



Institutional Evaluation Programme

UNIVERSIDADE DA BEIRA INTERIOR [UBI]

IEP EVALUATION REPORT

February 2009

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1. Introduction

1.1 At the invitation of Professor Doutor Manuel José dos Santos Silva, rector of the Universidade da Beira Interior [UBI], the European University Association [EUA] agreed to conduct a peer review exercise within the framework of its Institutional Evaluation Programme [IEP].

1.2 The EUA evaluation team consisted of:

- Professor Dr Alojz Kralj (chair), former rector of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Professor Dr Philippe Rousseau, former rector of Université Charles de Gaulle Lille III, France
- Professor Dr Fuada Stanković, former rector of the University of Novi Sad, Serbia
- Dr Howard Davies (secretary), independent consultant acting on behalf of EUA

1.3 The team was asked to give special focus to the development of synergies between the Faculties of Engineering Sciences and Exact Sciences, in terms of student recruitment, academic cooperation, and institutional structure. This issue is explored in section 3.7 below.

1.4 UBI is a comprehensive public university, located in Covilhã, a city of some 40,000 inhabitants in the eastern part of the Centro region. Known in the nineteenth century as the 'Manchester of Portugal', thanks to its flourishing wool trade, the city has since then experienced demographic decline, as a consequence of the displacement of the textile industry to Asia and Latin America and the migration of its population to the Atlantic coast and to elsewhere in the EU.

1.5 Since its establishment in 1975, the university has made a major contribution to the recovery and regeneration of old industrial building stock. With successive Portuguese governments' heavy investment of EU structural funds in national motorway infrastructure, UBI has been able to capitalise on its greater accessibility. Although it remains geographically on the periphery (the nearest major conurbation is Salamanca, across the border in Spain), it has grown steadily and achieved a national profile. In the 2007-08 academic year, it had 6104 students and 433 fte (full-time equivalent) academic staff. Its 2008-09 course catalogues offer 24 Bologna Bachelor programmes, with 42 discrete and four integrated Master programmes. Doctoral studies are available in sixteen disciplines.

1.6 As a first step in the evaluation process, UBI was asked to draft a Self-Evaluation Report. Following receipt of the report, the EUA team made a two-day visit in June 2008, during which it held talks with staff, students and external stakeholders and viewed the university facilities. It met the rector, Professor Doutor Manuel José dos Santos Silva; Professor Doutor Luís Carrilho, who acted as liaison

person with EUA; and the 11-person self-evaluation steering group. It visited four Faculties, where it held talks with academic staff and students. These were the Faculties of Engineering Sciences, Exact Sciences, Health Sciences, and Social and Human Sciences. The team was also able to hear the views of the mayor of Covilhã, together with local representatives of relevant commercial sectors, including banking and tourism. Finally, it met the senior administrative staff responsible for academic services, management information, the computer science centre, public relations and social services, as well as the secretary of the Faculty of Arts and Letters.

1.7 As a result of its discussions, the EUA team requested further information in a number of areas: budget, quality assurance, the use of physical space, staffing, student recruitment policy and student completion rates, knowledge transfer and regional development, and inter-university collaborative links.

1.8 Having received the supplementary documentation it undertook a second – three-day – visit in November 2008, during which it renewed its discussions with Professor Doutor Manuel José dos Santos Silva and Professor Doutor Luís Carrilho. It re-visited the two Faculties which were the object of the special focus and, for the first time, talked with staff and students from the Faculty of Arts and Letters. In separate meetings with students union officers, the director of public relations and the director of academic services, the team was able to deepen its understanding of their different areas of responsibility. It also toured Parkurbis, where it spoke at length with CEO Sr Pedro Farromba and where it met Professor Nuno Garcia, head of a start-up venture working in the field of wireless bio-signals.

1.9 At the end of the second visit, the EUA team chair delivered an oral report to a gathering of UBI staff and students. It contained an informal summary of the observations and recommendations, which are elaborated in this written report.

2. Preliminary observations

2.1 The present report is based on the EUA team's reflections following receipt of UBI documentation and the face-to-face conversations listed above. In this process, the self-evaluation undertaken by UBI staff and students was particularly important. For its understanding of the wider context, the team also drew on European Union [EU] and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] statistical data, as well as on reviews of recent Portuguese legislation. It is against this background that the team formed its view of how effectively UBI delivers its declared mission and whether it is well placed to manage the ongoing changes in its operating environment.

2.2 These changes are indeed dramatic – at both national and European levels. The decline of the textile industry and the phenomenon of outward migration have already been mentioned; in sponsoring research into smart materials with high added value and low labour costs, UBI has shown a capacity for positive response. However, other powerful factors are at work – already visible before the 2008 credit

crunch and the entry of the Eurozone into recession, both of which are likely to impact on UBI, as on all European universities, in unpredictable ways.

2.3 At the level of the wider Europe, the Bologna Process has triggered a transition to student-centred learning, to a system of academic quality assurance with a strong focus on the internal procedures of higher education institutions, and to a structured qualifications architecture facilitating the mobility of students and staff. Within the EU, meanwhile, global competition has prompted a strong emphasis on increased research and knowledge transfer activity, on the diversified funding of public higher education, and on its competitiveness vis-à-vis other global regions. Both the Bologna Process and EU policy lines now stress the importance of institutional governance structures which maximise legal, financial and academic autonomy, as well as principles of equity, accountability, efficiency, and full stakeholder participation.

2.4 These trends are impossible to ignore, particularly when the national government – as the Portuguese has done – sets out to enshrine them in a broad raft of legislation. To a very large extent, UBI's recent developments have been constrained by the nationally imposed timetable. In swift succession, new laws and decrees have come into force, covering the implementation of Bologna (42/2005 and 74/2006 in particular), institutional governance (62/2007) and the statutes of the new national quality assurance agency (369/2007). Still to come are legislation on the academic career structure [Estatuto da Carreira Docente Universitária – ECDU] and details of the modus operandi of the quality assurance agency. In its transformation of the higher education landscape, the Portuguese government has relied on commissioned reports from OECD, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA] and EUA. The present report is delivered in this context.

2.5 The national reform process, moreover, coincides with a downturn in public spending, triggered first by the breach of the Growth and Stability Pact and exacerbated by the global financial crisis. UBI, in common with most other European universities, has to seek to diversify its revenue streams if it is to survive and grow. Its unit of resource is declining, while the percentage of its outgoings taken up by salaries and on-costs is rising.

2.6 UBI is thus caught in a swift-running current of change. Formally, it has met its deadlines for the conversion of courses to the Bologna template and for the drafting and approval of new statutes. The question arises of how far, in its constrained context, it can be proactive – and the team believes that in four areas in particular, quality assurance, research, internationalisation, and internal organisation, UBI has considerable scope for action. First, although the new national quality assurance agency, the Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior [AAAES], is not yet operational, the fact that it is required to oversee the implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area [ESG] means that at least some of its prescriptions can be anticipated. Secondly, while new sources of European research funding are coming on stream

and the demand for research output is rising, Portugal has not yet reached the point at which it can claim to recover its investment in EU programmes; opportunities therefore exist. Thirdly, the volume of European student mobility is likely to rise as national higher education systems become more interoperable; here, too, there are opportunities for UBI. Finally, the new statutes create a space in which the university can consider its internal structure. How adequate is it for taking timely and well-founded strategic initiatives?

2.7 The following sections examine these and other points in detail. They contain recommendations which the team makes in a spirit of constructive criticism, with due regard to UBI's own self-evaluation and to its track record of achievement.

3. Recommendations

3.1 STUDENTS

3.1.1 The team met students both in Faculty meetings and in their capacity as officers of the students union. A number of issues were raised, some of which are taken up again in later sections of this report.

3.1.2 UBI's application to the EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme had mentioned – as points to be considered – the quality of the student residences and the cultural, sport and leisure services. In the event, the students declared that they were well served in these respects, their only wish being that canteen opening hours should extend beyond 20h00. As a result, the team has no specific comment to make. It should be said at this stage that, in its discussions with students, the team encountered widespread satisfaction. Many students had made UBI their first choice. Some felt that its reputation in the national labour market was not strong – except in some areas, such as the healthcare professions and on-line journalism – and this caused anxiety, but not to the extent of regretting their choice.

3.1.3 There were, however, other issues on which the EUA team wishes to comment. The first of these concerns the on-line questionnaires used to measure student satisfaction with the quality of courses and teachers. Following its first visit, the team requested evidence and examples of the intranet feedback given to students for the last six years. In response, it received an extensive array of tabulated data, which nonetheless did not fully answer the team's questions and which left open the precise manner in which the system worked. What is the process by which the data transits from the management information system to the pedagogic and scientific councils? What is the precise role of each of these in its analysis? How are recommendations made and how are they actioned? How are students informed of the outcomes and how are the outcomes monitored? Despite raising these questions in different discussions with different constituencies, the team was unable to derive a clear view of how the process worked, whether it was fully in place and whether it could be said to work successfully. Indeed, it was evident that most students and many academic staff were similarly uninformed. The

new statutes, moreover, give no detailed indication of what student satisfaction surveys, as an element in a comprehensive quality assurance system, might look like in the future. However, it appears to the team that much can be done to render the process transparent and intelligible, even if – of necessity – aspects of the remedial action taken may remain confidential. It feels that this is an example of how the requirements of the new national agency in relation to ESG could be usefully anticipated. Section 3.5 below contains further reflections on quality assurance.

3.1.4 Secondly, the team was impressed with the experience of object-based learning [OBL] built up by the Faculty of Health Sciences. It learnt that this particular blend of problem-based learning and inter-professional learning had been inspired by Linköping University. Adopted by both UBI and the University of Minho, its implementation was being monitored by an external advisory body set up by the Portuguese government. It promised to build a body of good practice quite distinct from that found in the five classical Portuguese medical schools. Healthcare students spoke highly of their involvement in setting individual goals referenced to learning outcomes, as well as of the supportive assessment methods and the patient-centred ethos, which OBL helped to create. Both they and the staff believed that there would be merit in extending OBL university-wide.

3.1.5 The EUA team noted that the new UBI statutes commit to the appointment of a *Provedor do Estudante*, a designation generally translated as student Ombudsman. No such appointment had been made at the time of its second visit, but it was envisaged that the new general council [*conselho geral*] would make an appointment by election. The office-holder would be responsible for representing the interests of students, taking up their complaints and liaising with relevant bodies within UBI. As with the case of the student questionnaires, it was not clear to the team how the post-holder's remit would be translated into procedure, how he or she would interface with UBI councils and the rectorate, whether he or she would have real agency and whether her or his opinions and actions would be adequately disseminated. In the view of the team, these questions should be addressed before, rather than after an appointment is made.

3.1.6 Finally, the team learnt from students of their uneasy interaction with the academic services. Students complained particularly of long queues resulting from understaffing and of a lack of courtesy displayed by administrative staff. In discussion, both the students and the director of the service recognised that there was room for improvement and for greater mutual understanding. Student recruitment being so important for UBI, the team trusts that this opportunity will be taken to set the relationship of students to the administration on a new footing.

3.1.7 In conclusion, it is worth putting on record that the degree of participation by students in the Bologna Process at European level (through the European Students' Union [ESU]) is not replicated in UBI.

R1 *The team recommends that UBI ensure the full participation of students in all quality assurance procedures and in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area [ESG].*

R2 *The team recommends that UBI develop object-based learning and supportive tutoring as distinctive features of its student-centred pedagogy.*

R3 *The team recommends that UBI ensure that the remit of the Provedor do Estudante is agreed by all stakeholders.*

R4 *The team recommends that UBI consolidate the operation of the Academic Services and ensure their optimal interface with students.*

3.2 LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.2.1 In this area, the impression gained by the team is positive. The UBI course portfolio has now been adapted to the Bologna template, with ministry approval. The university is clearly alert to the benefits of innovative pedagogy. Its teaching facilities and its library are of reasonable standard, while its staff teaching loads and staff-student ratios are within the range of what is acceptable. Most importantly, students are broadly satisfied.

3.2.2 In this context, the team would like to press the point made in 3.1.4 above – namely, that the good practice being built up in the Faculty of Health Sciences should be extended progressively and appropriately across all faculties. It believes that UBI would be well served by bench-marking its learning outcomes against good practice elsewhere in Europe. In many disciplines, and in such projects as the Tuning Project, the identification of generic and specific competences in first and second cycles is now supported by a wide European consensus, of which UBI cannot afford not to be a part.

3.2.3 Indeed, it is the team's view that the in-service staff development currently being offered by the Faculty of Health Sciences is of such strategic importance that UBI should consolidate it at university level and manage it from the centre. A central steer is particularly important for two reasons. First, because it will ensure that the University's strategic development is fully supported by the process of policy implementation. It is important, too, in view of the fact that under the new statutes there will be no pedagogic council operating at university level. The team notes that the previous council's functions are not to be taken over, in any specific sense, by the new *conselho geral* or the new *conselho de gestão*. Instead, the functions are devolved to Faculty level, but in the absence of any guarantee that Faculties will approach issues of learning and teaching with the same priorities.

3.2.4 UBI's dependence on student recruitment has already been mentioned. As the institution undertakes the difficult task of switching to student-centred learning, so its induction procedures for first cycle students could profitably be re-examined. If, as some academic staff reported to the team, the Portuguese secondary school system is still largely characterised by 'learning by rote', then it will be necessary to demonstrate the merits of object-based learning at recruitment and admission stages. If employers too are persuaded of its benefits, UBI will be able to raise its profile in the labour market. Recommendation 2 above suggests that OBL can become a distinctive feature, with all the competitive advantage that the term implies.

3.2.5 Finally, OBL and similarly innovative pedagogies require more permeable disciplinary boundaries than those defined by teacher-centred course delivery. Cross-disciplinary momentum, stimulated either by cutting-edge research or by student inquiry, or by both, demands a high quotient of student choice and a flexible implementation of ECTS. This requirement in turn implies making it as easy as possible – in terms of institutional structures and academic counselling – for students to cross Faculty boundaries in pursuit of the mix of modules that is appropriate to them. The team believes that these are the preconditions for the paradigm shift to student-centred learning. As sections 3.5 and 3.6 below will argue, new quality assurance systems can favour such developments, while old institutional structures can impede them.

R5 *The team recommends that UBI benchmark learning outcomes against good practice in selected European institutions.*

R6 *The team recommends that UBI consolidate the staff development programme at university level.*

R7 *The team recommends that UBI further improve the induction of new first cycle students.*

R8 *The team recommends that UBI remove all barriers to internal mobility.*

3.3 RESEARCH

3.3.1 UBI's commitment to research is evidenced by the 128 research projects listed in the 2006 edition of its *Guia de Investigação*. However, in the absence of standard performance indicators – such as annual research expenditure and measures of cost and productivity by fte and by highly cited paper – the EUA team formed the view that this very proliferation demonstrates the extent to which UBI's potential is fragmented and unfulfilled. In fact, output is not high – indeed lower than one refereed paper per researcher per year. Only 10% of the 30 or so nationally

funded projects have been rated good or very good by the *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* [FCT].

3.3.2 Most of UBI's externally funded research is supported by national sources of funding. The team was struck by the low level of participation in European programmes, all the more noticeable at a time when the EU's seventh Framework Research Programme is the largest and most ambitious ever and when new funding flows, such as the European Institute of Technology [EIT] and the European Research Council [ERC], are coming on stream. It is difficult to mount bids for substantial volumes of funding, when the research base is as fragmented as it is currently in UBI. The team considers that critical mass is the *sine qua non*, not only of growth, quality and competitiveness, but also of survival in a research environment likely to become much more competitive. Its observations and recommendations should be read in this light.

3.3.3 Critical mass is attainable in a number of ways, preferably undertaken in concert. First, the number of active and productive researchers can be increased by recruiting more PhD students and by reviewing the criteria for their supervision.

3.3.4 Secondly, the risk of fragmentation can be minimised by co-locating doctoral and graduate students in a cross-Faculty graduate school. Such a development can favour the inter-disciplinary momentum referred to in 3.2.5 above, giving it continuity at postgraduate level. It will also provide greater scope for student and staff mobility, for joint curriculum development and the establishment of international joint Master programmes (of which UBI currently has only one, in the Faculty of Arts and Letters). Above all, it can allow UBI's researchers to seek the most creative modes of consolidation of their efforts.

3.3.5 A further advantage of a graduate school is that it can inform curriculum design at the level of the Bachelor, thus helping stimulate and shape the next generation of researchers. A high index of fragmentation, itself frequently the product of rigid departmental boundaries structuring first cycle provision, will tend to frustrate the permeation of UBI's curriculum by its research outcomes.

3.3.6 Thirdly, critical mass can be built by limiting the range of its research aspirations and by rationalising into viable areas. It was not clear to the team that any such tendency to concentration existed. On the other hand, the team noted that Parkurbis has identified four priority areas, or lead markets, in which to stimulate start-up enterprises and to generate jobs: agri-food, software (including multimedia), renewable energies, and medical / biotechnology. From its discussions with the Faculties, the team drew the conclusion that the link between Parkurbis and UBI – in terms of strategic planning, collaborative research, intellectual property, regional development and knowledge transfer – is more tenuous than would be the case in those European universities which are regarded as having developed good practice in the field. This appears to be the case, despite the provision by Parkurbis of credit-

bearing placements and its links with the Faculty of Engineering and the department of management.

3.3.7 The team therefore anticipates that closer collaboration will pay dividends, particularly in respect of regional and international partnerships. It is to be hoped that the new statutes will provide the opportunity, particularly as – according to the Self-Evaluation Report – the consultative committee referred to in article 29 of the old statutes, and which could have formalised the link between UBI and its external stakeholders, was never in fact convened.

3.3.8 Finally, the team believes that critical mass is best built by consent. A precondition of this is sustained internal debate, during which opportunities and synergies can be identified, along with the attendant risks and the calculation of the effects of inaction. It recommends the creation of a climate in which, using the agencies and mechanisms foreseen in the new statutes, UBI will be able to elaborate a comprehensive strategic research plan, consisting of prioritisations, an implementation programme, and a monitoring of outputs and outcomes. In the absence of a scientific council operating at university level, under the new statutes, this task will not be an easy one.

R9 *The team recommends that UBI compete systematically for EU-funded and international research grants; and that it do so in the framework of a comprehensive research strategy, which builds on identified synergies and international collaborations.*

R10 *The team recommends that UBI revise the criteria for PhD supervision and increase the number of doctoral students, locating them in a graduate school, which will include international joint programmes in its portfolio.*

R11 *The team recommends that UBI use internationally accepted performance indicators and metrics.*

R12 *The team recommends that UBI reinforce its links with Parkurbis, with specific regard to intellectual property and knowledge transfer and that, at the same time, it extend the number of partnerships with economic and social actors in the region.*

R13 *The team recommends that UBI derive new first and second cycle programmes from its research expertise, rather than the reverse.*

3.4 INTERNATIONALISATION

3.4.1 In the area of internationalisation the EUA team noted the buoyant level of student mobility in the ERASMUS Programme, as well as the success of the bilateral

link with Poland and the priority set on relations with other lusophone countries. As in the case of research, it found that there was no comprehensive development strategy elaborated at institutional level, into which the international activities could be embedded. As a result, such opportunities as might exist to use staff mobility in the context of collaborative research and curriculum development could not be taken.

3.4.2 In internationalisation, as in research, the team feels that there exists an opportunity to gear up the current level of activity in a wider European context which has become extremely favourable. It would require the expansion of the International Relations Office, which is very small, has a tight focus on student mobility, and depends a great deal on voluntary labour supplied by academics in the Faculties. It would also require an explicit and agreed strategic framework, in which synergies and priorities are identified, and in which course delivery, student recruitment, collaborative links, research and knowledge transfer reinforce each other. Such a strategy must be clearly articulated by the rectorate and the *conselho geral*, before it can be successfully delivered by an expanded international relations service.

3.4.3 As cross-border cooperation becomes more feasible in the European Higher Education Area [EHEA], so critical mass becomes a function of an institution's partnerships, as well as of its internal structures. The team's attention was drawn to the number of foreign universities with which UBI has links, but the extent to which they were set in a unifying strategic framework was unclear. It believes it would be helpful if these too were subject to some form of quality assurance.

R14 *The team recommends that UBI elaborate a strategy benchmarked against good practice elsewhere in Europe.*

R15 *The team recommends that UBI develop a system of appraisal of its international activities and expand the International Office.*

R16 *The team recommends that UBI use internationalisation as a means of acquiring expertise through staff mobility, joint curriculum development and knowledge transfer.*

3.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.5.1 As indicated in point 2.6 above, the salient feature of the situation as regards quality assurance is the absence of a fully operational national agency. However, the legislation is in place and the AAAES is in the process of constitution. At European level, the agreed principles and procedures for quality assurance in higher education – formulated as standards and guidelines in the ESG – are now well known. In UBI, the team found only limited familiarity with their content. In the light of the university's aspirations to raise its international profile, it is important to use the window of

opportunity created by the Bologna reforms to embed a quality culture consistent with emerging European norms. Indeed, such a culture is a precondition of future activities in international student recruitment, collaborative course development, and interfacing with the labour market.

3.5.2 In particular, it is important to stimulate, monitor and enhance a quality culture at university level. The Self-Evaluation Report notes that UBI 'does not have an integrated and global support system for quality processes in teaching activities' [para.3.4.1]. The implementation of ESG will no doubt bring a large part of such a system into existence. While important elements of process will be devolved to Faculties and to departments, the EUA team does not believe that Faculties should enjoy complete autonomy in this area. Not only is the current questionnaire system operationalised inconsistently and in a manner which lacks transparency, but comprehensive quality assurance goes a long way beyond student satisfaction surveys. It involves, notably, a system of course approvals. It implies that courses are reviewed regularly in terms of their pedagogic efficiency (their drop-out, failure, and employment rates), their structure in the context of overarching internal systems and the eventual national qualifications framework, and the relevance of their content in the light of scientific and cultural developments.

3.5.3 A quality culture, moreover, is not confined to the activities of learning and teaching. It requires that research be internally assessed – particularly important for UBI, since the team was informed that external FCT evaluations often come after a two-year time lag. It also requires that the full range of services to students be periodically evaluated according to agreed procedures. While the team acknowledges the usefulness of ISO 2001 to specifically managerial concerns, it does not consider that it meets all the needs of institutions in which the student body is a major stakeholder. It has insufficient knowledge of the SIADAP scheme currently being phased in, so cannot assess the extent to which students will be able to participate in it.

3.5.4 Finally, it cannot be stressed too strongly that the intrinsic virtues of a robust quality culture – internal synergy and corporate confidence – are also the basis for effective external projection. Both stand or fall by the credibility of the quality assurance system, a credibility which depends on transparent agreed procedures efficiently implemented and fair outcomes widely disseminated. The team therefore agrees with the Self-Evaluation Report [para.4.6], when it states that the outcomes of the quality assurance processes should go to all internal and external stakeholders.

R17 *The team recommends that UBI establish quality assurance procedures in line with ESG, to be managed at university level, and that it also develop internal quality assurance mechanisms for research, management and administrative services.*

R18 *The team recommends that UBI disseminate outcomes of quality assurance to all stakeholders, including students.*

R19 *The team recommends that UBI review the implementation of Bologna courses, with particular regard to the allocation of ECTS and the division of pre-Bologna courses into two cycles.*

R20 *The team recommends that UBI conduct thorough analysis of drop-out and failure rates, and monitor accordingly.*

R21 *The team recommends that UBI use quality assurance to build a quality culture and to support the promotion of the university.*

3.6 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

3.6.1 A consistent thread running through the EUA team's observations and recommendations is the need for UBI to develop a strategic vision and plan. The team has learnt of the coordinated planning activity which led to the setting up of the Faculty of Health Sciences in the late 1990s. It also had sight briefly of the strategic plan covering the period 2004-2008. It was difficult to judge how widely this plan had been disseminated; regrettably, it was never mentioned in the discussions which the team held with the various staff and student groups. This may well be due to the fact that the Bologna reform legislation has been implemented since 2006 in conditions of strong external pressure and very tight deadlines. The team believes, as suggested already, that the time is now ripe for a renewal of strategic thinking. The new statutes, financial constraints, the effort made by national government to equip Portugal for a positive role in the EHEA – all suggest scope for a considered re-positioning.

3.6.2 Of themselves, however, the new statutes indicate no clear way forward. The team found it difficult to assess precisely in what way they would inflect the development of UBI. When it inquired of UBI staff and students, it heard conflicting opinions. The new statutes would strengthen the rectorate and the central organs; they would also consolidate the autonomy of the Faculties. The logical inference to be drawn is that the new governance structures have yet to be tested for their capacity to generate a shared vision of institutional goals. Much will no doubt depend on the spirit in which the large, and perhaps too large, *conselho geral* approaches its task. This issue is taken up again in section 3.9 below.

3.6.3 As mentioned earlier, critical mass in teaching and research becomes of paramount importance as the resource position becomes more difficult. It means that resources can be deployed more efficiently. At the same time, cost-efficiency is measurable only if the accounting system is adequate. UBI does not yet have the full-cost accounting methodology, on which viable bids to European research funds, for example, will depend. The team suggests that GA-API and the financial administration enter into dialogue – while the SIGUBI management information system is still at the development stage – to determine precisely what data sets are needed to satisfy FCT reviews, as well those required for competing effectively for funding offered by the ERC, the European Training Foundation [ETF] and the European Commission's seventh Framework Research Programme. Different data sets are often used in application, project management, reporting and archiving.

3.6.4 Full-cost accounting has broader benefits of relevance to UBI. It gives internal resource allocation greater transparency and serves to identify waste. It can improve cost recovery and deliver economies of scale. It can suggest better means of managing the end-of-year balance and the threat of confiscation of the carry-over. It can help fund incentives, which some research-active academic staff considered to be lacking and which – according to the Self-Evaluation Report [para.2.1.6] – could also be harnessed to reward excellence in teaching. It can inform investment decisions and strengthen the university's confidence in its regional interventions. Full-cost accounting, moreover, is on the way to becoming standard European practice.

3.6.5 Finally, the team formed a particular view of the institutional structures as they currently exist – and as they might continue to exist under the regime of the new statutes. It accepts that both generations of statutes point to the existence of a matrix system; it also found that this system had a reality in the discourse of the rectorate and the Faculties. Its content is nonetheless in practice limited to a certain amount of inter-Faculty collaboration and trading of teacher hours. In the opinion of the team, a fully-fledged matrix system is not yet in place. That is to say, such movement (of students, teachers, researchers, facilities) as exists between Faculties remains subject to management by the Dean. Indeed, the UBI is structured essentially in terms of the horizontal groupings of cognate discipline areas known as Faculties.

3.6.6 In a matrix structure, on the other hand, the team would expect to find individual academic staff members working to various managers simultaneously – in the areas of, for example, pedagogy, curriculum design, graduate provision, research, internationalism, regional development and knowledge transfer. The combination of these transversal features with academic departments typically – in other institutions – facilitates the identification of synergies, the building of critical mass, the assurance of cost-efficiency, and the capacity to energise the strategic planning process. At the same time, the institution benefits from greater integration of its administrative agencies. Most importantly, as suggested in section 3.2 above, it gains the fluidity and flexibility, without which student-centred learning cannot thrive.

3.6.7 Finally, the team recognises that a simultaneous move towards full-cost accounting and towards a comprehensive matrix system will pose substantial problems. More permeable Faculty boundaries will render more difficult the task of staff-student ratio calculation on which resource allocation and staff workload depend. This is a challenge confronting many European universities. The team believes that it is a problem which is better dealt with earlier rather than later.

R22 *The team recommends that UBI develop a long-term shared vision of institutional goals.*

R23 *The team recommends that – on a basis of wide consultation and discussion – UBI elaborate a new strategic plan, characterised by simplicity, prioritisations, identifiable means to ends, timeframe, follow-up and corrective measures.*

R24 *The team recommends that UBI develop a system of full-cost accounting, in order to ensure cost-efficiency.*

R25 *The team recommends that UBI boost technical support for researchers (GAAPI), to assist project management and grant applications.*

R26 *The team recommends that UBI strengthen the integrative function of its central bodies and re-examine its belief that Faculty autonomy is the appropriate way forward – with a view to implementing a structure enabling the best utilisation of mission, strategy and the Recommendations contained in this evaluation report.*

3.7 THE SPECIAL FOCUS

3.7.1 Regarding the inter-relationship of the Faculties of Engineering and Exact Sciences, the team noted that there is no consensus. Both the timing and the content of the rector's proposal to merge the Faculties were controversial. It is clear from the comments in the preceding section, as well as from the general tenor of the EUA team's observations and recommendations, that the team regards the eventual decision – that is to say, the decision not to merge these, and other, Faculties – as unfortunate in principle. It has found no evidence that UBI has been well served by the persistence of a rigid Faculty-based organisational structure. On the contrary, the team believes that the need to identify synergies, to become cost efficient and competitive, may well suggest more radical interventions.

3.7.2 The difficulties highlighted by the special focus were no doubt local at the stage when student numbers in textile engineering, paper engineering, mathematics and physics fell below what was viable. But changes in recruitment patterns and the emergence of cross-disciplinary areas are unlikely to be confined to these two Faculties. The Self-Evaluation Report mentions the falling numbers in the Faculty of Arts and Letters. There are also opportunities for cross-Faculty developments

between it and the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. The constant re-mapping of human knowledge and the evolution of labour markets make such developments probable rather than occasional.

3.7.3 For this reason the team believes that a more flexible matrix system could give UBI the greater agility and responsiveness that it is likely to need in the future. Rather than regard the synergies sought for the two Faculties as a matter for the bilateral rationalisation of student numbers by service teaching, it is better therefore – in the view of the team – to address the problem holistically.

R27 The team recommends that UBI engage in significant further development of the matrix system.

R28 The team recommends that UBI conduct a full review of the internal organisation of the university.

3.8 STRATEGIC FOCUS

3.8.1 The team was impressed with UBI's achievements and potential at a number of levels. As indicated above, it regards its scope for development as a regional player as considerable. The challenges, too, are considerable, but with a supportive city council, a growing track record in business incubation, a full range of academic expertise, and no competing institution on the doorstep, UBI is well placed to thrive.

3.8.2 At national level also, UBI is capable of mounting a strong bid to become an attractive destination for students. It has some cutting-edge courses, its facilities are good and its marketing arm is effective. Its aim of drawing 80% of its students from beyond the Centro region appears attainable. At international level, finally, there is everything to play for, as has been suggested above.

3.8.3 The problem, as the team sees it, is that these different levels of potential lack integration in a strategic plan and in effective organisational structures. Articulating them from a low resource base will require a degree of synergy that only a genuine matrix system can provide.

3.9 MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

3.9.1 In summary, UBI is in a process of rapid transition, but in its most recent developments – those of the Bologna Process – it has been reactive rather than proactive. Partly this is due to the pressure exerted by government and by legislation. Partly it is due to its internal structures, which predispose it to a conservatism which is at odds with at least some of its declared aims. The remedy lies, in the view of the EUA team, in clearer definition of its mission, its strategy and policy framework, its norms and values, its quality assurance and governance

systems, and the putting in place of a genuine matrix system. 3.9.2 It appears to the team that the *conselho geral* will have a major role to play. It has the power not only to endorse and confirm the various policy initiatives which come to it from the university management, but also to propose initiatives on its own account. Moreover, it is to be chaired by an external member – one of a group of eight who will be required to draft and agree statements prefacing the council's deliberations on a wide range of policy strands.

3.9.3 In the view of the team, the relevant statute brings into being a new centre of gravity. This is a significant change which will impact on UBI's capacity to manage change and on the direction in which change is managed. How the other elements of the university structure will dispose themselves around the *conselho geral* is impossible for the team to anticipate. The team has nevertheless noted (in points 3.2.3 and 3.3.8 above) that the new statutes effectively abolish the pedagogic and scientific councils, which have operated at university level hitherto. It will doubtless be necessary to monitor closely the obvious attendant risk, namely, that policy implementation becomes more hazardous when devolved to Faculty level. The team understands that UBI is already contemplating the introduction of a complementary consultative body to mitigate this risk.

4 Conclusion

4.1 EUA's methodology of evaluation uses institutional self-evaluation and peer review to seek the answers to four questions. What does an institution do? How does it do it? How does it know that it is doing what it intends? And how can it modify its activities accordingly? These questions are mission-specific and context-dependent. EUA is particularly interested in the European context.

4.2 Its visits to UBI took place two years prior to the putting in place of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Seen in this light, as well as in the national Portuguese context, the team considers that UBI knows what it has achieved in the past, but has not yet built a strong consensus on what has to be done in the near future. Its quality assurance and its internal management and governance systems are not yet adequate to the task of monitoring the delivery of its mission, once the mission is defined. The team senses a moment of hesitation – and opportunity – between the first moment of Bologna reform and the emergence of a clear institutional identity and purpose in the post-2010 era.

4.3 The final sentence of the Self-Evaluation Report refers to the profile of the classical Portuguese universities and the degree to which the profile of the new universities is different. The EUA team feels that this difference – in the case of UBI – remains to be translated into a clear mission, one which derives from its geographical, economic and social context and is expressed in its institutional structures and policies. Other European universities are to be found in border

regions in industrial decline; it may be useful to identify them and to consider their experience.

4.4 The Self-Evaluation Report [para.4.1] also refers to the unresolved tension between those in UBI who have institutional goals and those who have internal goals. The team is confident that creative self-evaluation can help ease this tension, particularly if the new statutes are used to extend horizontal dialogue between all stakeholders.

4.5 In summary, therefore, the EUA team believes that UBI is faced by a number of challenges:

- To elaborate a strategic plan which expresses a vision and sets priorities
- To restructure the University and introduce a genuine matrix system
- To put in place comprehensive quality assurance procedures which are consistent with ESG
- To consolidate research and postgraduate studies, so as to strengthen links with first cycle teaching and with external stakeholders

There can be no obvious order in which these tasks might be undertaken. Clearly, they depend on a mix of external factors, internal competences, available resources and collective will. A necessary first step, in the opinion of the team, is to place the items on a published agenda and to mobilise the widest debate. This step has already been embarked upon. It can happen that apparent inertia is broken by one factor which triggers a snowball effect. The team hopes that the process of self-evaluation will prove to have been this factor.

4.6 In conclusion, the team extends its sincere thanks to Professor Dr Manuel José dos Santos Silva for his invitation to visit UBI. It is grateful to him and to his colleagues, notably the liaison person Professor Dr Luís Carrilho and his assistants Dr Pedro Cabral and Dr Pedro Esteves, for their kind attention and warm hospitality. They supplied the team with all the necessary documentation and support in interpreting it. The team also met many members of the UBI community, as well as external stakeholders, and was treated by all with the greatest courtesy. In particular, it appreciated their readiness to express their views. It wishes UBI every success in the future.

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