

UNIVERSITY OF TRÁS-OS-MONTES E ALTO DOURO

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), Portugal. The evaluation took place with a first site visit to the University on 21-23 February 2012 and the second visit on 1-4 May 2012.

1.1. Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The 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
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

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

In 2006-2008 IEP conducted a series of evaluations of some 20 polytechnics and universities in Portugal. Most were co-funded by the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) to test the success of the reform of the higher education system that aimed to align it with the Bologna Process. An *Interim report on institutional evaluations undertaken in Portugal in academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08*¹ by IEP was published in May 2009. It draws conclusions from the evaluation reports about the state of implementation of the key

¹ <http://www.eua.be/iep/activities/coordinated-evaluations.aspx>

dimensions of the Bologna Process. UTAD was not part of this cycle of evaluations but instead applied to IEP for a review in 2011.

1.2. UTAD and the national context

The forerunner of UTAD was a polytechnic institute established in 1973. It became a university institute in 1979 and in 1986, based on the institution's education and research activities, the government granted it the status of a full university. Its main campus is located in the district capital of Vila Real, and it stands as a key player in the development of the north-eastern region of Portugal, building on the one hand on its traditions as an agricultural and veterinary institute and, on the other, on the region's geographic and ecological features. As such, the Enology degree that the University pioneered in 1984 is still unique in the country, as is its Applied Ecology programme that has been running since 2002. The University is also proud of its botanical garden on campus. In other areas, i.e. in fields of activity not linked to agricultural, veterinary and ecological sciences (in the broad sense of these terms), its Rehabilitation Engineering and Human Accessibility programme for disabled children and adults are similarly recognised. It is the University's declared strategy to build on its strengths to become a leader for the development of the region. It considers its research activities, with more than one hundred projects funded by the national Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and evaluated by their international panels, as a particular asset. The self-evaluation report points out that in the last evaluation in 2007, of the nine research centres at UTAD, one was evaluated as "Excellent", another "Very Good" and the others as "Good" (p. 26). FCT recognition is important for universities in Portugal because accreditation for masters and PhD programmes hinges on having research centres with at least a "Good" mark in the area in which the programme is to be set up. With respect to academic recognition and advancement it is also important for academic staff to be associated with a research centre, but staff may do research in centres other than those associated with their own university.

In addition to the main campus, Quinta de Prados, the School of Human and Social Sciences and the Higher Education School of Nursing are located elsewhere in the city and in the city of Chaves, some 60 kilometres away. UTAD has five faculties, referred to as schools: Agrarian and Veterinary Sciences; Life and Environmental Sciences; Sciences and Technology; Human and Social Sciences; and a polytechnic-level Higher Education School of Nursing. In the 2010/11 academic year UTAD enrolled 7791 students and had a total of 553 academic and 442 non-teaching staff.

The new legislation on higher education and quality assurance adopted in Portugal starting in 2006 has prompted changes in the internal legal framework of the University. By law, UTAD is a legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy. Following the revision of its Statutes in 2008, a new type of governance and management with changed bodies and functions was introduced. The General Council and the Schools were set up accordingly and the Rector was appointed in line with the changes.

1.3. The self-evaluation and evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a commission headed by the Pro-Rector for Evaluation and Quality, with the approval of the Rector. The commission was made up of the

three vice-rectors, the pro-rector, the presidents of the five schools, the Director of Student Social Services, the Student Liaison Officer, the President of the Student Association and the head of the Office of Quality Management.

The Rector asked the school presidents to discuss the self-evaluation process in their respective schools, while the head of the student association conveyed the process to the students. It was also posted on the University website. As with higher education institutions elsewhere, UTAD found that the self-evaluation process was a fruitful exercise for self-reflection by the members of the University at the various levels and a tool for defining a strategic vision for the institution and its units.

The Team was sent the self-evaluation report and 14 annexes electronically a few weeks before the first visit. UTAD decided to produce the printed version as a bound book, but this was delayed due to technical problems, which prevented the IEP evaluation team from receiving the hardcopy before the first visit. The Team noted that a simple photocopied version would have sufficed for the purpose of its evaluation. At the end of the first visit the Team asked UTAD to provide some additional documents and information, the majority of which was provided over the weeks leading up to the main visit. As to the quality of the self-evaluation report, the Team believes that it could have been more analytical, addressing the University's strengths and weaknesses in a more reflective way. This would have allowed UTAD to benefit even more from the entire evaluation process. During the two visits, however, the Team appreciated the open attitude of the members of the University and the collegial and honest discussions in the interviews which allowed them to gain a thorough understanding of the structure and function of UTAD.

In the two visits to UTAD the Team had interviews with Rector Carlos Sequeira; the Vice Rectors for Administrative and Financial Matters and for Teaching and Training (but were not able to meet Vice Rector for Research and Cooperation), four of the five Pro-Rectors, some internal and external members of the General Council, and the Self-Evaluation Group. They visited the five schools and had interviews with external stakeholders, chief administrators, quality assurance leaders and staff, students and student representatives in various cross-sections, as well as representatives of research centres.

In the first visit the Team followed the suggested IEP schedule, which was organised by the institution. During the second visit, the Team chair laid emphasis on strategic areas, so that after school visits on Day 1, the focus groups on the other two days were:

- students from different schools, including student representatives, who were joined by the heads of student services
- leaders on all levels and staff and students involved in quality assurance
- university-level managers of research and technology transfer and representatives of research centres
- the leaders responsible for strategic planning and change management.

These discussions, which lasted for 90 to 120 minutes, allowed for in-depth exchanges of a range of views.

1.4. The evaluation team and the evaluation process

The IEP evaluation team (later Team) consisted of:

- Jürgen Kohler, professor of law and former rector of the University of Greifswald, Germany, Team chair
- Aine Hyland, emeritus professor of education and former Vice-President of University College Cork, Ireland
- Öktem Vardar, professor of mechanical engineering and Rector of TED University, Ankara, Turkey
- Blaze Todorovski, European Students' Union, FYR Macedonia
- Christina Rozsnyai, programme officer, Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Team coordinator.

The Team thanks Rector Carlos Alberto Sequeira, Pro-Rector Alexandra Esteves and the other members of the Self-Evaluation Commission, as well as the heads and members of the schools and service units who contributed to the self-evaluation report and the fruitful and open discussions during the two Team visits to UTAD. The Team also expresses its appreciation for the organisation of the visits and the University's kind hospitality.

2. Constraints and challenges: UTAD within its environment

At the time of the evaluation, Europe is struggling with an economic and financial crisis, in which Portugal is severely affected. The national budget cuts impact UTAD, not only because funding from this source is *de facto* reduced as compared to earlier years. In addition, the economic situation permeates the environment with a sense of insecurity, which makes planning difficult. UTAD has had to freeze almost all hiring of new staff which, in turn, makes the implementation of any staffing policy difficult. Still, the Team believes that there is potential within UTAD in the area of staff development and consequent rationalisation of staffing, if a deliberate strategy can be developed at the University level in agreement with the faculties.

The demographic decline, prevalent in much of Europe, including Portugal, has an impact on student enrolment. Here, again, there is potential for UTAD if it aims to reach out to a broader national and international community. A complex strategy that involves deliberate public relations management, not just locally, but also nationally and even internationally; raising the attractiveness of the programmes by including unique disciplines and teaching and learning approaches; expanding into adult education and life-long-learning for both entire degree programmes and subjects of interest; and allowing for flexible learning paths that make it easier to enter studies at different points of study are examples that could be further explored. The Team has learned that some faculties are aware of these possibilities but also aware of the obstacles, including the provisions for external accreditation of programmes and a strong element of prescriptive rigidity as regards national practice of assigning students to universities. It nevertheless encourages UTAD to ease along the process of exploration and implementation with assistance from central management.

Another constraint in the eyes of the Team is a misunderstood interpretation of the Bologna Process that seems to emanate from the government. In fact, “Bologna” is much more flexible than is currently legislated, with a variety of learning structures, rather than the 3-year bachelor plus 2-year master system, and a broad range of entrance conditions.

Staff hiring-rules make it difficult to adapt existing staff, most of all the administrative staff, to changing needs within the University. In addition, nationally set hiring quota and structure, and especially the fact that hiring boards decide only from written documents rather than personal interviews, are real obstacles to a rational and sensible staffing policy, which allows the University to ensure hiring that is fully targeted to meet needs of a specific nature. However, the Team would recommend that UTAD works out a staffing policy, starting by outlining what type of staff is needed for UTAD in line with its overall strategy and profile.

On the sectoral level there is also an apparent incoherence in institutional planning. The Team heard, for example, that the country has six schools of veterinary medicine for a population of roughly ten million. Such a situation dilutes the national resources as well as the quality of education. On the other hand, UTAD has the possibility to excel in areas of this kind and thus make a name for itself that would make it more attractive than the others.

The external quality assurance of research is another area that the Team believes holds certain constraints. While the national evaluation and funding scheme appears to hold out the possibilities for excellence in research and funding, the evaluation focus seems to be highly disciplinary, preventing the development of new inter- and multidisciplinary projects, and thereby hampering profile building and excellence at the international level.

The historic development of UTAD has left it with a dispersion of various campuses. Certainly there are political reasons for sustaining the Chaves campus in order to provide that region with higher education and to support regional development. On the other hand, such an outpost is less efficient for the University as a whole, as it requires doubling of some structures and resources. The integration of a polytechnic, the Nursing School, into the University also poses its share of problems. Both the aims and conditions of the two types of institutions differ, and there is a certain friction among the University stakeholders – most notably at the Nursing Schools – that UTAD management must address.

Portuguese higher education is a system on the move: the economic threat with its fiscal constraints; the recently changed legislative environment which in some parts is still being implemented; the resulting changed governance structure of universities; the new educational structure following from the Bologna Process are all contributing to an unstable environment. Apart from the challenges, opportunities also arise from what can be seen as a new beginning and the chance to explore how best to profit from the changes and what to make of them for UTAD.

3. What is UTAD trying to do and why: aims and objectives and their validity

3.1. Strategic planning and profiling

In its self-evaluation report, UTAD sets out its mission:

"Qualifying the cultural, artistic, technological, professional and scientific learning, enhancing learning under an international reference framework, enhancing research, consolidating the provision of community services and strengthening international cooperation" (p. 2).

During the first visit, the Team learned that UTAD had been discussing a new strategic plan. Although not all parts of the plan had been worked out, it was given to the Team prior to the second visit, after its approval by the General Council. It was evident to the Team that the Rector and University leadership had already been holding fruitful discussions about the role and future of the University in the months leading up to the IEP evaluation, since the Strategic Plan is for 2011-2014. Perhaps also stimulated by the Team's first visit, UTAD is now focusing on developing its distinct profile. The historically and geographically given agrarian motif is reflected in what the plan states as the University vision:

"A University with international acclaim in the area of Agrarian Sciences for the excellence of its teaching and the research that is transversally enhanced by the different knowledge areas" (p. 6).

The paragraph leading up to the vision is in fact part of it, where UTAD says,

"Supported by four university schools – the School of Agrarian and Veterinary Sciences, the School of Human and Social Sciences, the School of Sciences and Technology, the School of Life and Environmental Sciences – and one polytechnic school, [...] UTAD [...] recognises current areas of excellence and proposes the development of new areas that justify strategic investment for the Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro within an identity-enhancing Vision" (p. 6).

The Team very much supports UTAD in this discussion and recognises that many elements it proposes in this evaluation report are emergent in the Strategic Plan. At the time of the Team's second visit the discussion was not at all finished. There is a broad consensus about the agrarian or agricultural profile, and the members of the University recognise that a profile underlines and develops the strengths of an institution and raises its attraction for students and external stakeholders in general.

The Team would like to make clear, however, that a decision of branding has consequences of its own. A SWOT exercise could identify whether UTAD would like to take this course at all. Moreover, if so, the University will have to decide on how inclusive or exclusive the "agrarian" profile should be, or if the label should be different or broader, not only for reasons of more accurate or more appealing "marketing of a brand" but much more so in order to ensure that the University fully embraces the potential in terms of learning, research, and service to society of its "core business", which is supposed to define its profile and serve as a beacon.

The new Strategic Plan notes that:

"...UTAD must emphasise the areas that can make it a benchmark and consolidate the existing scientific potential in the priority areas for the next decade, such as forestry, wine growing and production, life quality and food quality, production technologies and 'green' production, and integrated rural development" (p. 8).

The scope of the profile, however, is still debated in UTAD, as the Team heard in the interviews at the different faculties. On the one hand, the discussion revolves around what areas and disciplines should be linked to it. Beyond those obvious fields related to agriculture and veterinary sciences, and including UTAD's established speciality of enology, it can extend to more loosely related fields, as stated in the Strategic Plan, such as tourism, wellness, preventive medicine, rural development, related business and management, biofuels and so on. On the other hand, how exclusive are the profile-linked areas to be vis-à-vis the requirements for a university of arts and sciences? How can – and should – the existing range of recognised teaching and research areas be retained when University resources are channelled to profile areas? How wide a range of the existing areas can be linked to the profile areas, be it by design of the entire programme, or by specific electives, or by sequencing bachelor, master and doctoral programmes in view of the University's defined profile(s)? Should basic research remain broad while each department can channel some of its knowledge into applied fields that are related to the profile areas (specialisation in application)? What is the potential of internationalisation, be it within Europe or world-wide, in the latter case with special regard to existing, relatively strong links to Portuguese-speaking countries, e.g. Brazil and Angola?

This discussion, which is on-going at all levels including the departments, is necessary and the fact that it is taking place testifies of good leadership within the University. The Team believes that the discussion should involve a broad range of stakeholders, not just within but also around the University. How can business and industry, and also the local and regional government, be linked into the profile areas? The external stakeholders whom the Team met during its first visit were supportive and enthusiastic about working with the University and could be enlisted in boosting profile areas.

UTAD central management can channel the discussions by providing a structure in which various options are considered, SWOT analyses are carried out and the consequences of each option are mapped out (e.g. consider relatively low demand in core agricultural programmes where the content and methodology may be outdated). These exercises on all levels have to be done recurrently. The involvement of stakeholders ensures that the options are validated (are the identified strengths and weaknesses realistic or unfounded assumptions?) and that a balance between University interests and those of its members is achieved and sustained.

Once the profile areas are identified and agreed upon, the central management also plays a role in deciding on how to proceed with the unviable areas and programmes with respect to both teaching and research. What are the incentives and disincentives that could be applied for supporting one and not the other? How to make currently less popular areas that are potentially attractive and a key profile more appealing to potential students (e.g. veterinary sciences has less than half the number of students in bachelor, master and integrated master studies combined than any of the other university-level schools)?

The Team recognises that the discussions along these lines have been taking place at UTAD, as seen in the Strategic Plan. Here the Team would only like to advocate a more systematic managerial approach. In laying down different scenarios, options and projections it might even be useful to start by asking what it means to be a research university compared to a teaching university and what the implications are for UTAD, not just with respect to the obvious national

status but in its daily operations. The Team by no means questions the University's recognition of its research quality; it only advocates that rather than taking fixed assumptions, UTAD stakeholders can arrive at a better ownership and endorsement, that is, a more consensual understanding, of their identity and its consequences.

3.2. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning at UTAD are planned and conducted autonomously by the schools and departments, and the Team believes that the decentralisation of conceptualisation in this regard must be respected. However, it also believes that a template for planning should be implemented to overcome the shortcomings in programme design and to ensure consistent quality. This includes addressing the concern that currently precedence is given to content over embellishing skills and competences. A set of generic reference areas should be staked out and broken down into the following elements:

- personality development (developing education persons with self-management and social skills)
- creating expertise and innovation (“research minds”)
- relevance to society (employability, etc.)
- good citizenship (working in a democratic society and with participatory talents).

These objectives should be translated into fit-for-purpose curricula and input throughout the modules which constitute a given programme, and an assessment methodology that tracks student achievement should be linked to the courses or modules.

The overarching educational objectives should be implemented in a comprehensive way. It is also important to bear in mind the institutional objectives by designing the curricula and providing the teaching and learning methodologies in line with the mission and vision of UTAD. The University will also have to bear in mind structural requirements such as access, recognition of studies, mobility and workload; and the needs of society and diverse student communities who, for example, need bridging schemes and the recognition of prior learning, which become all the more important the more intensely the University tries to address non-traditional learners in view of the demographic challenge.

To ensure coherence of the generic elements, it is vital that professional input with a holistic view is provided, in order to spare individual departments having to work out separate methods (the existing expertise at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities could be put to use for the whole of the University). In addition, there should be a procedure for intervention in case of non-compliance with the set of overarching objectives pursued by UTAD in line with its defined mission and vision, in particular with its designated profile and overarching educational and research policy. In order to ensure that these are accepted by all members of the University, the objectives and processes must be made transparent by communicating them thoroughly and consistently to the stakeholders.

The Team recommends that UTAD continues to explore how to provide for the demands of non-traditional learners by developing life-long-learning and part-time courses, not just for whole programmes, but also subjects of interest to the community. It is also suggested that it

addresses the challenges of designing and implementing e-learning and blended learning courses in as many departments as possible.

3.3. Research and outreach

After looking carefully at the research structure at UTAD, the Evaluation Team concludes that it would be beneficial for the University if it realigned its research centres to reach three objectives:

- to create critical mass
- to ensure interdisciplinarity
- to try to get a broad intake of staff.

Research will also be discussed in the tools and quality assurance sections of this report, but at this point, from the perspective of the University objectives, the Team would like to stress the need for both freeing and incentivising staff to be able to periodically conduct in-depth research and focus on innovation. Incentives could be not only financial but structural, such as rearrangement of the workload within departments for given periods of time, factoring research success into staff advancement and career development, and so on.

In addition to basic research, its practical application and alignment with external stakeholder needs (private or contract research) are viable options for UTAD and its departments and research centres. Practical research that makes full use of the technology is an additional tool for “selling” the specialities within the University’s profile, and the results achieved there can feed back into the theoretical research work. Practical research should, therefore, be seen as an activity of its own merit.

4. How is UTAD trying to achieve its objectives: implementation tools and concepts

4.1. Turning vision into reality: creating a meaningful action plan

In substance, the implementation of tools and concepts starts with the creation of a feasible action plan that builds on the elements of the institutional strategic plan and aligns with the institution’s mission and vision. The Team saw the initial steps of the process at UTAD with the discussion around the new Strategic Plan, and commends the University for having started to draw up annual Activity Plans as well as review reports on the previous year’s actions. The Team strongly believes that even more concrete plans of action, going beyond the actions and objectives set down in the current version but also with specified timelines and responsibilities, would be helpful.

The Team would like to underline that an action plan is grounded in addressing the role and position of governance and management. In particular, it is a matter of leadership to organise the discourse and channel the institutional input into lines of decision-making. The development of a concrete action plan involves the identification of specific, quantifiable and agreed aims and targets, responsibilities and timelines. The SMART (Specific – Measurable – Attainable – Relevant – Timely) management approach is a useful tool for this purpose. In addition, the creation of a plan requires access to reliable figures and data about the institution. Having received various sets of data that were not always conclusive or consistent, the Team found that

there is room for improvement at UTAD as concerns data collection and interpretation. Financial means and sources available to realise specific actions should be incorporated into the action plan.

4.2. Programme development and an adequate quality support system

With regard to programme development, an adequate quality support system should be set up. An assigned, full-time quality officer (the operational head of a central quality assurance department with authority) has to be able to identify the quality issues and steer developmental processes using professional quality instruments. The quality officer must be able to communicate the essence of the process in order to ensure a joint understanding of the quality requirements, while a member of top management, e.g. a vice-rector for teaching and learning, must oversee it. Departments need support in the process by a professionally skilled quality leadership and staff. This may not necessarily require hiring new staff but the scope of skills required and the authority must be clarified.

Programme development should align with the strategic objectives of the University. This means that UTAD has to be selective in what to do and what not to do, e.g. closing existing programmes or aligning programmes to research aspirations. It also means that UTAD should consider its master and doctoral strategy, including the pros and cons (the substance and strengths and weaknesses) of a doctoral school.

For programme development, the issues of partnering should be addressed, involving a networking and internationalisation strategy (e.g. selecting partners for joint programmes) to achieve critical mass in target areas. UTAD has set down the basic idea for networking in its Strategic Plan. Now it can work to systematically develop a coherent scheme. This means that UTAD should ask itself what it is interested in and then it should be selective in its choice of partners as linking with partners should not be a random process. A clear aim should be set which would feed into real research and teaching, as well as learning alliances.

Finally, issues of practice (applied learning) must also be worked out, such as the development of internships for students and the ways of attaining generic educational objectives within programmes (so-called “soft skills”), such as democratic citizenship and identified skills and competences.

4.3. Research and transfer

There is an on-going discussion at UTAD about the visibility and effectiveness of its research centres. The possibility of a reduction in the number of centres and mergers with the aim to increase visibility are being considered. In this respect, UTAD can make use of the structural flexibility of the research centres due to their relative independence from University structures. Again, it is important that UTAD works out a concrete action plan (SMART targets) to steer this development. It should align with the University’s strategic objectives and ensure the interface with teaching and learning.

5. How does UTAD know that what it is doing works: quality assurance and monitoring

As part of the Bologna Process, universities in Europe have committed themselves to setting up internal quality assurance systems following the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (known as ESG). The seven Standards expect a higher education institution to continually or periodically monitor

- its quality assurance policy and procedures
- the system of approval, monitoring and review of its programmes and its degrees and awards
- how it assesses student achievements
- the quality assurance system of its teaching staff
- its learning resources and student support schemes and procedures
- its internal information systems
- how it makes information accessible for the public at large.

UTAD is aware of the ESG; they are referred to in the Strategic Plan and were mentioned in the interview with the quality assurance group. As the University admits, however, it is still in the very early stages of implementing a quality assurance system. In fact, between the Team's two visits, a restructuring of the scopes of authority among the various quality assurance groups and levels was underway, and for this reason the Team could not be given a quality assurance organisation chart. Nevertheless, in line with requirements set into national legislation UTAD has several regulations that are linked to quality assurance and has begun to implement them. (Provided in annexes to the self-evaluation report are the "Regulation for the Performance Assessment of the Teaching Staff of UTAD" [p. 168 ff.] and the "Organic Regulation of the Services" [p. 190 ff.])

5.1. Governance and management of quality assurance

It was difficult for the Team to track how certain action lines were measured and what the timelines or levels of accomplishment are. As part of this evaluation the Team would like to point to some issues for consideration by UTAD in re-steering its quality assurance system. At the level of governance and management it is also important in this context that the quality assurance scheme is linked to the University's strategic objectives. This means that the University management should monitor whether or to what degree these objectives are met, and what actions need to be adjusted periodically so that they are met. A SMART plan with timelines and measurable targets should be aligned with the quality assurance targets and goals, and reporting on quality achievements should be measured against identified measurable goals.

It is crucial, especially for quality assurance, that the University has reliable statistical data and the capacity to identify the data professionally. Some of the data given to the Team was not clear (e.g. the employment figures that did not align with the scant response rate of graduates in employment). The Team learned that there are several data systems in use for various types of data at the University, some of which are new and still being refined. The Team supports UTAD in developing its databases but would like to stress that a congruent and reliable system, handled by professional staff, should be available centrally.

As concerns student participation in governance, the Team found that they are genuinely and effectively represented in the University governance bodies. However, after interviews with students the Team wondered, without being able to investigate this in depth, how far student representatives were in touch with the general student population and how information from the management bodies, in which the representatives sit, is channelled down to the students, or vice-versa.

5.2. Quality assurance of teaching and learning

As noted above, UTAD has an array of systems to measure quality and performance: student evaluations of teachers and curriculum (the Information System to Support Teaching, or SIDE platform); tracking teacher performance by department heads (the School Regulation of Performance Assessment of the Teaching Staff, or RADE platform); monitoring the performance of services; and others. The University's self-evaluation report lists an array of systems and measures (RACE, RAQE, etc. on p. 26 and elsewhere) that the Team found difficult to work out. The Team therefore advises not to engage in an excessive amount of such measures.

UTAD should primarily concentrate on evaluating courses, modules and programmes, while the University is advised to postpone – if this should be sensible at all – entire school or university-wide reporting on the quality of teaching. While concentrating on programmes or courses, UTAD needs to ensure the relevance of course and programme evaluations and their specific perspectives and objectives, e.g. by being selective in what to evaluate and not covering every quality feature every time. The University must also make sure that the evaluation focuses not only on teacher performance but also on student progress and success in learning. It is important that the appraisals take a holistic approach covering access policy, progression within the programme, and checking how student assessment adequately evaluates whether students are attaining the competences and skills defined for the courses. In order to do this, the University will need to collect and use information beyond questionnaires, such as retention data, data on the duration of studies, graduation deviation figures and alumni reporting far more prominently. It will also need to check output and employment figures for each programme to verify its validity more thoroughly.

The quality of the student experience of teaching and learning includes also the related services, such as fairness of and timely access to examination and grading results and an appeal policy. In one interview, students noted the delay in receiving examination results, which may be a lack of adequate software or may require training for the administrators or the professors who use it, or it could be a communication problem. Whatever the reason, it should be addressed and covered in the quality assurance process.

More than looking at how teachers teach, UTAD should focus on developing a comprehensive concept on quality that concentrates on enhancement and is supportive. If seen as top-down policing rather than a mutual process for enhancement of quality, there is a risk that quality assurance will derail. Finally, adequate participation in the quality assurance process must be ensured, especially by providing tangible feedback about improvement or negative trends in a relatively short time to everyone concerned, from top management to students.

5.3. Quality assurance of research

UTAD, in cooperation with the national Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), participates in a commendable system of research evaluation. In order to link research into the entire quality concept of the University, the Team recommends that beyond the external quality assurance, an internal system should be set up, and the entire system should be in line with the University strategy. The system should identify the strengths of research. It should determine the entrance and exit criteria for professors and PhD students. Moreover, it should determine supportive measures for those who participate in research, e.g. specify to what degree this is part of the teachers' profile in their overall evaluation. The Team learned that the "Performance Assessment of Teaching Staff" includes research performance as part of the assessment of teachers. The Team would, however, like to emphasise that the teaching and research should run in parallel and they should be integrated into a coherent system, with regard to both strategic steering on a central level and quality assurance that provides feedback on research performance in line with the strategic priorities.

6. How is UTAD able to improve: culture and management, capacity for change

This section of the evaluation report does not deal with teaching and research management, or the optimal organisational substructure, e.g. of schools vs. departments. Instead it concentrates on the overarching institutional set-up.

6.1. The culture of change

In its discussions with various groups at UTAD the Team found that in many areas there is a commendable openness towards change. The awareness of risks and opportunities is increasingly present. In the spirit of UTAD there is a preparedness to address the challenges: the Team found many individuals who were willing to engage proactively, to be drivers of change, with an intrinsic motivation that is largely rooted in a sense of pride in the institution. (Concurrently, the Team also sensed that there was some nervousness stemming from the overall economic situation which may threaten their employment and stand in the way of steady development, at least in the immediate term.)

6.2. The tools for change

Based on the existing culture of change, UTAD must develop the tools to manage change. First of all, it must strengthen its conceptual clarity, as discussed in Section 3.1. on strategic planning and profiling. Acquiring the tools for change is a systematic learning process for all University stakeholders and in particular the leadership on the various levels. They can, and indeed should, seek input from external stakeholders, business, industry, graduates etc. but also from internal staff, administrators and students, on their perceptions of the University and its functioning. They can organise moderated debates and workshops with internal and sometimes also external stakeholders to gain and disseminate input, in particular to obtain information from different angles and to clarify viewpoints. They can conduct role-sharing exercises between administrators and academics, e.g. in preparing meetings or following up on them, so as to highlight the obstacles and considerations of each group in their daily work and to establish a workable interface between them.

It is helpful to identify champions and best-practices within the University to present as examples on how goals can be achieved. Designating taskforces to specific tasks on all levels, based on individual competence and enthusiasm, can assure that the process is participatory.

It is key that UTAD ensures the robustness of decision-making in due time so that it is realistic and durable, well-reasoned and rational. Those who are the decision-makers by statute have to participate in informed decision-making processes, e.g. institutional responsibilities should be defined, such as the legal responsibilities of the different leaders and what that means for their community, or the role and responsibilities of the General Council. These are debates in which each different level of the institution should be involved. It is important that both the discussions are carried out on various levels and that there is an interface between the levels. Equally, an interface between the internal and external members of the General Council and the members of the University should be established to ensure flow of information in all directions.

Broad ownership among the members of the University must be ensured so that each individual is aware of his or her role and responsibility in working toward the defined goals, and ready to take on this role and responsibility in a strategically managed and forward-looking manner. In addition, there is a need to ensure public endorsement of the University's strategic role and goals via planned and proficient marketing and communication.

Leadership and resolve require sharpening in order to develop further. The Rector and all elected officials will have to take an active part in these processes by channeling the debates and, once conclusions are reached, by sending clear signals that the University has an established policy. Showing leadership and resolve, and involving the members of UTAD on all levels, will ensure that the decisions made will lead to sustainable results with a continuity in the development of UTAD.

7. Recommendations

The key recommendations made in the text of the evaluation report are repeated below for better reference, following the order in which the topics were discussed.

1. Exploit the existing potential within UTAD in the area of staff development and consequent rationalisation of staffing by setting up a deliberate strategy and policy on the University level in agreement with the faculties, starting by outlining what type of staff is needed for UTAD in line with its overall strategy and profile.
2. Exploit the potential for attracting more students to counterbalance the demographic decline by devising a complex strategy ranging from good public relations to partnering nationally and internationally, to building up strong programmes in niche areas and introducing new teaching and learning methods.
3. Continue the discussion on all levels of the University about setting an institutional profile; analyse the strengths and weaknesses of various options and map out the consequences.
4. A template for planning should be implemented to overcome the shortcomings in programme design and to ensure consistent quality, bearing in mind the institutional

objectives and structural requirements such as access and the needs of general society and diverse student communities.

5. Realign research centres to create critical mass, ensure interdisciplinarity, and to get a broad intake of staff, while appreciating the importance of not only theoretical but also practical research concentrated around the University profile.
6. Set up an adequate quality support system for programme development, overseen by a top University manager and carried out by a professionally skilled full-time quality officer.
7. Develop a systematic networking and internationalisation strategy for programme development.
8. Continue the discussion about the research centres based on the University's strategic objectives and ensure the interface with teaching and learning.
9. Continue to develop the quality assurance system based on the ESG, but in line with the Strategic Plan and a focused action plan.
10. Continue to develop a reliable and coherent database on all University data that is accessible by central management, and ensure that professionally trained staff can retrieve and interpret the data.
11. Continue to develop the quality assurance initiatives into a coherent system under central steering.
12. Ensure that quality assessment of teaching and learning is approached holistically and focused on quality enhancement. Provide feedback as quickly as possible to ensure ongoing participation.
13. Align research evaluation with the institutional strategy and priorities.
14. In order to develop a culture of change, organise debates on the roles and responsibilities of various levels of the University with participation of all levels. The Rector and elected leadership should adopt a clear role in channelling these debates and, once a debate is finished and conclusions have been reached, in signalling the institutional policy.

8. Conclusions

The purpose of the Evaluation Team report is to help UTAD at the institutional level. Therefore, the Team focused on the institution as a whole and its review involved neither programme nor research assessments. The Team does not compare UTAD to other higher education institutions, but rather attempts to uncover the University processes and its potential on its own merits. This report – and indeed the entire evaluation process – should serve to provide governance and management with an overarching perspective. At the same time, it should give all members of the University community some strategic directions, based on an external view of UTAD's current situation. The IEP evaluation is a collegiate review by peers, who cannot proffer ready-made solutions, nor should this be done since any external prescriptive approach would be futile

and ineffective because it would prevent UTAD from truly “owning” its aspirations, concepts, and implementation practices. UTAD must ask its own questions to arrive at the right answers so as to set out its own optimal course, and in particular since only UTAD understands fully the internal facts and external circumstances within which it operates, its strengths and weaknesses, and its opportunities as well as its risks.

IEP encourages the University to write a progress report in one year’s time, reflecting on the actions taken following the IEP Team recommendations and explaining why some recommendations were not considered. In line with ESG recommendations, the University is also encouraged to request a follow-up evaluation by IEP within one to three years.

The University community expresses pride in the institution, which is a real incentive for the UTAD management. The Team believes that UTAD has a role to play in society at large in the region, the country, and internationally. The many changes taking place in the country and in higher education open potentials for exploiting and influencing the course of those changes and using them to the University’s advantage. The Team hopes that its evaluation is able to stir discussion in the University on the way forward, but also that decisions will be made and implemented as a result of the discussions.