

ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (hereafter ISCTE-IUL).

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 IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

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

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

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management in order to contribute to the dynamics of development;
- 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 the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

Therefore, the methodology of IEP evaluations involves an examination of

- short- and long-term objectives, including a university’s mission statement, and
- external and internal constraints, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

1.2 ISCTE-IUL and the national context

ISCTE-IUL is a public university established in 1972. It is one of the three Portuguese universities which adopted the foundation status that was made possible with the new law on higher education in 2007. ISCTE-IUL is located in Lisbon, which, as the nation's capital and with its coastal location is a popular destination for students both nationally and internationally, the latter especially for Brazilians. Lisbon additionally hosts three public universities, with a total of 15 public universities in Portugal overall. There are also three private universities in Lisbon out of a national total of ten, and many more private institutes and public and private polytechnics.

With the new status, conditioned on an institution generating at least half of its revenues from own income, ISCTE-IUL was able to focus its profile and consequently “defines itself as a specialised university institute”. Its strategy is to focus on “three scientific areas: Business Studies & Economics, Social Sciences & Public policy and Technologies & Architecture” (SER p. 4).

ISCTE-IUL has 16 departments organised into four schools, the Business School, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Sociology and Public Policy and the School of Technology and Architecture. In addition, there are nine research centres: Business, Psychological and Social Intervention, Anthropology, Socioeconomic Change and Territory, International Studies, Contemporary History, Sociology, Informatics and Technology, and Telecommunications. All study levels, from Bachelor to Master to PhD, are offered but with a strong emphasis on post-graduate programmes, which involve more than half of the number of students enrolled. Life-long learning is also part of the university profile.

In December 2012, ISCTE-IUL had 426 academic teaching staff, about 100 researchers and 220 non-academic staff. In the academic year 2011/2012 a total number of 9 459 students were enrolled; 4 441 were undergraduates, 4 318 graduates and 700 PhDs.

The strategic decision to change the university from a regular public institution to a foundation one after 2009, albeit retaining its status as a public university, was made with the aim of raising ISCTE-IUL's autonomy, allowing it more flexibility under private law to manage its strategy and finances. Nevertheless, as a public institution ISCTE-IUL is governed by the regulations of the government budget, which, in the country's economic crisis, poses a challenge for the university leadership.

It is part of the strategy of ISCTE-IUL to foster a culture of entrepreneurship, which has enabled it not only to adopt the foundation status but is currently driving it to optimise its finances by introducing full costing in all its operations in the near term. The need for reliable data generation is part of that strategy, which in turn is also at the basis of its quality assurance.

1.3 The self- evaluation process

The ISCTE-IUL self-evaluation process was undertaken by an eight-member self-evaluation group appointed by the rector. The group represented all schools and involved two representatives of the rectorate, two academic staff, three non-academic staff and a student. ISCTE-IUL registered for an evaluation by IEP in July 2012 and the self-evaluation process took place between September and December. It was both a top-down and bottom-up approach, with the self-evaluation team proposing the main issues while representative groups composed chapters for the self-evaluation report (hereafter SER) taking account of the university's strategic documents. A number of meetings and online surveys gathered information from the entire university community, with subsequent drafts discussed in the university's management bodies. The result was a SER of 31 pages, with nine additional appendices. The evaluation team (hereafter the team) was provided additional documents during the site visits, including Activity Reports and a Quality Manual. The university also provided reports and figures requested in preparation for the team's second visit in due time.

The team noted during the site visits that the groups it interviewed were well aware of the self-evaluation process and report. University members reported, and stated in the SER, that it was "a collaborative process, which resulted in a positive learning experience for the community" (SER p. 5). The team commends ISCTE-IUL for having taken the self-evaluation process very seriously. The SER and other documents provided gave a very good view of the institution. The SWOT analysis in the SER revealed strengths and weaknesses; the team emphasises that it is a good starting point for further strategic planning.

1.4 The evaluation team

The self-evaluation report of ISCTE-IUL, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in January 2013. The first visit of the team in Lisbon took place from 25 to 27 February, and the second visit from 18 to 21 June. In between the visits ISCTE-IUL provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The team consisted of:

- Winfried Müller, former Rector of Klagenfurt University, Austria, Team Chair
- Ivan Ostrovsky, former Vice-Rector for Finance and Development at Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia
- Patricia Pol, former Vice-President for International Development at the University of Paris-East, France
- Anca Prisacariu, doctoral student in educational sciences, University of Bucharest, Romania

- Christina Rozsnyai, Programme Officer, Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Team Coordinator

The team thanks Rector Professor Luís Antero Reto for the university's warm hospitality, and Vice-Rector Professor António Caetano, who was the liaison person and who prepared and organised all the team meetings during the site visits, as well as Director Coordinator Ana Sampaio, who assisted the team during the whole evaluation procedure. The team also thanks the members of ISCTE-IUL who have prepared the documentation and contributed with their open discussions during the meetings to the team's understanding of the university.

In the following sections, the team provides an analysis of the university's key activities and offers recommendations that the leadership, and indeed all stakeholders of ISCTE-IUL, may find useful in staking out and implementing its strategies. The team realises that several recommendations face legal constraints but considers it nevertheless important to present their international expertise on the issues. Other recommendations are already being considered or developed, as seen, for example in the "Short-term action plan" (Appendix 8, SER p. 49) and which the team learned in its discussions with university groups. In stating them here the team would like to support ISCTE-IUL in carrying the initiatives further. The recommendations presented in each section (*in italics*) are summarised at the end of the report for easy reference.

2. Governance and management

The team was impressed by ISCTE-IUL's strong and highly motivated leadership and the distinct dedication to a corporate identity. This, coupled with an open and collaborative culture, has made the pioneering switch to foundation status possible. The team had the sense after its interviews that this strategic decision has been accepted as a success by the university community, even if there were initial concerns about the risks involved. ISCTE-IUL has been able to exploit the possibilities by focusing its profile, defining its student intake with regard to the high level of graduates, and diversifying its financial streams and investments. Indeed, while posing enormous financial strain on the country's higher education, the current global economic crisis that hit Portugal especially hard may have made it easier for ISCTE-IUL to define the potential given with the foundation status by convincing the higher education sector's leadership of its sustainability.

It is one of the tools for IEP teams to look at a university's mission as a key strategic indicator and instrument. However, university mission statements tend to be very general, very often reformulating the aims of higher education set down in national legislation, and it is not easy to research good mission statements in the higher education sector. For IEP it is important that a university realises the strategic potential that a concise, specific, forward-looking mission entails both for strategic planning and for marketing the institution's uniqueness. The team found ISCTE-IUL's mission statement to be of the general and academic type, but during its meetings in the site visits it evolved towards a clearer definition of the aspired academic profile and the institutional priorities. In its SER, ISCTE-IUL defines its mission as follows:

The mission of ISCTE-IUL is providing, transmitting and transferring scientific knowledge in accordance with international standards, providing economic, social and cultural value to society. The goals of this mission are achieved by articulating teaching, research and services to the community.

The team believes that this mission is a good starting point, but to serve as a strategic tool it could present to the internal and external community what distinguishes ISCTE-IUL from other universities, keeping in mind where it would like to position itself in the national and international landscape in the long term. Its strategic plans and short- and long-term action plans should directly derive from the mission. *The team recommends ISCTE-IUL to consider the very good description and vision set down in the academic profile (SER p. 9) to be incorporated into the Mission Statement.*

Although the team had access to the full Portuguese version of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014, an English summary, provided in the SER (Annex 5, pp. 41-45), was available and well elaborated with clear goals in strategic areas: quality assurance, a focus on Master and PhD programmes, internationalisation, service to society,

human resources, management processes, modernisation of teaching and research facilities. The team learned in the interviews that a first draft of the new Strategic Plan is completed and has been submitted to the Senate and General Council. ISCTE-IUL has invited experts from foreign universities to lead workshop discussions for ISCTE-IUL members on various strategic aspects, on which they also produced a report. The final plan is to be approved by the end of 2013.

The team was provided with several reports, such as an Activity Report of the Research Centre CIES-IUL for 2010, focusing on research achievements, which it found very detailed and informative. The Action Plan given to the team was, on the other hand, not very detailed with the exception of referring to the SWOT analysis; there were no benchmarks, intermediate indicators, assigned responsibilities, monitoring instruments, etc. The team was told, however, that this was a draft from which a detailed plan was being worked out. *The team recommends that ISCTE-IUL expand its Action Plan to include indicators, etc.*

The team observed that ISCTE-IUL's centrally steered financial management is clear and effective. The team commends the efforts made for controlling the full costs of all activities, for which ISCTE-IUL has purchased and is being trained by foreign experts to implement SAP, the accounting software that covers all areas of an organisation, from human resources to purchasing to overhead expenses. As the software package may be applied beyond financial management to everything from human resource allocation to research organisation, ISCTE-IUL has recognised the potential for this considerable investment and is focusing on long-term gains, a leadership attitude for which it is highly commended.

On the matter of financial sustainability, the team heard that a considerable number of students do not, or cannot, pay their tuition fees on time (a figure of 20% non-payment was given). The team also heard that within the university's financial support scheme, students winning prizes or attaining top grades are relieved of tuition payment. While such support is commendable and social considerations are part of ISCTE-IUL's strategy, a reliable income stream is needed to ensure long-term planning and sustainability. The team heard from the senior leadership that there is a discount for students paying their fees in a lump sum at the beginning of the semester rather than in instalments. The team believes that this is a good incentive, and it *supports ISCTE-IUL to explore as many possibilities as possible to enable or motivate students further to pay their fees on time.*

With respect to teaching and research decisions, academic units enjoy a high degree of autonomy. In this regard the team sensed a certain tension in some schools and research centres it visited. This stems from the relative short time that the centralised structure has been in place, vis-à-vis the almost full autonomy these units had enjoyed previously. The team noted, however, that even the sceptics were

very open to discussion and welcomed the negotiating culture that has accompanied the transformation and continues at this time.

With respect to governance and management, quality assurance and internationalisation, objectives are supported at rectorate level by a vice-rector or a pro-rector and by dedicated offices. These will be discussed in separate sections of this report.

Regarding interdisciplinarity, however, there is still work to be done. The not always coherent school structure, which has its roots in the university's history, the distinct mandates of the scientific and the pedagogic councils, and most conspicuously the fragmented, discipline-focused and funded research centres, pose a structural challenge for across-the-board thinking and innovation. ISCTE-IUL management believes that interdisciplinarity should be a bottom-up process initiated by the units. In fact, the team heard in the interviews that both academics and researchers would desire more interdisciplinarity and flexible structures to support it. The team also heard, however, that some research centres have academics from various departments that cut across schools. A merger or expansion of some schools and research centres has been implemented (e.g. the Centre for African Studies which was expanded to International Studies) or is planned in the near future (e.g. the ongoing debate whether to expand the Centre for Anthropology CRIA into European Studies or some other structure), which may promote more interdisciplinary projects. As regards the number of research centres, the team hear repeatedly in the interviews that closing some of them is being considered in order to focus on quality and sustainability in research as an ISCTE-IUL policy and strategy. *The team agrees with this plan and recommends reconsidering the number of research centres.*

The team commends the structures ISCTE-IUL has implemented to provide links with external stakeholders, the economy and society. Knowledge transfer was a strategic decision already in the early history of ISCTE-IUL, for which four private entities, in which ISCTE-IUL holds a majority stake, were established. INDEG-IUL, which recently celebrated its 25-year anniversary, provides executive courses for enterprises (the first of its kind in Portugal); AUDAX-IUL is also well established with the mission to train young people also from poor social groups in entrepreneurship; IPPS-IUL is a newer establishment for post-graduate training for public sector workers and leaders; GLOBAL-IUL is a consulting service in the process of establishing itself in the market.

The team sees potential beyond these initiatives to diversify connections with its numerous external stakeholders in business and industry, some of whom the team was able to meet in an interview. *The team recommends ISCTE-IUL to try to increase, diversify and make sustainable own income through formal contracts with local communities and enterprises.*

Management structures are partly regulated by national higher education legislation and partly by foundation rules. Since the new higher education law of 2009 university rectors are assigned chief responsibility for university management, embedded in several external and internal bodies checking and balancing his or her decisions. The ISCTE-IUL Board of Trustees was appointed by government, but put forward by ISCTE-IUL. It approves the university statutes, real estate sales and purchases, taking up financial loans, and the Management Board. It also ratifies the decisions of the General Council and the election of the rector as well as strategic documents.

The General Council is the highest decision-making body, which defines strategy, elects the rector and approves the statutes and other strategic and financial documents and plans, as well as the budget and the establishment or closing of organisational units. The General Council represents academic staff and researchers, non-academic staff, students and external partners, with a total of 33 members.

A five-member Management Board, including one student, oversees personnel and finance and assists the rector in these areas.

Academic coordination at the central level is overseen by a Scientific Council and a Pedagogic Council. The former is made up of academics and researchers and the latter of academic staff and students. The schools also have their scientific and pedagogic councils for decisions within those divisions.

The Senate and the University Council are in a parallel structure. The function of these much larger, advisory bodies, not compulsory by law, is to represent all academic bodies directly and provide an inclusive forum for discussing university matters. As much of the membership overlaps with the membership in the bodies that are legally mandated, the Team explored whether they could not be phased out, while understanding their democratic function. Conversely, the team believes that they are quite big, even for advisory bodies, and take up time and resources which, given the small size of ISCTE-IUL and its many informal channels of communication that are also culturally facilitated, could be channelled elsewhere. *The team recommends ISCTE-IUL to clarify roles, responsibilities and size for all boards on the level of the central decision-making bodies, the Senate and the University Council, with the goal of simplification and avoiding redundancies caused by duplication.*

The team also found that student participation in the decision-making bodies is weak, a feeling that was shared by student representatives in interviews. Although students are present in the central bodies, except for the Scientific Council, their number is too low from a structural point of view – although the team heard that students are in fact active in these forums – for the student voice to be heard. The General Council has five student members out of 33, the Management Board has

one out of five, while there is one student member on the University council and the Senate. In all pedagogic councils, both central and schools ones, half the members are students. In the central pedagogic council one of its vice-presidents is a student. The president of the Student Union is also present in the University Quality Assurance Council as a member. The team acknowledges the efforts made by ISCTE-IUL in involving students in most bodies but believes that more can be done. The education ministers of the Bologna signatory countries have promoted student involvement in higher education institutional decision-making since the Prague Communiqué in 2001, where they wrote “that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions”. As this has become a wide-spread practice in Europe since that time, *the team recommends ISCTE-IUL to increase the participation of students in decision-making bodies as full members (or as observers, if there are legal constraints).*

Regarding organisation, the team was struck most by the school and department structure, as it appeared irrational on reading the SER, and the number of departments overall seemed too large. The impression was corroborated in the interviews during the site visits, and the team learned that there are ongoing discussions at several university levels on reorganisation. This would involve some departments being closed or grouped to another school (one example, though many options are still being discussed, is the reassignment of the Department of History to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences rather than in the current School of Sociology and Public Policy.) The team recognises that the school structure as such is only a few years old and the department configuration has historic reasons, nevertheless it would support a structure that would be rational from both a management perspective and for the synergies needed for effective teaching and research. The current discussions go beyond the reallocation of departments and extend to the very structure or even existence of schools. *The team recommends to keep key decisions at rectorate level and to decentralise responsibilities to lower units where appropriate, preferably with research and curricula planning to be coordinated more at the top. The team further recommends ISCTE-IUL to reconsider the number of schools and departments and the distribution of departments to schools with the goal of simplifying the organisational structure.*

The team read in the SER (p. 21) that there is a knowledge gap between the recently hired and long-standing non-academic staff. ISCTE-IUL states in its *Short-Term Action Plan* in the SER (Annex 8, p. 50) that training for long-standing staff is planned. The team supports such training not just for non-academic staff but newly recruited academic staff as well. It would be a management tool for continuously updating the quality of teaching, improving student satisfaction, and increasing institutional identity. The team also learned that in line with the Portuguese custom, a lot of the staff at ISCTE-IUL are its own graduates. This is evident from the CVs

received for the participants of interview groups. The team would like to point out the danger of inbreeding in such settings and the desirability to have external ideas in order to refresh scientific knowledge and thinking. *The team, therefore, recommends ISCTE-IUL to strengthen development and training of non-academic and new academic staff and to take care of the problem of inbreeding when recruiting new staff.*

The team commends the elaboration and improvement of the FÉNIX information platform, which it was able to see first-hand in a dedicated session during its main visit. FÉNIX involves all university data with assigned access to university members and various academic and management groups. Once it is completely installed it should be a powerful management tool on all levels, including teaching and learning and quality assurance. The team learned, following student complaints, that wifi access is currently being expanded from 40 to 200 access points. *The team recommends that ISCTE-IUL proceed in perfecting the internal information systems (e.g. FÉNIX).*

3. Teaching and learning

It was evident to the team from the start of its first visit that the ISCTE-IUL community was proud to identify with this university, as a teacher, student, researcher or external stakeholder. It was palpable, and not just from the leadership, that ISCTE-IUL had achieved something that distinguishes it from other higher education institutions. The employability of its graduates is well above the national average; the SER (p. 8) sites an alumni survey from the last quarter of 2012 where only 11% were unemployed after one year of graduation, as compared to the youth unemployment rate nationally at 35.5%. While the strong business education segment (44% of the student body in 2011/12) no doubt contributes to the favourable rate, the teaching approach to skills-oriented learning in many courses and electives and the general high quality of education at ISCTE-IUL likely plays a role. This was corroborated by the external stakeholders from business and industry whom the team spoke to.

On the other hand, the team noted repeatedly the separation between study and research; PhD students are involved in research through the research centres but not in their departments – and as a rule are not involved in teaching – while research is not generally part of the education of Master or Bachelor students (although some such initiatives were reported to the team). The team sees a potential in ISCTE-IUL's good relations with employers in the vicinity, who in their meeting with the team expressed a willingness to cooperate in this area. Moreover, the team explored the extent to which employers were involved in the design of new curricula and was told that this occurs only rarely. Based on experience in many European universities, the team believes that employers provide valuable insight into what skills and competences graduates should have to succeed in the workplace and can provide advice on how to install appropriate elements into the curriculum. Therefore, *the team recommends that ISCTE-IUL strengthen relations with stakeholders and employers by signing contracts for joint projects and internships and formalise their participation in discussing curricula.* In developing curricula, their coherence with life-long learning courses that the university offers or plans to offer should be kept in mind.

ISCTE-IUL has focused its teaching approach on learning rather than teaching, which is one of the developments emphasized by the Bologna Process. The SER (p. 10) describes that the university implemented curricular reform in line with “Bologna” starting in 2006, which included changing the study cycles and focusing on learning outcomes. ECTS was introduced along with more independent study. The interviews with students revealed, however, that the ECTS value of courses does not always correlate with the independent study load and that some teachers still need improvement in this area.

The SER (p. 6) states that the “Bologna” type provision now covers all programmes, and that “a Language and General Skills Laboratory was set up to improve the acquisition and development of general and open skills by undergraduate and graduate students”. The team commends the efforts made and supports ISCTE-IUL in continuing to improve the implementation of “Bologna” elements. That would include not just the possibility of students to train themselves but also ongoing staff development to enable teachers to apply learning outcomes focused on educational methods. The close and open relationship students have with their teachers, evident in many site visit interviews, is commendable at ISCTE-IUL and provides a good foundation for interactive, student-participatory teaching and learning. Several stakeholders remarked that they saw efforts being made and that ISCTE-IUL graduates are equipped with practical knowledge, but that there is still room for improvement in soft skills teaching. Therefore, *the team recommends that the university continue efforts in implementing all elements of the Bologna Process and in all schools and departments.*

Focusing teaching on learning outcomes requires a continuous tracking of their attainment via student assessment as well as graduate success. For this reason it is important to have a system in place, overseen at university level, which ensures that the stated outcome goals are met. The team, therefore, *also recommends tracking attainment of learning outcomes with a system overseen at university level.*

The need for increased interdisciplinarity was mentioned from a structural point of view in the preceding section. It is, of course, also a concern with respect to teaching and learning (as well as research, the topic of the next section). As ISCTE-IUL is fully aware, interdisciplinarity is an evident development in global education. In its SWOT analysis, the SER (p. 28) mentions as a strength ISCTE-IUL’s “High potential of interdisciplinary programmes”. The team believes that the structural segregation mentioned is not conducive to interdisciplinarity, but that on the academic level there is also a potential for improving in this respect with more coordination between programme directors and pedagogic councils. *The team, therefore, recommends creating incentives to increase interdisciplinary teaching and learning.*

The implementation of e-learning instruments is at a very early stage. ISCTE-IUL is well aware of the potential inherent in e-learning provision, both as a competitive teaching modality in the academic offer for external learners and as an internal teaching instrument, together with blended learning (e-learning elements within a study programme or course). It is stated in the SER (p. 10) that ISCTE-IUL “wishes to strengthen some aspects [of Bologna], such as innovative pedagogical practices and dissemination of e-learning.” The attainment of e-learning provision and the goal to improve in this area are mentioned in many places in the SER and constitute an important goal for development for ISCTE-IUL, mentioned also in the “Short-term

action plan” (SER Appendix 8, p. 50). *The team strongly supports promoting e-learning and providing common e-learning instruments for all schools.*

The team observed that ISCTE-IUL has many excellent facilities for teaching and learning, yet there are improvements to be made in some areas. With less contact hours in teaching and more independent study required of students it is important to have the appropriate facilities and infrastructure. Students mentioned in several interviews that they consider the library hours to be too short and would like to have access also on weekends. Indeed, ISCTE-IUL has made it one of its strategic goals in the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan (SER p. 45). Another grievance students voiced in both site visits was the dearth of group study places, with not enough rooms and within these not enough seats to carry out team projects. On the same line, ISCTE-IUL recognises the need to expand its ICT services to support the demands of flexible learning. The ongoing expansion of wifi access points was mentioned in the previous section of this report.

The team recommends looking into expanding library access and the number of group study places in order to meet the needs of students to do project-based independent learning. It also recommends that ISCTE-IUL proceed in improving and modernising the ICT infrastructure within the whole institution (Intranet, wifi access, integration of existing information systems, etc.).

Concluding this section on teaching and learning, the canteen and dormitory complaints of students must be addressed. ISCTE-IUL is again aware of these issues. Students had access to the cafeteria at the neighbouring Lisbon University before the facility was closed, and the one on ISCTE-IUL campus is too small to meet the needs of the number of students seeking access within a short time window. The matter of dormitories is mentioned as a problem in the SER (p. 20). The team would like to reinforce the importance of taking care of both issues and *recommends ISCTE-IUL to improve the conditions for student meals on campus and to improve accommodation for students both by increasing the number of places and by providing rental assistance.*

4. Research

ISCTE-IUL has a strong research orientation. This is expressed again and again in its documents, including the University Mission, Strategic Plan and the SER. As noted, nine research centres are integral units of ISCTE-IUL. However, they traditionally enjoy a high degree of autonomy, since they are funded – and quality evaluated – by the national Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Integration, beyond the legal framework attaching the centres to ISCTE-IUL, thus extends to the academic staff of the university, many of whom are contracted by FCT to do research within the respective research centre while at the same time working as professors for an ISCTE-IUL department. Moreover, the rector of the university appoints the directors of the research centres. As such, the reputation of these academics as researchers has a bearing on the standing of ISCTE-IUL as a research university. The integration has allowed ISCTE-IUL to put in place a university research policy in agreement with its scientific staff, which it does (SER p. 13). The team believes that it is key for ISCTE-IUL to succeed as a research-oriented institution to have central influence on the institution's research policy and development. The team believes that the existing policy, likely due to this historic development and the segregated character of the research structure, does not really set university-level priorities. Rather, it mirrors the loose association of more or less autonomous entities under the university umbrella. *The team recommends that the university define its priorities in research excellence and translate them into a strategy and relevant action plans.*

In addition to academic staff from the university, research centres have their own staff of around 100 researchers, hired on contract by FCT or other project funds but reflected in the staff numbers of ISCTE-IUL. PhD students conduct their research exclusively at the research centres, rather than at a school or department. The SER (p. 17) states that around 1 000 researchers are involved in projects in research centres at ISCTE-IUL, half of them academic staff and the rest PhD students and researchers. The coordination on the organisational level is done through the Scientific Council of ISCTE-IUL and in coordination with the scientific councils of schools. Moreover, it is ISCTE-IUL policy that research centres contribute to programme design and research projects for undergraduate and Master students. The team found, and the SER (p. 17) corroborates this, that undergraduate and Master students are not much involved in research.

ISCTE-IUL has taken numerous steps in order to buttress its strong research orientation. The team commends the creation of a *Research Support Office and recommends developing it further with staff trained to provide logistical and administrative project support.* The team also supports the plan by ISCTE-IUL, noted also in the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 (SER Appendix 5, p. 41) to extend its research activities in the areas of public policy, tourism and hospitality as a way to build up a reputation in these niche areas. Moreover, the team sees potential with the

achievements at ISCTE-IUL research centres in the area of technology as well. *The team, therefore, recommends focusing on the achievements in research that exist in the areas of management and social sciences and strengthening also the technology area.* The team commends ISCTE-IUL in its endeavours to benchmark its research internationally by awarding internationally cited articles by its staff and many other means. *The team recommends strengthening cooperation of internal research centres with national and international research institutions. Moreover, the team recommends increasing the visibility of research by being more active in international research groups.*

Just as importantly, interdisciplinarity as discussed in relation to teaching is perhaps even more crucial when it comes to research. *The team strongly recommends increasing interdisciplinary research by stimulating more interaction between research centres as well as departments and schools, and integrate research centres into the fabric of the university as much as possible.* And while financial restrictions obstruct the promotion of qualified staff and the recruitment of new staff to fill the needs for research and teaching, there is a policy in place to reduce the teaching load for academic staff if they are involved in a research project. In order to further improve the research potential at ISCTE-IUL, *the team recommends assisting young academic staff by offering training in research methodologies, providing research grants, etc.*

Finally, to take advantage of the very supportive external community that has been mentioned earlier in this report, with regard to research, too, *the team recommends strengthening links with public authorities, local communities, industry, and enterprises by signing mutual contracts of cooperation and make collaborations sustainable.*

5. Service to society

The importance of ISCTE-IUL in the areas of management and social sciences in research and education is evident. Stakeholders and employers appreciate the education at ISCTE-IUL and praised the existing collaborations in the interviews with the team.

The team commends the creation of special units for executive education, lifelong learning, consulting, organisational development and entrepreneurship. *It encourages strengthening graduate programmes and continuous learning activities for the community.*

The team also commends the promotion of study programmes in secondary schools, mentioned in the SER (p. 14) and in interviews. The SER (p. 18) lists also examples of several other initiatives, meetings and forums as well as cultural activities that it organises. The team encourages ISCTE-IUL to continue offering services to society and *recommends intensifying and formalising these activities. The team recommends further that ISCTE-IUL present its focus areas in research and education not only at schools but also to potential partners from society, industry and economy (fields of special knowledge, examples of good collaborative research and projects).*

ISCTE-IUL describes in its SER (pp. 17-18) the establishment over time of four entities, INDEG-IUL, IPPS-IUL, GLOBAL-IUL and AUDAX-IUL, described in Section 2 of this report. The team commends these initiatives but notes that most activities involve the Business School and its staff. *The team recommends ISCTE-IUL to expand instruments for knowledge transfer into all areas of the university.*

The team learned that ISCTE-IUL is keen to strengthen its relations with its alumni, for fundraising purposes and as means to enforce university identity. Given that many alumni “work in top management in private companies or occupy positions in local or central government” (SER p. 10) – and the team was able to meet several of them in an interview – ISCTE-IUL is well placed to engage with society in a mutually advantageous way. An office operates under the rector’s oversight with this aim, extending also to contacts internationally. Indeed, four alumni are present in the eight-member panel of external stakeholders. *The team recommends strengthening alumni relations.*

6. Quality culture

ISCTE-IUL has introduced important instruments for the institution's internal quality assurance. The SER (p. 22) puts the time of the launch of quality assurance practices at 2008, with a *Manual de Qualidade* (Version 1.0) issued in 2011. The team was provided with the Portuguese version of the manual, and commends ISCTE-IUL for the thorough and well thought through document. In it the management hierarchy, action flows and "Plan-Do-Check-Act" chart, indicators and responsibilities are described. The *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and guidelines of the Portuguese quality assurance agency A3ES were taken as a basis. Working on the *Manual* further, *the team recommends that certain internal quality assurance measures be further strengthened, such as benchmarking with comparable institutions, indicators in relation to goals, or monitoring instruments.*

Structurally, there is a Quality Assurance Commission responsible for policy and strategy. The *Manual* indicates that it can be headed by a vice-rector (as it is currently the case) or a pro-rector. It includes an Executive Quality Assurance System Coordinator overseeing implantation and monitoring. An Advisory Board ensures internal and external stakeholder views and aligns quality measures with the university's "intrinsic culture and values" (SER p. 22). An eight-member panel of external stakeholders, including four alumni, represents the university's main scientific fields. A Curricular Analysis Commission, headed by a pro-rector, oversees the alignment of the curricula with the institution's quality assurance. Finally, technical-administrative support and data collection is provided by the Studies, Evaluation, Planning and Quality Assurance Office.

Among the quality assurance instruments, student surveys play a prominent role and are asked of students twice in a semester, with the second one being mandatory and given online via ISCTE-IUL's FÉNIX information system (students cannot get their class grades unless they complete the surveys). Results are discussed in departments and a poor teacher evaluation is followed-up on. The team strongly supports these measures and *recommends further, that evaluation results should be used to provide advice and support to university members, both staff and students.*

There are course reports, also generated by FÉNIX based on quality indicators, and summary quality reports are available to the university community at large. A teacher performance evaluation is part of the quality assurance system and extends to teaching, research, management, knowledge transfer and service to the community.

One quality assurance system in place is ISO 9001, which, according to the *Manual* and corroborated in the interviews, is applied in the service and administrative

areas. The team thinks that ISO 9001 has many benefits, but also a tendency to focus on processes rather than on people, improvement and a change of culture.

It is clear to the team that ISCTE-IUL exhibits a growing awareness of the importance of quality management. The experience gained in numerous evaluations and accreditations is beneficial for the development of a quality culture. The leadership of ISCTE-IUL has a strong desire for quality culture, but the feeling of ownership on the part of staff and students is not yet commonly internalised.

The concept of “quality culture” was conceived with the Quality Culture project, launched by EUA in 2002. The concept comprises “a connotation of quality as a shared value and a collective responsibility for all members of an institution, including students and administrative staff. Quality culture signals the need to ensure a grass-roots acceptance, to develop a compact within the academic community through effective community building, as well as a change in values, attitude and behaviour within an institution.” The definition of the concept adds another important set of elements, “it is essential that the rectoral team create the appropriate conditions for the academic community to deliver quality provision and that attention be paid to developing an agreed institutional profile, the commitment to institutional goals and objectives by the university community, and clearly defined and agreed objectives and strategies to meet them.”¹

The definition reveals a very complex concept, and ISCTE-IUL has several elements in place. The team witnessed the commitment of the leadership and those in the university community to develop a full quality culture, and the team believes that ISCTE-IUL is well placed to achieve quality culture if it continues on this path. *The team recommends that quality assurance become a common understanding and seen as an element on the course toward a shared quality culture.*

The team noted that the participation of students in quality assurance activities is not very active. Although students are represented in the Quality Assurance Commission and the Advisory Board in accordance with the ESG (Standard 1.1) the information flow to the student body seems to be missing. *The team, therefore, recommends that students should be more actively involved in quality assurance procedures.*

Students remarked in several interviews that they had little or no feedback on the results of their teacher evaluations. This is a common problem in universities in Europe and, the team believes, a serious one, since the whole exercise has become

¹ European University Association (EUA), 2006, Quality culture in European universities: a bottom-up approach. Report on the three rounds of the Quality Culture project 2002 – 2006 (Brussels, EUA) p. 6

formalised (indeed, some students seem to simply tick of any which reply in the surveys just to be able to reach their grades). *The team recommends that ISCTE-IUL increase the visibility of the course evaluation results and consequences for students in order to motivate.*

Finally, to ensure the success of the quality assurance system and the establishment of a quality culture at ISCTE-IUL, *the team recommends that care be taken to close feedback loops of all quality assurance procedures. It recommends further that ISCTE-IUL evaluate all quality assurance procedures and instruments regularly.*

7. Internationalisation

ISCTE-IUL states in its SER (p. 17) that “... international relations are a key element of ISCTE-IUL’s sustainability strategy in the medium- and long-term”. The team learned during the site visits about a number of initiatives the ISCTE-IUL leadership is taking to establish courses in partnership with universities abroad, such as in China or Mozambique. Internationalisation bolsters the university’s financial sustainability but more than that, it is a quality measure and instrument by setting a benchmark for the institution, its staff and students. For these reasons, *the team encourages ISCTE-IUL to proceed with the operations overseas and build up its capacities with this strategic goal in mind.*

The team also learned in the interviews that the university has strategic partnerships with other universities in Portugal, with special focus on the other foundations in Oporto and Aveiro. The SER (p. 19) notes that the four Schools “have academic staff members specially designated to facilitate and promote international development”. The team highly commends the ongoing activities in internationalisation. As a consequence, several double or joint degree programmes have been, or are planned to be, launched, which the team commends.

A very informative 19-page “Handbook for prospective international students”, compiled from information posted on the ISCTE-IUL website, was provided to the team in Appendix 9 to the SER (pp. 51-70). In addition, on request, the team was provided with two parts of a new, 2012 “Internationalisation Report” in Portuguese and English. The plan is to issue annually and in three parts, with 1. Agreements and Protocols; 2. Internationalisation Index; and 3. Impact. The team commends this new initiative and *recommends that ISCTE-IUL continue to develop an action plan for internationalisation with clear goals and benchmarks (e.g. mobility, strategic partnerships, research collaborations, international activities).*

With ISCTE-IUL situated in a privileged geographical location and excellent worldwide travel connections, the university is well positioned to attract foreign students and staff. The team interviewed representatives from the international relations office, who handle both Erasmus and other mobility, and was presented with an impressive global map listing some 40 countries together with the volume of international exchanges. The team concluded from the figures provided also in the SER, that the percentage of mobility of foreign students is quite good, given the OECD average for Europe for tertiary mobility in 2012 of 8%²; 12% of the student body are foreign students and 4% have studied abroad. Of these figures, 37% are from outside Europe which, given the common language, entails a majority coming

² OECD Education at a Glance 2012, www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/oecd-eag-2012-en.pdf, p. 374.

from Brazil. *In order to increase outgoing mobility, the team recommends improving the proportion of international programmes, such as ERASMUS, Fulbright and others.*

In the interview with foreign students, the team learned of some difficulties they faced in finding courses taught in English or in finding accommodation. *The team recommends raising support for incoming students by offering free language courses in Portuguese and helping them with accommodation.* Assigning a local student to each visiting student to help getting adjusted in the host location has been a successful practice in many countries. It has the added value of providing language practice for the native student. The team heard in the same interview that several students who had enrolled in a class announced to be taught in English was in fact given in Portuguese. Therefore, *the team encourages ISCTE-IUL to prevent such problems by quality control measures and possibilities for recourse for the students.*

However, the internationalisation of the teaching and research body is not as high as ISCTE-IUL would like it to be. According to the “Internationalisation Report 2”, the percentage of permanent foreign faculty members is 2%, while the ratio of foreign visiting faculty members is 23%; 29% of faculty members obtained their highest degree abroad and 4% of the faculty members hold lecturer positions in other countries. Of researchers, 25.9% were foreign, the figure including PhD students. In the section on teaching and learning, this report noted the problem of inbreeding of staff at ISCTE-IUL. *The team recommends also with this aspect in mind that the university continue to employ international staff and support by all possible means the mobility of existing staff.*

8. Conclusions

The team has found that ISCTE-IUL is a well-recognised higher education institution of good reputation in the country. It is marked by a strong, strategically thinking leadership, a highly motivated staff, committed students and very supportive stakeholders. ISCTE-IUL has established an excellent basis for meeting actual and future challenges and opportunities in higher education.

9. Summary of the recommendations

9.1 Governance and management

1. Reflect the very good description and vision set down in your academic profile to be included in your Mission Statement
2. Expand the Action Plan by including benchmarks from comparable institutions, intermediate indicators, responsibilities, monitoring instruments, etc.
3. Create further incentives to enable and motivate students to pay their fees on time
4. Reconsider the number of research centres
5. Try to increase, diversify and make income sustainable through formal contracts with local communities and enterprises
6. Clarify roles, responsibilities and size for all boards on the level of the central decision-making bodies, the Senate and University Council, with the goal of simplification and avoiding redundancies caused by duplication
7. Increase student participation in decision-making bodies as full members (or as observers, if there are legal constraints)
8. Keep key decisions at rectorate level and decentralise responsibilities to lower units where appropriate, preferably with research and curricula planning to be coordinated more at the top
9. Reconsider the number of schools and departments and the distribution of Departments to Schools with the goal of simplifying the organisational structure
10. Strengthen development and training of non-academic and new academic staff
11. Take care of the problem of inbreeding when recruiting new staff
12. Proceed in perfecting the internal information systems (e.g. FÉNIX) and improving and modernising the ICT as a central management tool

9.2 Teaching and learning

13. Strengthen relations with stakeholders and employers by signing contracts for joint projects and internships and formalise their participation in discussing curricula
14. Continue efforts in implementing all elements of the Bologna Process and in all schools and departments
15. Track attainment of learning outcomes at school level
16. Create incentives to increase interdisciplinarity
17. Promote e-learning and provide common e-learning instruments for all schools
18. Expand library access and the number of group study-places in order to meet the needs of students to do project-based independent learning
19. Finish installation of the ICT infrastructure within the whole institution (Intranet, wifi access, integration of existing information systems, etc.)
20. Improve the conditions for student meals on campus
21. Improve accommodation for students (number of places and rental assistance)

9.3 Research

22. Define priorities for excellence in research and translate them into a strategy and relevant action plans
23. Develop the research support office further
24. Focus on your excellent research in the areas of management and social sciences and strengthen the technology area
25. Strengthen cooperation of internal research centres with national and international research institutions
26. Increase the visibility of research by being more active in international research groups
27. Encourage interdisciplinary research by stimulating more interaction between research centres as well as departments and schools
28. Integrate the research centres into the institution where possible
29. Assist young academic staff by offering training in research methodologies, reducing teaching loads, providing research grants, etc.

30. Strengthen links with public authorities, local communities, industry, and enterprises by signing mutual contracts of cooperation and making collaborations sustainable

9.4 Service to society

31. Strengthen graduate programmes and continuous learning activities for the community
32. Intensifying and formalising offering services to society
33. Present focus areas in research and education not only at schools but also to potential partners from society, industry and economy (fields of special knowledge, examples of good collaborative research and projects)
34. Expand instruments for knowledge transfer into all areas of the university
35. Strengthen alumni relations

9.5 Quality culture

36. Strengthen certain internal quality assurance measures further, such as benchmarking with comparable institutions, indicators in relation to goals, or monitoring instruments
37. Use evaluation results to provide advice and support to university members, both staff and students
38. Promote a common understanding of quality assurance so that it is seen as an element on the course toward a shared quality culture
39. Ensure that students are more actively involved in quality assurance procedures
40. Increase the visibility of the course evaluation results and consequences for students to motivate them
41. Close feedback loops of all quality assurance procedures
42. Evaluate all quality assurance procedures and instruments regularly

9.6 Internationalisation

43. Proceed with the operations overseas and build up the relevant capacities as part of the internationalisation strategy
44. Continue to develop an action plan for internationalisation with clear goals and benchmarks (e.g. mobility, strategic partnerships, research collaborations, international activities)

45. In order to increase outgoing mobility, improve the proportion of international programmes, such as ERASMUS, Fulbright and others
46. Raise support for incoming students by offering free language courses in Portuguese and helping them with accommodation
47. Prevent problems encountered by foreign students by quality control measures and possibilities for recourse for the students
48. Continue to employ international staff and support the mobility of existing staff by all possible means