome and hospitality provided during the IEP Team's visit. Special thanks are offered by the IEP Team to Dr Ricardo Batista, for his excellent work in ensuring the smooth running of all aspects of the process, and to Professor Coordenador Doutor José Carlos Gonçalves, Coordinator of the Self-Evaluation Steering Committee.

2. Vision, mission, and general context

a. Main changes since 2008

The IEP Team noted with great interest the changes at the Polytechnic Institute since the 2008 IEP Evaluation. Principal amongst these were the election of a new President, who took office in September 2010; a revised Vision and Mission; the development of a *Strategic Plan (2010 – 2013)*, approved in May 2010; and new governance and management bodies. The Team were also interested to learn of the election and appointment, in June 2010, of an entirely new team of Directors of the six IPCB Schools, and subsequent elections to positions of Heads of Technical and Scientific Units.

The documentation provided to the IEP Team described the Polytechnic Institute's Vision for the future, which emphasises 'recognition for excellence in teaching, research, and service to the community' and a 'strong commitment to the development of the region and the country'. The IPCB Mission stresses 'the high level qualification of citizens, the production and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the cultural, artistic, technological and scientific education of its students in an international frame of reference'. Information provided to the IEP Team also highlighted the strong set of values that underpin the vision, mission, and work of the Polytechnic Institute. This provides the context for the newly developed IPCB *Strategic Plan*. This document is structured around five strategic axes, or areas for development. The IEP Team noted with interest that this structure closely reflected the recommendation on strategic planning contained in the 2008 IEP evaluation report, and was also based on the ideas expressed in the IPCB 2008 self-evaluation. The five areas provide strategic focal points for learning and teaching; human resources; research development and innovation; internationalisation; and organisation and management. For the purposes of implementation, each of these five areas is supported by an extensive range of strategic objectives, operational objectives, and tasks, with accompanying milestones. Matters relating to strategic planning are considered more fully in section 3.

The IEP Team considered the new governance and organisational arrangements at institutional level arising from the changing legal frameworks and statutes as referred to in section 1. The new arrangements at the Polytechnic Institute had been approved, in principle, in November 2008, at the time of the completion of the 2008 IEP evaluation. The Team noted that the authority of the former General Assembly, previously responsible for making arrangements for electing the President, had now been assumed by the IPCB General Council. This council acts more as a governing body than the body it has replaced, and is chaired by a prominent external stakeholder. In turn, the Management Council has taken over from the former Administrative Council all executive decision-making responsibilities for financial, estates, and resource-related matters. The IEP Team learned that these new arrangements were now becoming fully operational. Also, two advisory councils had been established, each with a remit to advise the IPCB President. The Academic Coordination Council has been established with broad responsibilities for academic matters, while the Quality and Evaluation Council was in the process of being formed at the time of the IEP Team's 2011 visit. The IEP Team also learned with interest that an appointment had been made in May 2010 to the position of Defender of the Student. In the view of the IEP Team this is an important position which carries with

it responsibilities for promoting student needs and student success and, in conjunction with relevant bodies and services, for considering matters relating to student affairs more generally.

Changes in governance and deliberative committee arrangements have also been introduced at School level. The IEP Team noted that the former Representative Assemblies and Administrative Councils that had been in place at the time of the 2008 IEP evaluation, had been replaced by a system of Representative Councils as the main governance bodies at School level. Each School Representative Council is empowered to elect and remove the School Director; to approve the School's annual Activities plan and report; to approve and revise School Statutes; and to consider such initiatives as are deemed to be necessary for the development of the School.

In summary, having reflected on all of the documentation provided, and the various meetings held over the two-day period of their visit, the IEP Team was impressed by the thoughtful and productive use made by the Polytechnic Institute of the recommendations from the 2008 report in developing the strategy, structures, and activities of IPCB, and in identifying future directions and challenges.

b. Addressing future challenges: strategic priority areas

In looking to the future, the IEP Team recognises the progress made since 2008 in a number of areas. The Team has observed a Polytechnic Institute community hard at work and Team members have been impressed with the leadership and achievements to date of the new President and the wider academic community of IPCB. While facing continued transition, future development will need to be balanced with consolidation of existing progress and achievements. With this in mind, the IEP Team identifies six strategic priority areas for the Polytechnic Institute:

- Governance, management and strategic planning
- Quality assurance and quality culture
- Developments in learning and teaching
- Research and research policy
- External regional dimension
- International and European dimension.

3. Governance, management, and strategic planning

Two inter-related and very significant dimensions of the follow-up visit to IPCB that were of great interest to the IEP Team were the areas of 'governance and management' and 'strategic planning'. These areas had been identified in the recommendations of the 2008 report and, as has been highlighted in section 2, they are of continued significance in the on-going work of the Polytechnic Institute. The main changes in these areas were noted earlier. In this section of the IEP Team's report attention focuses on what the Team learned of the progress being made in these matters by the Polytechnic Institute.

Strategic planning

As was evident from the strategic documentation made available to the IEP Team, the structural and functional re-organisation at IPCB has been taking place in the context of challenging circumstances nationally, not least in the financial climate facing all higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the IEP Team found an academic community that is working collectively and determinedly to secure a good future. In the view of the Team, it is well served in this by the new, comprehensive four-year *Strategic Plan* and a realistic approach to the challenges inherent in its development and

implementation. The *Plan* is seen by the IPCB President as providing the Polytechnic Institute with a sustainable strategy over the life of the planning period. It draws attention to challenging priorities in areas such as the Bologna Process, and research and development, and achieving a step-change in the level of teachers' qualifications. Regional, national, and international aspirations are evident. As is apparent elsewhere in this report, the IEP Team's deliberations led to a particular interest in the Polytechnic Institute's work and aspirations in the strategic area of research.

In the view of the IEP Team, the planning processes and related discussions have received good support from the IPCB General Council, which gave its approval to the *Strategic Plan* in May 2010 and which considers all such strategic documentation.

The IEP Team learned that the Council plays a constructive role in considering planning matters, and pays close attention to the Annual Activities Programme (derived from the *Strategic Plan*), which is prepared for the Ministry of Education annually, and the QUAR (Framework for Evaluation and Responsibility) report, submitted annually to the Ministry. These reporting processes enable the Council to pay close attention to the achievement, or otherwise, of planning milestones and targets.

From their discussions in various meetings, it was evident to the IEP Team that the President and other senior managers have been determined to provide opportunities for all bodies and individuals to have access to, and to discuss freely, the IPCB *Strategic Plan*. Moreover, it was also apparent to the Team that the *Strategic Plan* is based on ideas generated internally in various institutional contexts, and that the development process has taken full account of the work done in preparation for the 2008 IEP evaluation and the IEP report arising from that evaluation. In this, the Polytechnic Institute is to be commended. While the IEP Team heard that the *Plan* may not have been fully read by every member of the IPCB academic community, nevertheless the Team was quite satisfied that engagement and ownership is widespread across the Polytechnic Institute, at all levels, that good opportunities have been made available for dissemination, and that all Schools are represented in General Council discussions on strategic matters. Indeed, in exploring these matters with staff drawn from IPCB's six Schools, the IEP Team heard confirmation that the institutional-level *Strategic Plan* acts as a live, guiding document to inform local-level decision making across the five strategic axes, and that School plans and objectives are closely aligned with the IPCB *Plan*. Senior staff in Schools put forward the view that the academic community is now better informed than has previously been the case. This again confirmed to the IEP Team that the *Strategic Plan* is becoming a good working document for the Polytechnic Institute. The Team also formed the view that a major contributory factor here is the informal meetings held on a monthly basis between the President and the Directors of Schools.

Governance and management

The importance attached to the new arrangements for governance and management was emphasised in the documentation made available to the IEP Team by the Polytechnic Institute. In particular, good articulation between the various structures, consistency of approach to management and decision making, and organisational cohesion were considered by IPCB to be especially desirable. In considering institutional documentation, and through discussions at meetings with both internal and external stakeholders and interested parties, the IEP Team formed the view that the desired progress in terms of organisational development is being made by the Polytechnic Institute.

The positive role of the General Council at institutional level has been described in section 2. In the view of the IEP Team this is complemented effectively by the IPCB executive group, the Management Council, which is contributing to greater centralisation and unification in resourcing

matters, and the Academic Coordination Council (ACC), which has facilitated greater cohesion in the academic management of the Polytechnic Institute. The ACC has put in place a framework for exercising oversight of Schools. Prior to its formation, under the previous legal framework, Schools exercised significant autonomy and operated in different ways. In the view of the IEP Team, the ACC now allows the opportunity for a balance to be achieved by the Polytechnic Institute between the harmonisation of activities across all the Schools, and the particular needs and idiosyncrasies of individual Schools. The Team noted the good work being undertaken by each of these bodies, both in enabling IPCB to work towards a better institutional ethos and in responding to School issues.

A similarly positive picture was obtained by the IEP Team in respect of the workings and operation, to date, of the new governance bodies at the School level, including the Representative Councils, and the changed scientific and pedagogic bodies. The latter - the Technical and Scientific Councils (TSCs), Pedagogic Councils (PCs) and Technical and Scientific Units (TSUs) - have all been introduced under the new statutes. (The contribution of these latter bodies to academic matters and to learning and teaching enhancement is discussed in section 5). The Team heard that the Representative Councils now reflect the will of the individual Schools more effectively than previous arrangements and that the TSCs were adjusting to the oversight exercised through the ACC's policies and guidelines. In turn, the IEP Team noted that students were now able to be more active in the PCs. Though the Team heard that there was a degree of disenchantment amongst some individuals who were no longer *ex officio* members of the new councils, nevertheless the Team regarded the opportunities to be elected to the new councils and new management positions, under the new dispensation, as a welcome development. In the view of the IEP Team, this had generated a greater sense of involvement, commitment, and enthusiasm amongst those occupying new positions.

In reflecting on all of the foregoing, the Team was impressed with the hard work done in addressing the new statutes and the requirements for new councils and deliberative bodies. While it is too early to judge fully the progress of the General Council and the other councils in the Polytechnic Institute, the Team appreciates the direction taken to date. In considering the early progress being made with the implementation of new governance bodies, the IEP Team recommends that these councils continue their work in supporting the President of the Polytechnic Institute in addressing key aspects of the change agenda. This should include advising the President on identifying a coherent and focused research strategy. (Matters regarding research and research policy are discussed more fully in section 6).

A further aspect of governance considered by the IEP Team was the new leadership arrangements at School level that had led to the election and appointment of the new team of School Directors and also Heads of Technical and Scientific Units (TSUs). The Team was interested to explore through discussion at various meetings whether, as a result of these changes, Directors, Heads, and other staff viewed the Polytechnic Institute as being more cohesive, and whether Schools now operated in similar ways. The IEP Team heard Directors express the view that they function well as a team, that they work and learn together, and that they all feel that they now belong to the same institution. While change has been rapid, and not all staff were adapting quickly to new ways of working, the team of Directors conveyed the view that, as a team, they have a better understanding of each other's problems and issues. From Heads of TSUs, the IEP Team heard similarly positive viewpoints, suggesting that they experience good, open relations with Directors, both formally and informally. The Team also noted support for the reorganisation of Departments into fewer Units.

In summary, the IEP Team notes with interest that the Polytechnic Institute continues to implement its recently developed arrangements for leadership and management in its academic structures at school and institutional levels. The Team also formed the view that a major contributory factor here is the informal meetings held on a monthly basis between the President and the Directors of

Schools. In view of this, the Team recommends that, at this stage of development, the organisation would be well served by the continuation of these regular informal meetings between the President and the Directors of Schools.

The IEP Team believes that the changes described, and the overall period of national legislative changes, are being implemented and managed well. The Team also notes that the Polytechnic Institute recognises that change is complex and that the process of adaptation and assimilation continues. The IEP Team formed the view that the senior managers of IPCB are realistic about the challenges of integrating different views, new groups, and new appointments, and in addressing any concerns or resistance to change. Although there are problems still to be addressed, the present optimistic spirit of the Polytechnic Institute is perhaps well summed up by the comment in one of the IEP Team's meetings, that 'IPCB is re-born'. The impact of the 2008 preparations, the subsequent IEP report, and the whole-hearted manner in which the Polytechnic Institute has engaged, at all levels, with the agenda arising from the IEP evaluation has been evident to the IEP Team throughout the follow-up visit. Here, the IEP Team have been particularly impressed with the effective work done by the Self-Evaluation Group in evaluating progress in response to the 2008 IEP recommendations. The Team proposes that the President of IPCB may wish to consider the value of extending the working life of this group, perhaps on a limited-timescale basis, with a remit to assist him in monitoring further progress and change against the 2008 and 2011 IEP report and recommendations.

4. Quality assurance and quality culture

Developments in organisational quality management

From the strategic documentation studied by the IEP Team, and through discussions in various meetings, the IEP Team was able to explore the efforts being made to develop policy and procedure for improving organisational quality management and organisational processes, services, and working practices. It was evident to Team members that the Polytechnic Institute was continuing to build on initiatives that had been instigated at the time of the 2008 IEP evaluation. IPCB continued to pursue ISO 9001 accreditation and certification and to make use of the Common Assessment Framework, derived from the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Business Excellence model, for the purpose of evaluating services and operations. Priorities in this area are highlighted in the IPCB *Strategic Plan*, which has as one of its strategic objectives to 'implement a management system based on a certifiable culture of quality', with a supporting operational objective to 'develop a certified and accredited management system'. Here, the IEP Team noted that a phased approach is being used in the various activities and processes of the Polytechnic Institute. Implementation is underpinned by a quality policy introduced by the new President of IPCB and a set of guiding principles.

In reviewing progress since 2008, the IEP Team learned that, in December 2010, ISO 9001 certification had been achieved in five areas (Academic Services, Social Action, Management, Human Resources, and Evaluation and Improvement). The Team also noted that the Polytechnic Institute is seeking to apply the ISO 9001 model to all operations and that it is now being extended from non-academic areas to the administrative processes in academic and teaching areas. To this end, certification of a further two areas (Courses and Training, and Research and Provision of Services) is anticipated by the end of 2012 or soon thereafter. Further, reflecting a commitment in the IPCB QUAR report, the Team noted that good progress is being made to achieve recognition for the Polytechnic Institute's Social Action Services under the first stage of EFQM accreditation, 'Committed to Excellence' (C2E). The Team was advised that for those areas already certified and

accredited through ISO 9001, the Polytechnic Institute's Quality Policy Team was now exploring ways in which to consolidate and to assess how processes were working and how they might be further improved. The IEP Team noted that it is intended that this will include seeking the views of service users, such as students.

The IEP Team took the opportunity in meetings with various staff groups to discuss progress on implementation and how the changes in procedures and practices were being received in the various service areas and academic units. The Team learned that, while implementation issues remain, and while it is acknowledged by the Polytechnic Institute that there is still some resistance to the application of these models, there is continued improvement in participation, involvement, and adoption of the new procedures and approaches. The IEP Team heard that the organisation was now generally perceived to be more efficient and that, whereas previously there had been no common procedures or models, documentation and work practices were now more uniform and much improved. The Team formed the view that external recognition through accreditation and certification provided a good indication that functions and services were undergoing continuous improvement. In summary, the IEP Team notes that quality initiatives to date have contributed to progress made in the rationalisation and centralisation of administrative processes and procedures. In the view of the Team this has led to greater organisational cohesion and the beginnings of an organisational quality culture focused around institutional administrative procedures and practices, in which all staff are able to know the procedures and apply them consistently.

The IEP Team was also interested to consider progress made with the establishment of the Quality Evaluation Council (QEC), which has overall responsibility for the central regulation of quality matters, plans for which had been discussed at the time of the 2008 IEP visit. The Team learned that the operation of the QEC had been delayed while elections to other bodies and positions were completed. To date, two meetings of the Council had been held. The formation of Quality Evaluation Committees as advisory bodies at School level had been subject to similar delays. As in the 2008 IEP report, the view taken by the IEP Team is that the role of these quality committees, both centrally and at local level, is potentially very significant but that, at this juncture, it is not possible to form any firm view of work and outcomes in this area. The Team learned that the Polytechnic Institute views the QEC as playing a key role in coordinating all self-evaluation processes, for external and internal evaluations, and covering both administrative processes and academic provision. In this, the central QEC will be assisted by a smaller executive sub-group, a Permanent Commission, which will undertake work in areas as yet unspecified. The QEC will assume responsibility for planning and taking further forward matters relating to the external certification and accreditation of services and functional areas. It will provide advice to the IPCB President on improving institutional performance generally.

Academic quality assurance and evaluation

The documentation provided to the IEP Team indicated that, in addition to the implementation of a quality management system for IPCB services and working practices, the Polytechnic Institute sought to implement an internal system for quality assurance in pedagogical and academic matters. The Team noted that the QEC's remit and terms of reference extended beyond administrative and accreditation matters, and included oversight of academic quality. The Team were encouraged by this. In the view of the IEP Team, a focus on assuring the quality of academic provision through the introduction of procedures for internal academic quality monitoring, course review, and evaluation, is much needed. Work already commenced by the Bologna Group can be used to inform this. The IEP Team notes that mechanisms for assuring the quality of the student learning experience are vitally important as the Polytechnic Institute prepares for the forthcoming challenges which will arise as

the requirements of the national Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Agency become known.

The IEP Team believes that the QEC will have an important role to play in these matters, and Team members advise that experience gained to date by the Polytechnic Institute, through IEP evaluation, will be helpful in these matters. The previous evaluation criteria and procedures at national level, as used by ADISPOR (the Association of Portuguese Polytechnic Institutes) at the time of the 2008 IEP evaluation, are no longer applicable. The IEP team learned that, to date, the focus of the new quality agency had been on programme accreditation, and not evaluation. The IEP Team were interested to hear the view expressed by the Polytechnic Institute that there is a need to create new standards for learning and teaching in order to meet the evaluation requirements of the national quality agency, and that this work will need to be completed, under the oversight of the QEC, in advance of that. The Team noted that external evaluation of IPCB is anticipated for 2013 or at some point soon thereafter. In light of this, the Team's view is that there is now an opportunity for the Polytechnic Institute to make further progress with procedures and a framework for academic quality assurance. Further, though guidance on external quality evaluation is awaited from the national quality assurance agency, the Polytechnic Institute can be proactive in this area by considering the utility of the *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)* for the development of its own internal standards and guidance for the quality assurance of academic provision.

Student-related quality issues

In view of the interest in such matters as identified in the 2008 IEP report, the IEP Team explored several areas of importance relating to students and quality processes. This included student progress and achievement. From the documentation and data made available, and from discussions at various meetings, the Team noted the high student failure rate in some areas. This was discussed at a senior level with IPCB staff. It was noted that strategies such as use of tutorials, provision of specialist courses for foreign students, and support classes in some science and technology areas, have all been used to address this problem. Nevertheless, the Team formed the view that more could be done, including detailed analysis at course level. The IEP Team advises the Polytechnic Institute to strengthen its quality monitoring arrangements for course review and student tracking, and to ensure that data on student progress and achievement (from entry to exit) are made widely available.

Furthermore, members of the IEP Team were interested to consider the implications for students of the recent changes in the Polytechnic Institute's committee system, at central and School levels. This had been a focal point for the 2008 IEP Team. Consideration of committee composition and discussions with staff and students confirmed that under the new statutes, with the exception of the Management Council, students are represented on all institutional-level governance and advisory bodies. At School level, while students are involved in the Representative Council and the Pedagogic Council, they are not represented on the Technical and Scientific Council. The IEP Team notes the changes introduced in the area of student involvement and representation in the various committees, councils and formal bodies.

The IEP Team also learned of the opportunities made available to students to provide feedback on their experience. Students are able to comment at the end of each semester on their curriculum experience and on teacher performance, the latter being a national requirement. Having explored this procedure with students, it appeared to the IEP Team that arrangements for feedback and communication to students, and provision of information on changes that may have been introduced as a result of student evaluations, may not be as thorough as is desirable. While

welcoming such feedback opportunities for students, the IEP Team advises the Polytechnic Institute to take steps to put in place mechanisms for ensuring that communication to all students on actions taken to address their concerns is both timely and effective.

5. Developments in learning and teaching

The SER drew attention to the progress being made in introducing changes in the area of learning and teaching, and to the continuing challenges and pressures, both externally and within IPCB. While, to a large extent, the agenda for change is very similar to that which prevailed in 2008, the IEP Team formed the view that the Polytechnic Institute had developed a much clearer focus, sense of direction, and momentum, in these matters. This was reflected in the identification of several strategic and operational objectives, together with a range of quite specific tasks and activities. These were focused around four key areas and were mapped very well onto the recommendations in this area put forward in the 2008 IEP report. These four priority areas, where changes had been put in place, and which point to the Polytechnic Institute's responsiveness, are: revised curricula and courses addressing regional and stakeholder needs; new scientific-pedagogical positions and functions to support transformation in learning and teaching; pedagogic training for all IPCB teachers; and changes in the educational paradigm, with an emphasis placed on learning and learners. The IEP Team noted that, reflecting the challenges arising from the Bologna process, the area of pedagogy was one of central concern to the Polytechnic Institute.

It was apparent to the Team that the recently established Technical and Scientific Units (TSUs) had a central part to play in all of these learning and teaching developments and changes relating to courses, students, and teachers. Furthermore, some of the newly established councils described in Section 4, also have an important role in respect of changes in learning and teaching. The Team noted that the Academic Coordination Council (ACC) sets out pedagogic directions for the Schools, including teaching strategies and pedagogic updating, and assists in the coordination of the Polytechnic Institute's educational policy. At the School level, the Technical and Scientific Councils (TSCs) and Pedagogic Councils (PCs) are key bodies. The former deal with education plans, syllabus and curriculum matters, and also receive reports from Course Coordinators (discussed below), while the latter are concerned with pedagogic matters and teaching activities, including examination schedules, and the student experience and student relations. From discussions with staff at all levels, the IEP formed the view that these new arrangements were perceived as more dynamic and effective than those that they had replaced. It also appeared to the Team that good relations were developing between these councils and other newly established functions and positions, for example the Bologna Group and Bologna Coordinator.

The IEP Team paid particular attention to matters relating to the ways in which the Polytechnic Institute has been addressing the implications of the Bologna Process. From the documentation provided, and from fruitful discussions during various meetings, the Team noted that a number of positive steps had been taken. At this juncture, work in this area was proceeding from an initial phase that had focused primarily on curriculum organisation and degree structures, to a second phase concerned with the enhancement of pedagogy.

The Team learned that the President had nominated a Bologna Group to assist in this drive towards new methods and practices and to advise on new models for pedagogic training. To enable the Bologna agenda to be addressed at local level, this Group included representatives from each School. In the view of the IEP Team, this work is being led effectively by the enthusiastic Institutional Bologna Coordinator. The helpful information provided to the Team illustrated how use is being made of performance indicators designed to measure progress, and how an annual reporting

procedure is used to evaluate improvements at IPCB related to the Bologna Process. In working towards the introduction of changes in the prevailing educational paradigm, the IEP Team were encouraged to note the emphasis being placed on the pedagogic training of teachers and that this was aimed directly at the main issues related to the Bologna Process. The Team noted that there are three elements to this: pedagogic methods (e.g. assessment; and teaching methods); teachers' skills in promoting student self-help and cooperative work; and the use of e-learning. The Team was informed that, to date, around 170 teachers have undertaken these courses.

The IEP Team noted that initiatives in addressing Bologna requirements and the implementation of new methods generally, were also being supported through the emerging work of Course Coordinators, appointed for each programme by Directors of Schools. Although this system is not yet fully established, the Team formed the view that the work of the coordinators, and their reports on their activities, will provide valuable information and advice for TSUs and for the local TSCs and the institutional-level ACC for the purpose of introducing improvements. In addition, the Team noted with interest that the coordinators have direct and close links with students.

The IEP Team also paid attention to other developments in learning and teaching linked to the foregoing, and designed to enhance both the student experience and pedagogic practices. The adoption of technology enhanced approaches to learning and teaching is being supported by the introduction of the 'open source' Moodle platform, and through involvement in an 'e-polytechnic' project for the promotion of distance learning. Of particular interest to members of the Team was the implementation since 2010 of the ConstAP project, designed to enable teachers to strengthen the support provided for student learning and assessment, and autonomous learning in particular, and to monitor their progress. It appeared to the IEP Team that this initiative for 'learning to learn' was receiving wide support from amongst IPCB teachers across all Schools. The Team also noted with approval the increased emphasis being placed by the Polytechnic Institute on the careers and employability agenda. Members of the Team were interested to learn from the IPCB President of the importance he attached to the establishment of a new office to address these and related aspects of students' professional needs.

In their discussions at various meetings, and in their general deliberations, the IEP Team undertook to assess how the above changes were being received by students and amongst the teaching staff of the Polytechnic Institute's Schools. Students' views revealed to the Team a mixture of both positive experiences and some concerns. For the most part, students were satisfied with their educational experience, with staff reported as being available and open. However, the IPCB students whom the IEP Team met indicated that access to and availability of part-time staff was a difficult area. Moreover, some concerns were expressed about some out-of-date approaches to teaching and learning and a lack of use of technology by some teachers. The IEP Team also heard the view expressed by some students that insufficient time and space was created by staff to address Bologna issues with students. The Polytechnic Institute may wish to consider further how widely such concerns are felt by IPCB students. In general, Team members found students to have a good awareness of the context for changes in learning and teaching and formed the view that the Polytechnic Institute must ensure that their loyalty is retained and that their issues and concerns are responded to.

The IEP Team concurs with the view put forward in the SER that it is too soon to assess definitively whether the move towards new educational approaches and the adoption of Bologna-type learning and teaching initiatives, are having the desired impact on pedagogy, academic practice, and student learning. As was acknowledged by the Polytechnic Institute, the new agenda has yet to be fully grasped by all staff and all students, and, in some teachers' practices, the more traditional approaches remain predominant including, for example, an over-reliance on assessment by

examination. Indeed, it was evident to the IEP Team that progress on these matters varies between Schools. Nevertheless, the teaching staff whom the IEP Team met were commendably enthusiastic, open to change, forward-looking, and engaged in much good work. Also, much of the development work and desired changes remain relatively new. An outward-facing approach was apparent in meetings with teaching staff and the IEP Team formed the view that progress with the Bologna Process was being made, despite constraints.

To summarise the foregoing, the IEP Team were interested to learn of the changes being taken forward in the broad area of learning and teaching enhancement, including the Bologna agenda and work towards a more student and learner-centred educational paradigm. The IEP Team encourages the Polytechnic Institute to continue to make progress with these initiatives. In doing so, the Team urges the institution to ensure that the student voice is heard and responded to as new approaches are developed.

The IEP Team also noted the importance to the Polytechnic Institute and its students of the role played by the Social Action Services, including in the provision of scholarships and assistance with accommodation, and other student-related support services. The Team learned that this was one of several top goals for the IPCB's President over the next two to three years and that he had worked closely with students to address this priority area. The Team encourages IPCB to ensure the sustainability of these services into the future, particularly in a period of financial hardship.

6. Research and research policy

Research, development, and innovation forms one of the five strategic axes identified in the IPCB *Strategic Plan*. The IEP Team noted that the accompanying strategic objective – to develop research that meets the needs of the market – is underpinned by several operational objectives. Both the *Plan* and the SER highlighted the importance attached to research informed curricula and teaching; the promotion of business links through knowledge transfer activity and innovation; and the need to improve the qualification level of teachers through doctoral PhD studies. The Team recognised that the Polytechnic Institute saw the need for the main strategic research areas to reflect the portfolio of academic subjects, together with the expertise of teaching and research active staff. Senior staff of the IPCB Schools acknowledged the challenges that this broad research agenda presented, particularly in respect of achieving targets for staff PhD qualifications, and with regard to increasing the level of applied research.

During various meetings, and through considering the documentation made available to them, the IEP Team considered each of these important matters. The Team was interested to explore the progress that the Polytechnic Institute had made in these areas over the past three years or so, including those aspects that had drawn recommendations in the 2008 IEP report. The Team saw that progress had been made in all areas. For example, the volume of publications had increased; the importance attached to internationalisation had helped to increase research through academic links and partnerships with foreign universities; the emphasis placed on staff qualifications was now widely accepted as necessary for research capacity building; and good steps have been taken in inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research. Equally, there was widespread acceptance of the need to continue to build and strengthen in each of these areas. Further, the Team noted that the Centre for Regional Development Studies had taken on more responsibility for supporting the IPCB research community in routine administrative tasks and that this had been generally welcomed. The IEP Team was particularly encouraged to see that IPCB continued to prioritise applied research and knowledge transfer and their regional application. The Team also heard from Heads and Directors of

their efforts to foster a research culture in all academic units in a way that balances both internal and external needs and dimensions.

The IEP Team also considered, with interest, the respective roles played by the newly established Academic Coordination Council (ACC) and the Technical and Scientific Councils (TSCs) of the Schools. The latter bodies oversee research plans of Schools, in such matters as links with research centres, applications for PhD studies, conference attendance, and scholarly publications. The Councils make proposals for consideration at a higher level including through the decision-making of the President. The ACC has responsibility for advising on the criteria for the creation of research centres and for providing overall strategic advice on research and development. This institution-level Council considers the proposals of Schools and also defines the parameters within which the Scientific Councils operate at School level. It appeared to the Team that these bodies offer good potential for contributing to greater coherence in the Polytechnic Institute's research plans and activities.

In making their enquiries, the IEP Team was fully aware of the various pressures and constraints faced by the Polytechnic Institute in the area of research. Not the least of these is that research in polytechnics in Portugal continues to attract no funding. The funding issue and other, linked, sources of frustration, such as the challenges of developing a research culture in each academic unit, and in securing good research leadership at the pedagogic level, were all considered by the IEP Team on the basis of information made available. It was evident that Schools and academic units were moderately successful in generating some income from locally and regionally commissioned research and consultancy projects, but the tendency appears to be for this to happen in small pockets of activity rather than on a large scale.

A further area of challenge for IPCB noted by the IEP Team is the seemingly intractable problem of a high teaching load for staff undertaking higher qualifications, and the constraints this imposes on efforts to create 'research-only' time. This issue, and the desirability of creating post-doctoral opportunities, was openly identified by the Polytechnic Institute in the documentation provided to the IEP Team. The IEP Team learned that the national requirement, now applied to all polytechnic institutions, is for 50% of all faculty to be qualified at PhD level by 2015. In the view of the IEP Team, the policy that has been put in place to help the Polytechnic Institute to meet this obligation is working in the right direction. To date, 33% of teaching staff possess a PhD qualification while a further 121 staff (47%) are registered for doctoral programmes, of whom 85 are directly supported and funded by IPCB.

In considering the area of multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research the IEP Team noted that the SER pointed to a notable constraint placed upon efforts to grow collective research. This arises from the situation whereby the research of those IPCB teachers undertaking doctoral work at other higher education institutions is included in the outputs of the research teams at those universities. The documentation provided to the Team also indicated that, despite improved inter-school relations there is scope to improve these links even further by the creation of more interdisciplinary research teams. The IEP Team were encouraged to note that several steps had been taken by the Polytechnic Institute to address these matters. It was anticipated that, as there are now fewer Technical and Scientific Units, this would make the formation of partnerships between teachers easier, thus enabling involvement in multi-disciplinary research. The Polytechnic Institute has also formed a new Regional Study and Development Centre. This has involved the creation of a Technical Council made up of two representatives from each IPCB School, and is tasked with supporting inter-school interaction in research and knowledge. Also, again to raise the profile of multi-disciplinary research at IPCB, the institution had joined the national Open Access Scientific Repository. This was regarded as an important development in assisting the dissemination of advanced research. With regard to another national development, in the view of the IEP Team it remains to be seen whether,

in time, the policy of the national Science and Technology Foundation will provide opportunities and incentives for capacity building in multidisciplinary research at the Polytechnic Institute. In overall terms, however, the IEP Team were pleased to hear from senior managers the view, expressed confidently to Team members, that the willingness of more staff to engage in inter-school research was a positive development in recent times.

The IEP Team noted that positive steps were being taken, in various ways, to grow activity in the area of applied research and knowledge transfer. These measures ranged from the requirement for all Masters-level theses to be applied research, undertaken in partnership with local industry, to the contributions made to research in agriculture in the region (an area of strength traditionally for the Polytechnic Institute), and various other projects and incubators referred to in section 7. The Team noted that development of new research centres is unlikely to attract government funding, and that applied research is the appropriate direction for IPCB to follow. Nevertheless, from discussions with external stakeholders the Team formed the view that more can be done to pursue opportunities to undertake applied research in conjunction with regional companies. The importance of this, and the key role that can be played by polytechnic institutions such as IPCB, in applied research and in addressing practical problems, is a matter of which members of the General Council are keenly aware. With this in mind, the IEP Team was interested to note the references made in the Polytechnic Institute's SER, to emerging developments at national level that may provide a favourable operating environment for IPCB in the respect of its aspirations in applied research. The 'Applied Research Centres' project being developed by the Polytechnic Institutions Coordinating Council, has good potential for promoting regional activity through knowledge transfer and through bringing polytechnics together in regional partnerships. The IEP Team also noted that opportunities may be opened up, through these developments, for improved access to regional laboratory infrastructures. In the view of the IEP Team, should such opportunities present themselves, the Polytechnic Institute must ensure that staff are sufficiently incentivised and that applied research is appropriately recognised and valued in the points system used by IPCB for assessing and rewarding teachers' performance.

It was evident to the IEP Team that, in addressing its research agenda, and in growing capacity in this area, the Polytechnic Institute faces a difficult dilemma. Given the realities of the situation facing polytechnic institutions, and the constraints of not being able to form independent research centres, and taking account of the doctoral research links of staff with research centres of university institutions, it appears to the IEP Team that such links offer opportunities for partnerships and synergies between researchers. The Team noted the example of IPCB-CERNAS, which was created as a sub-research centre. In the view of the Team this may be a good model for the Polytechnic Institute to adopt in other academic areas. Also, participation of IPCB researchers in a variety of university research centres is an important mechanism for promoting the creation of synergies and shared networks for research, especially in view of the lack of critical mass necessary for creating free-standing research centres at this stage of the Polytechnic Institute's development.

In summarising their deliberations, the IEP Team notes the Polytechnic's aspirations in developing its research profile and the capability of its academic staff, both in applied research and in research informed teaching. The Team also notes the funding challenges. The members of the Team had informative discussions in various meetings during their visit. The Team notes that the General Council is taking a close interest in strategic planning in research matters, including the human resource development strategy for meeting external requirements for PhD qualifications, and plans to grow applied research. From such discussions the IEP Team formed the view that, not only is this a pivotal area for the future development of IPCB, but that it is essential that planning for the period beyond 2015 is informed by a clear vision. Therefore, the IEP Team advises IPCB to ensure that it has a clear focus on the specific outcomes and targets it wishes to achieve in its research and knowledge

transfer agenda. Furthermore, the Team advises that this requires from the Polytechnic Institute, effective planning, oversight, leadership and coordination, both centrally and in IPCB's Schools.

7. External regional dimension

Through exploring matters relating to the Polytechnic Institute's research and other outward-facing activities, the IEP Team's attention was drawn to the broader question of the external regional dimension and positioning of IPCB. Meetings with external stakeholders and partners, with heads of scientific units, and with members of the General Council, were particularly informative and helpful to the IEP Team in exploring the Polytechnic's regional role. The Team was able to invite discussion of external stakeholder expectations of IPCB regarding the development of the region, and to elicit examples from staff of the Polytechnic Institute of the various contributions made by academic units to the local and regional society and economy.

The IEP Team heard on a number of occasions how fundamental IPCB is perceived as being, externally, to the locality and to the wider region. This accords fully with that aspect of IPCB's vision, noted earlier, that places emphasis on such a commitment and will be of encouragement to the Polytechnic Institute. The members of the IEP Team were interested to note that the newly established General Council is chaired by an external stakeholder, a prominent member of both the national and regional community, and wish to emphasise that this makes the institution more open to society and community. The President of the General Council is Presidente of the Foundation for National Scientific Computing. This externality is reinforced by the composition of the General Council, which includes seven members in prominent positions from outside IPCB and who are in a position to contribute valuable knowledge and experience to the Polytechnic Institute's top-level leadership. With this in mind, the IEP Team welcomed the priority given in the new *Strategic Plan* to the development of closer links with the business community, and the emphasis placed on this for both the Polytechnic Institute and for the region.

In various meetings, and through considering documentation made available to them, the members of the IEP Team were encouraged to note the promising degree of enthusiasm with which staff of the Polytechnic Institute approached the various opportunities available to progress this external regional agenda. The Team learned of good examples where local and regional business, commerce, and public bodies benefited from links with IPCB and through which, simultaneously, the Polytechnic Institute and its staff and students benefited. These included protocols, incubator projects, internships, employment opportunities, industry and business-oriented courses and training schemes, involving the full range of academic departments and units of the Polytechnic Institute. These links covered agriculture, health, technology, arts, media, the food industry, municipal and other services, and provided good examples of the Polytechnic Institute's external work.

The IEP Team's deliberations in this area confirmed that the Polytechnic Institute continues to strengthen its work and relationships with its various local and regional stakeholders in the business, industry, and commercial sectors. The Team were interested to learn that one of the three sub-committees formed by the Chair of the General Council has as its remit the area of 'Liaison with Society'. The Team members view this as a significant development. Nevertheless, the Team also heard the view expressed by prominent external stakeholders that the Polytechnic Institute should be more assertive. The IEP Team would concur with this sentiment. Areas where the Team sees scope for a more proactive approach include seeking direct funding and sponsorship for applied research from prominent national and international companies located in the region. In summary, the IEP Team formed the view that IPCB could be more ambitious and demanding as it seeks to

maximise the contributions from its partners, including contributions in the form of financial support.

In reflecting on the importance to the Polytechnic Institute of its regional role and positioning, the members of the IEP Team noted both the challenges (including a competitive environment) and the potential opportunities for additional forms of collaboration. For example, the Team noted that situated within relatively close proximity there were three competitor institutions: one university, and two polytechnics. It appeared to the IEP Team that there may be scope here for regional academic collaboration and the pooling of expertise which may bring mutual benefits to participating higher education institutions. The Team believes that the Polytechnic Institute has the ability to play a leading role in building a network of polytechnics in the immediate region for the purposes of collaboration on advantageous and mutually beneficial projects.

8. International and European dimension

The Polytechnic Institute continues to regard the international and European dimension as a priority, and this was a further area that the IEP Team wished to explore in order to assess progress made since the 2008 IEP evaluation. The desire to pursue closer integration with the European Higher Education Area and to strengthen external relations, strategic partnerships and other forms of collaboration with reputable international institutions was highlighted by the Polytechnic Institute. The IPCB SER and the *Strategic Plan* provided helpful information that Team members were able to follow up in meetings with staff and students. The *Plan* indicated that the formal internationalisation policy that the Polytechnic Institute had adopted identified increased mobility (incoming and outgoing) of students and staff, and language policy, as high priority areas. This emphasis is also evident in the two strategic objectives and supporting operational objectives identified in the planning document. Also emphasised in the objectives is the intention to diversify funding sources in support of the international mobility aspirations. The Team heard that these plans for enhanced internationalisation had the general support and approval of Directors of Schools, and of the Pedagogic and Technical-Scientific Councils. The IEP Team also noted that much of this activity remains under the progress category of 'on-going'.

The IEP Team's close examination of these matters revealed that the Polytechnic Institute acknowledged the need to continue to make further progress in addressing key aspects of the 2008 recommendations. The SER, and discussions with staff and students, indicated to the IEP Team this recognition of some continuing concerns and challenges. Incentives and grant support, for both students and staff, were included amongst these concerns, as were language provision, and opportunities for non-teaching staff mobility. Senior staff in the Polytechnic Institute's Schools indicated to the IEP Team that international exchanges and links remained an on-going challenge for them. Nevertheless, the Team noted that, since 2008, the importance of protocols with international institutions had been reinforced. Also, incoming student mobility had increased and the level of outgoing mobility sustained. Improved grant support had been made available and the work of the International Relations Office had been enhanced, with 98 bilateral agreements in place across all countries in Europe. Students whom the IEP Team met indicated that they wished to see additional opportunities being made available. The IEP Team also noted that student mobility through the Erasmus scheme had become a priority for the national government. Staff outgoing mobility had increased, as had the level of incoming faculty, though 2010/2011 had seen an unavoidable dip due to the consequences of the Iceland volcanic eruption and uncertainties in making travel arrangements. The IEP Team were interested to learn that participation in the EU Leonardo Da Vinci programme had improved student employability prospects, with 78% of participants obtaining employment subsequently and others obtaining invitations to continue with links.

The IEP Team also had the opportunity to explore the experience of incoming Erasmus students, including directly through discussion. Students whom the Team met, drawn from a range of northern and southern European countries and a range of subject disciplines, indicated that their experience of academic study, learning facilities, and student life more generally, compared very favourably with that of their home university and, in some cases with that of universities other than their own of which they had experience. All confirmed that they would recommend IPCB to a friend. The IEP Team also heard favourable comment on the friendliness and good support, both formal and informal, offered by IPCB teachers and central services, including staff with responsibilities for international relations. The *International Students' Guide* was also well received by students, in particular the small brochures produced by the International Relations Office. The personal support offered by the International Office staff also drew positive comment.

Further discussions enabled the IEP Team to explore with students the operation of the 'tutor buddy' system, involving fellow students from IPCB. It appeared to the Team members that the effectiveness of this arrangement is variable and that the Polytechnic Institute should take steps to secure greater consistency and quality in the operation of this valuable system. The Team also formed the view that, in making provision for incoming international students, there was much to be gained by the Polytechnic Institute through giving consideration to the merits of an International Association for Erasmus Students.

From their reading of documentation provided, and in meetings with students and staff, the IEP Team formed the view that, while progress is being made, there remains work for the Polytechnic Institute to do in the area of language provision and implementation of language policy. The Team learned with interest of a new foreign language initiative, and the establishment during the 2010/2011 academic year of a Language Centre. The Team regarded this as a welcome development. However, from the description of the Centre presented to the Team it was not clear to members of the Team whether the remit extended beyond IPCB students, as only the Polytechnic Institute's students are mentioned in the documentation made available. In the view of the IEP Team the remit of the Centre, and the language policy adopted by IPCB, should be sufficiently comprehensive to cover all students, including incoming international students and outgoing IPCB Erasmus students. The members of the IEP Team heard, from students, examples of learning and teaching situations where language provision was less than satisfactory. This included outgoing IPCB Erasmus students who had not received language preparation before their foreign placement, incoming students with no Portuguese who were unable to receive tuition in some classes, and other incoming students for whom some English language provision would have been welcomed.

In reflecting on all of the foregoing, the IEP Team wishes to encourage the Polytechnic Institute to continue to progress its plans for further internationalisation. In taking forward this agenda the IEP Team advises the Polytechnic to pay particular attention to two matters. Firstly, the strengthening of language policy; and, secondly, the advantages of the International Relations Office and the Professor of International Relations in facilitating the establishment of an International Erasmus Association.

9. Recommendations

Governance, management, and strategic planning

- In considering the early progress being made with the implementation of new governance bodies, the IEP Team recommends that these councils continue their work in supporting the President of the Polytechnic Institute in addressing key aspects of the change agenda. This should include advising the President on identifying a coherent and focused research strategy.
- The IEP Team notes with interest that the Polytechnic Institute continues to implement its recently developed arrangements for leadership and management in its academic structures at school and institutional levels. In view of this, the Team recommends that, at this stage of development, the organisation would be well served by the continuation of regular informal meetings between the President and the Directors of Schools.
- The IEP Team have been impressed with the effective work done by the Self-Evaluation Group in evaluating progress in response to the 2008 IEP recommendations. The Team proposes that the President of IPCB may wish to consider the value of extending the working life of this group, perhaps on a limited-timescale basis, with a remit to assist him in monitoring further progress and change against the 2008 and 2011 IEP report and recommendations.

Quality assurance and quality culture

- Though guidance on external quality evaluation is awaited from the national QA agency, the Polytechnic Institute can already be proactive in this area by considering the utility of the ESG (European Standards and Guidelines) for the development of its own internal standards and guidance for the quality assurance of academic provision.
- The IEP Team advises the Polytechnic Institute to strengthen its quality monitoring arrangements for course review and student tracking, and to ensure that data on student progress and achievement (from entry to exit) are made widely available.
- While welcoming the feedback opportunities made available to students, the IEP Team advises the Polytechnic Institute to take steps to put in place mechanisms for ensuring that communication to all students on actions taken to address their concerns is both timely and effective.

Developments in learning and teaching

- The IEP Team was interested to learn of the changes being taken forward in the broad area of learning and teaching enhancement. The IEP Team encourages the Polytechnic Institute to continue to make progress with these initiatives. The Team urges the institution to ensure that the student voice is heard and responded to as new approaches are developed.
- The IEP team noted the importance to the Polytechnic Institute and its students of the role played by the Social Action Services and other student-related support services. The Team encourages IPCB to ensure the sustainability of these services into the future, particularly in a period of financial hardship.

Research and research policy

- The IEP Team notes the Polytechnic Institute's aspirations in developing its research profile and the capability of its academic staff, both in applied research and in research informed teaching. The IEP Team advises IPCB to ensure that it has a clear focus on the specific outcomes and targets it wishes to achieve in its research and knowledge transfer agenda. The Team advises that this requires effective planning, oversight, leadership and coordination, centrally and in Schools.

External regional dimension

- The IEP Team notes that the Polytechnic Institute continues to strengthen its work and relationships with its various local and regional stakeholders in the business, industry, and commercial sectors. The Team formed the view that IPCB could be more ambitious and demanding as it seeks to maximise the contributions from its partners, including financial support.
- The IEP Team noted the importance to the Polytechnic Institute of its regional role and positioning. The team also noted the challenges (including a competitive environment) and the potential opportunities for collaboration. The Team believes that the Polytechnic Institute has the ability to play a leading role in building a network of polytechnics in the immediate region for the purposes of collaboration on advantageous and mutually beneficial projects.

International and European dimension

- The IEP Team advises the Polytechnic Institute to pay particular attention in taking forward its internationalisation agenda to:
 - a. the strengthening of language policy
 - b. the advantages of the International Relations Office and the Professor of International Relations in facilitating the establishment of an International Erasmus Association.

10. Envoi

It has been a pleasure for the IEP Team to discuss with all staff, students, and external stakeholders the progress made in taking forward the agenda set out in the 2008 IEP report. It has been of great satisfaction for the Team members to see this progress. The Team have been impressed by the vitality and commitment observed during meetings and discussions, and the determination to continue the progress of recent years. The optimistic spirit and collegiality observed by the IEP Team were noteworthy, as were the hard work and determination of the IPCB academic community. The Polytechnic Institute has the leadership and cohesiveness to be successful in its next stage of development. We wish the institution well in this.