

**UNIVERSIDADE LUSÓFONA (UL)**

***EUA EVALUATION REPORT***

***June 2007***

## Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1. The university in its context.....	4
1.2. Assessment of the self-evaluation process.....	4
2. CONSTRAINTS AND INSTITUTIONAL NORMS .....	5
2.1. Resources .....	5
2.1.1. Finances.....	5
2.1.2. Physical infrastructure.....	6
2.2. Organisation .....	6
2.2.1. Leadership .....	6
2.2.2. Governance.....	6
2.2.3. Departments .....	7
2.2.4. General observations on mechanisms for quality assurance .....	7
3. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.....	10
3.1. Education.....	10
3.2. Research .....	11
3.3. Services to society (the third mission of a university) .....	12
4. THE CAPACITY FOR CHANGE.....	13
4.1. The vision and the mission.....	13
4.2. Institutional policies, including human resource strategies.....	14
4.3. Mid-and long-term strategies .....	15
5. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	16
5.1. Academic leadership .....	16
5.2. Strategic management and capacity for change .....	17
5.3. Quality management .....	18
6. ENVOI .....	19

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is primarily focused on an examination of decision making structures and processes and internal quality management within the university. The main aim of the evaluation is to gain a global view of the institution in order to develop its strategic capacity. The process starts with the evaluation of the specific profile of the institution and its mission and examines its major characteristics. The evaluation determines if, in carrying out its mission, the institution provides a stimulating, effective, and efficient environment for learning, research, and service to society. The evaluation is focused on answering the following four key questions (EUA guidelines):

- What does the institution want to do? (Mission)
- How does it do this? (Activities)
- How does it know that it works? (Quality culture)
- What does it do in order to change? (Strategic capacity for change)

The evaluation includes several steps. The first and most important is the self-evaluation process undertaken by the participating institution. A team of evaluators is appointed by the IEP Steering Committee to conduct two site visits. In the case of Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias (UL), the team included:

- Ivan Ostrovský, IEP Team Chair, former Vice-Rector Comenius University, Slovakia
- Dennis Anderson, Former President and Vice-Chancellor, Brandon University, Canada
- Andrée Sursock, Deputy Secretary General, EUA
- Anne Marie de Jonghe, IEP Team Secretary, Director General, Rectors' Conference, Flanders, Belgium

The team came to the university for a first visit in December 2006, asked for supplementary information, and came back for a second visit in May 2007. Open conversations took place in a cooperative spirit with over 150 people in the course of the two visits.

The evaluation of UL took place as a result of its voluntary decision to join ten other institutional evaluations in Portugal; these ten other evaluations were requested and funded by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. The UL has developed high expectations for this international evaluation process. The institutional leaders want to strengthen the institution in order to better achieve success in fulfilling UL's mission for Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as in Europe; to enhance research opportunities; to improve UL's ability to compete for EU funding; to attract better students on a national and international level; and to attract more PhD-qualified staff. In short, UL wants to improve its position among Portuguese universities and aspires to be one of the leading and most innovative universities in the country.

The team hopes that this institutional evaluation report will assist the university as it plans and executes its strategy.

The evaluation team would like to express its thanks to Rector Fernando Santos Neves and General Manager Manuel de Almeida Damasio, and all the staff and students who participated in the process. Special thanks are due to Teresa do Rosario Domasio and her staff for the efforts expended in ensuring good logistics and organisation during the visit.

### **1.1. The university in its context.**

The university started its activities in 1987. In 1998 a merger of two distinct universities took place leading to the creation of Lusófona in its current form. The evaluation team was told that, today, UL is the largest private university in Portugal. The founders of the university created an ambitious vision for the institution. In pursuing this vision, the goal has been to build a recognised private university in Portugal.

The University name comes from the word “Lusofonia” which refers to all the Portuguese-speaking countries and their common linguistic and cultural background. The university views itself as the leading institution responsible for the development of this geographical and cultural space comprising about 200 million inhabitants. The university campus is situated in the centre of Lisbon city, the capital of Portugal, with accessible public transport.

With a student body of about 11,000 students and 1,500 teachers, the university offers an adequate educational social and cultural environment. The number of foreign students from Lusófonia countries contributes to a significant international dimension at the university.

The University is structured around ten scientific departments that constitute the main institutional units.

UL currently offers 41 undergraduate degrees, 38 master’s degrees, 5 PhD programs and 34 post-graduation degrees, as well as a number of vocational and continuous training courses as part of its lifelong learning provision. The evaluation team was told that all the University courses comply with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and that almost all of the undergraduate and graduate degrees have been transformed according to the principles and norms of the Bologna Declaration. Those that have not yet been transformed are expected to be converted to the Bologna format soon.

### **1.2. Assessment of the self-evaluation process.**

In conducting its self-evaluation, the university appointed a self-evaluation team under the leadership of Vice-Rector Mario Moutinho. The team of nine members included academics, administrators, and two students. The draft self-evaluation report (SER) was then presented to the governing bodies for discussion.

The SER provided a very detailed picture of some aspects of the university and a description of its strengths and weaknesses. Understandably, the SER might have been more complete had the university not been in the midst of a major increase in enrolment and, simultaneously, in the midst of the implementation of Bologna, factors that stretched staff resources.

Apart from the SER, the evaluation team took into account: the additional written informative material that the University and the departments had compiled, as well as the information received during the interviews with the academic and administrative staff, the members of the self-evaluation steering group, the students, the external stakeholders, and the institutional leadership.

The team spent substantial time talking to over 150 people and received additional written information to complete the picture; all of these inputs assisted the team in its description and analysis of the institution and in preparing the recommendations included at the end of this report.

The evaluation team would like to stress how it views its role and the nature of its findings. In keeping with the philosophy and methodology of the Institutional Evaluation Programme, the evaluation team is neither assessing the quality of teaching and research nor is it conducting an accreditation exercise. Rather, the exercise consists of a formative evaluation of the institution's overall strategic decision-making processes and its internal mechanisms for quality assurance.

The evaluation team sees itself primarily as a mirror. It came to UL to listen to and to reflect back on what it heard. The report will therefore concentrate on the issues and questions that the team thought are the most important. It does not address in-depth all the challenges that the university is facing because it would be presumptive to do so after such a short time spent at UL. Instead, it is hoped that its recommendations will provide key insights that can be discussed further and developed to conclusions and actions within the institution.

UL is facing a scenario of change. There are signs that Portuguese universities will be working within a new legal framework. For years UL has been under pressure arising from the poor reputation of private institutions in the country, as well as from the national legislation which provided for a different treatment of private universities in comparison to public universities.

The Rector, the General Manager, and staff of UL are well aware that the University needs to change in order to prepare for new opportunities and to deal with pressing challenges. It appears that there is considerable consensus within the university community on the need for change and the general direction of change. The evaluation team hopes that this evaluation exercise will assist the university to plan and implement its strategy in order to enhance its overall position in the higher education system at the national and international level.

## **2. CONSTRAINTS AND INSTITUTIONAL NORMS**

UL is a private university managed by a cooperative - COFAC. The cooperative also manages other schools which were not within the scope of this evaluation exercise. The findings of this report are limited to UL.

### **2.1. Resources**

#### **2.1.1. Finances**

UL's financial resources are primarily derived from tuition fees; 90 % of UL's income comes from student fees, and only 10 % from fundraising (specific activities, projects, sponsors, media partners, etc.). This dominant role of student fees in UL financing suggests that a high level of quality service will have to be delivered to a rather demanding student body. To meet students' expectations and demands for service UL may continue to find that it needs to increase investments, financed by loans from several banks.

Priorities for financing in UL depend on the attractiveness of study programs to students. This policy may create tensions. Study programs that are less attractive to students and contribute a smaller proportion of UL's revenues, may be more vulnerable, especially because of demographic pressure and the expected downturn in the size of the typical university entrance cohort in Portugal.

UL is still expanding its partnerships with Portuguese speaking countries and is aware of the fact that these partnerships need good governance in the sense that financial risks have to be

avoided. For example, UL is helping Cape Verde with its international strategy by, among other things, trying to find some partners for them.

If UL is to pursue its research mission, the financing of research will become an important issue. At the moment research can be supported by successful applications to Portugal's national science foundation, by outside companies, or by UL itself (currently rather limited). Some departments have a non profit organisation which manages the research contracts with outside companies. The six research centres or units in the humanities supported by the national science foundation have financial autonomy and their own equipment. In the organisation structure these research units are situated between the department and the administration.

Developing multiple source of financing is vital for UL and the team commends the considerable efforts that the university is making to diversify UL's funding. Based on interviews with outside partners, however, the team learned that opportunities for research sponsorship through outside partners could be further developed.

### **2.1.2. Physical infrastructure**

Most of UL's buildings are located on a relatively small main campus in the university area of Lisbon. Physical expansion at this main site may be difficult, however, some space is still available for building purposes: a building project (for the research functions and staff) is about to be finished and another has just started.

The evaluation team heard many complaints about cramped space at the main campus for teaching, research, and offices, and about deficiencies in the general physical environment (heating/air conditioning, bathrooms, and student residences). Students complained about the infrastructure for the mobility-impaired. However, the university is compliant with the law as far as the new buildings/renovations are concerned. Ramps and lifts are gradually being built.

The campus is also dispersed (e.g. sports infrastructure, veterinary department, hospital in Sintra), and we were informed that UL had recently assumed responsibility for an applied MBA program focused on the air industry sector and offered at a separate site from the main UL campus). However the review team did not visit these dispersed sites.

## **2.2. Organisation**

### **2.2.1. Leadership**

The Rector and the General Manager had a clear view of what they wanted to accomplish with the founding of this university. The same team has been leading UL since its creation and a succession problem may arise, which could temporarily influence the organisation. UL needs to plan for succession to ensure sustainability. The team observed that UL is aware of this issue and is preparing for the future. Several senior staff members have been working with the Rector and General Manager for a number of years and thus can provide a sound basis for continuity.

### **2.2.2. Governance**

The university is a private institution organised within the cooperative, COFAC, in accordance with national legislation. The structure of governing bodies is prescribed by the law. The team observed that the decision-making lines and procedures correspond with the

legal statute of the university. The team sensed general satisfaction with the decision-making procedures across the university as well as a high level of mutual trust among the academic staff, managers, and administrators. This leads to fast and flexible reaction to the opportunities and challenges the university faces and is a distinct advantage of UL.

The team observed that, in practice, the organisation seems to be sufficiently effective and efficient. The responsibilities are divided properly and decision-making lines are sufficiently transparent and ensure accountability.

### **2.2.3. Departments**

The internal organisation of the university is not prescribed by any external authority. The university has 10 departments, some of which provide more than one study program. The team observed that such organisation works properly offering benefits for the students and academic staff. The head of the department deals directly with the general manager of the administration. The administration is very attentive to what is happening in the departments.

The directors of programmes are chosen by the head of the department. This decision needs the approval of the Rector and the General Manager. Within the departments, directors of programmes have a great deal of responsibility and autonomy with respect to the programmes. A decrease or increase in enrolment, which can be caused by external or internal factors, can have a direct consequence for the head of the department.

A proposed new internal structure has been discussed recently: to move from departments to faculties and schools. It seems that the departments were meant to increase interdisciplinarity, which has been achieved to some extent in some areas but not in others. The proposed change is based on the idea that the faculty structure will be more appropriate for the future functioning of the university.

Although the team did not have detailed information on this new organisational design, it seems to the evaluation team that it is necessary to spend additional time to discuss and to reflect on all dimensions and consequences of this proposal. The team would like to stress that, as a general management principle, decisions about organisational structures should follow and be consistent with the institution's strategy, therefore, the university should ensure that the proposed changes will be efficient and effective in achieving its strategic goals. It would not be sufficient to argue that the creation of faculties is more in line with the traditional organisation of Portuguese public universities; two universities (Minho and Aveiro) are not organised in this way.

### **2.2.4. General observations on mechanisms for quality assurance**

#### 2.2.4.1. Teaching performance

The team observed that although the university does not have a formal quality unit, it does use a set of tools to monitor its activities. Prominent among these are the teacher and student questionnaires. The QA responsibility seems to be properly distributed and shared among governing bodies, administration and academic managers, including directors of departments and directors of study programmes. Departments get feedback from the central administrative level about the analyses of the student evaluation questionnaires. Departments discuss the results in their own pedagogical and scientific councils and develop their own specific quality mechanisms.

In general, student representatives take part in the discussion of the student evaluation results in the central pedagogical council at which they can raise issues and concerns and make suggestions. The results are also discussed in the students' council, which is open to all students. Students also administer their own surveys, usually based on selected samples. Students do not distinguish between part-time and full-time teachers (as often recommended by academic policies or quality assessments). From their perspective, teaching quality depends on the course content, the pedagogical qualities, and the teaching skills and availability of the teacher.

One issue raised by some of the students concerned the distribution of the teaching/course evaluation questionnaires. Some students were uncomfortable in cases where the teacher was the person who distributed the survey and then stayed in the classroom while the students completed the survey and handed it in.

Other concerns related to the content of the main teaching/course evaluation questionnaire and the fact that all results were not made public. Specifically, some students noted that some of the questions on the questionnaire were too general in that they asked for a rating of a subject area (and it was noted that often there is more than one teacher for a subject area); there was insufficient focus on questions regarding rating the specific class and the particular teacher of this specific class. Moreover, some students complained that there was insufficient opportunity (and space) to write in qualitative comments about the teacher and the specific course taught by this teacher.

UL has made significant progress in implementing a quality assurance system for teaching, but UL needs to further develop general guidelines and a standardised procedure for conducting the student course/teacher evaluation surveys, and it needs to improve the content of survey form itself. It might be a good idea to identify good practices across the departments. For instance, the psychology department administers a survey after each semester. Once the forms are filled out, they are collected by the student representative, who puts them in a sealed envelope and gives it to the head of the department. Statistical analysis follows and the results are given to the professors. A conversation takes place between the department head and each professor who has teaching problems. The aggregate results for the departments are made public. The results are discussed in the scientific council of the department. The general council of UL is informed in case of a difficult problem. Another survey, with open questions, takes place in the Psychology department in the middle of the semester and the feedback is used only by the professor to make any necessary adjustments to teaching. In addition to obtaining student feedback via questionnaires, feedback on teaching is often obtained in regular (monthly) meetings or spontaneous discussions that the head of department has with student representatives of different programs.

#### 2.2.4.2. Research Performance

Research performance is not centrally monitored at this moment and UL does not appear to have developed an institutional tool for this purpose. If research becomes part of the performance appraisal of professors, it will be integrated in the central system. Departments use the classic indicators included in the system of Portugal's National Science Foundation (peer reviewed publications, papers at conferences, chapters in books, etc). Some departments send these data to the relevant councils or administrators at UL at the end of each semester.

The current law does not permit using the teaching and research performance of professors in promotion decisions. Fortunately, as a private university, UL has more autonomy in this area as is not bound by this legal barrier. Therefore UL has been taking teaching quality into

consideration in hiring, promotion, and firing decisions. It will be important to monitor what the upcoming law will say about this matter and if the rules will be the same for private and public universities.

### 2.2.5 Administrative Services

The team observed that the administration of the university fits with the legal environment. The team did not note any serious weakness of the university administration at the management level. It is a real advantage to UL to have an effective and flexible administration.

The team noted, however, that students were dissatisfied with some parts of the central administrative services at the clerical level, including enrolment and registration procedures and financial services, areas that need further improvement and would benefit from more dialogue and coordination among the administrative units responsible for these functions. The team observed that the students are generally satisfied with the treatment of their problems at the department level.

It should be noted that an information deficit about the recently implemented Bologna reforms appears to have played a role in student dissatisfaction with the administrative services, which were overwhelmed by this demanding reform process. UL tried to alleviate the problem by setting up a special office to deal with questions related to the proper implementation and good practice of Bologna principles and standards.

The development of student services seems to be in an early stage and further work is needed as Bologna will require more student-centred education. This implies services for individual academic support and advising. A support service has already been set up (students' survey, project in psychology department about cognitive development), but the question remains whether this will be sufficient.

The team observed that the virtual campus project which includes academic registration, student "page" on the UL website, courses on the web, etc., is meant to make some of these administrative and other academic processes easier with the aim of facilitating student life. UL's intention is to have the whole administrative IT system become ISO certified and a small project in this direction has just started.

### 2.2.6. Student Representation

Each department has its own student representatives, part of whose job is to work/liaise with the central student's delegation; the latter is represented in the four university councils. However, perhaps because departmental student representatives find it easiest and most effective to deal directly with their department heads and study programme directors when problems arise, they tend not to be sufficiently involved with central student representatives.

It was obvious to the team that student engagement was good but limited to the departments and it would be useful to develop ways to involve students at the university level. As the EUA Quality Culture Project stated, "Most students are confronted with the notion of student participation for the first time when they enter higher education. They need to understand what it is about and the benefits it holds for them and the institution. They also need to develop a sense of ownership of the quality issues." The report highlights ways in which student participation can be improved, including by "providing appropriate support for student groups, developing their leadership skills and their capacity to understand strategic

institutional issues and involving them in the appropriate bodies where their contribution would be of added value.”<sup>1</sup>

### **3. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

#### **3.1. Education**

The university is looking to attract quality students. Special recruitment activities are in process through the use of central marketing and communication services and the participation of department chairs, faculty and, in some cases, current UL students. The central marketing and communication unit is an important asset for UL in its function as an institutional research unit. It contributes to strategic decision-making through various statistical studies and its surveys of students' expectations. UL monitors three groups twice a year: prospective students, former students (after 1.5 years), and current students. The results of these surveys are used for making decisions about investments in the short term.

Students come to UL for various reasons: good location with many transport access possibilities, specific programs/courses, good teachers and good relationships with teachers, and good job prospects upon obtaining a degree from UL. Graduates of UL appear to be attractive to employers and employability of graduates does not appear to be a weakness of the university.

UL has a particular student population, which will need adapted strategies especially in the context of the expected negative demographic trends in Portugal's potential student population. UL noticed an increase in quality of students over the past year and has decided to focus on the quality “inside”. At present 40 % of the students come to Lusófona as a first choice. Foreign students are from Portuguese-speaking countries (1200) and from Erasmus exchange (750 universities, plus USA).

The university took the lead in attracting the specific group of “mature” or “23 plus” students (1,000 out of 10,000 the first year). The team observed, however, that this very specific group of students needs proper follow up and support.

Students are generally highly satisfied about the academic quality at UL. In contrast, as discussed above, they indicate that administrative services remain below the high level of expectations that go with fee-paying students. It will be important for UL to manage the different expectations of a variety of students: Students who were unable to get a placement in a public university, those who are seeking special niche departments (for example, media) from Lusófona and will be demanding in many respects; and those coming straight from secondary school, perhaps with a lower level of expectations than more mature students.

UL has means to compete. Competition with the public sector can take place on the basis of an attractive class schedule, availability of unique courses (such as museology, media studies, oceanography and ‘science and religion’), development of student services, and special outreach to lower- and middle-class students and the “23 plus” category,

The degree structure and curricula are in the early stage of adaptation to the Bologna reform. The implementation of Bologna put pressure on all the other activities. However, there is a need to deepen the implementation of Bologna and to explain better to both students and staff

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<sup>1</sup> Quality Culture in Universities: A Bottom-up Approach (EUA 2005), p. 27  
[http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user\\_upload/files/EUA1\\_documents/Quality\\_Culture\\_2002\\_2003.1150459570109.pdf](http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/EUA1_documents/Quality_Culture_2002_2003.1150459570109.pdf)

its goals and substance, placing particular emphasis on the fact that Bologna also implies a new teaching model (based on learning outcomes for each study programme), one that requires changed approaches to pedagogy and to provision of student services (for example, services to students with regard to individual trajectories and student-centred learning). Bologna also implies a new educational model (research based education).

Recently the university's applications for five PhD programmes received approval. This is a major sign of recognition for the university and the utmost effort should be applied to mount these 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle programmes successfully.

### **3.2. Research**

The university places considerable emphasis on its research mission. Recently it has been working hard to improve its research culture and to develop a research policy. Professionalisation of research will be further developed.

In order to encourage scientific writing and promote a research culture not only in the UL/Lisbon area but also among Lusófona countries, the university publishes a set of 13 scientific journals. This initiative links the UL mission in Portuguese speaking countries with the more global research aim. Some journals are peer reviewed, open to outside researchers, and contain articles/abstracts written in English. Currently UL uses the Latin-index as a reference point for its own journals.

These UL-sponsored journals provide a home-grown publishing outlet and can serve as an incubator for young researchers. However it is broadly recognized among European universities that, in order to build an international reputation for research, it is necessary for faculty to get their publications accepted by more mature and highly ranked existing international journals. Thus UL is advised to pursue a dual strategy of supporting its own journals but, simultaneously, encouraging and supporting its faculty to publish in top international journals in their disciplinary fields. The latter forms an essential step in UL's internationalisation and research development processes.

However, the university needs to overcome several obstacles in order to fulfil its research aspirations. The university suffers from a low number of academic staff with PhD degrees. This may be one of the reasons for its low research capacity. Another reason seems to be that a considerable number of the staff teach part time while having outside commitments; in most cases where teachers engage in research with outside institutions, particularly in the context of associated laboratories, their research is not credited to UL

Other research obstacles are related to infrastructure and funding possibilities. UL has difficulty dealing with the funding of its research activities. These difficulties arise from the national organisation of research in Portugal. In addition, library holdings and access to academic journals seem to vary across the disciplines and may be deficient in engineering and applied sciences.

Research performance is not equally distributed across all departments; this is a well known picture and not necessarily a weakness of UL. The obvious research strengths in certain areas (e.g. health sciences, communication and media, sport sciences, psychology) constitute driving forces for the university and would be consistent with a niche strategy for research.

Since there is an insufficient critical mass of researchers, a lack of funding (strategies), and no coherent management structure for research, there is an urgent need to articulate a clear research policy. One solution could be to elaborate on the concept of a "single research institute" which is currently being discussed at UL. This would mean that small and/or

emerging research groups in UL could operate under the umbrella of a common institute, which would require a specific space on campus.

A common institute structure could stimulate the research culture at UL and, in some cases, would provide a new impulse to creativity and interdisciplinarity. It could certainly mean, among other things, that resources could be shared and that training of researchers and doctoral students (e.g. in methodology or how to get published) could be better organised. A common institute for all UL researchers may strengthen the research profile of UL in the eyes of the outside world and would enable better national and international cooperation.

On the other hand, in Portugal, it seems less obvious that a single university can build research strength on its own. The country has a history of associated laboratories, which may involve collaboration of several research teams originating from different institutions. UL could take the lead in four areas (media/communication, sports, psychology, and health). For instance, in communication/media, they could associate with five other research groups (consisting of more than half of the PhD's in the country). Seed money would be needed for UL to start such laboratories or any other research collaborations or partnerships. Project money from the National Science Foundation could be obtained.

A combination of both models, the "UL research institute" and the "associated laboratories" strategy, could be a good solution. The former could act as an incubator for research groups and a research setting for faculty who are not involved in another research structure.

The scientific council is involved in discussions about the research strategy (e.g. definition and follow up of relevant indicators), staff development (e.g. more full-time faculty, more PhDs, workload balance, more space), and in developing the third mission of community linkages (e.g. urban sciences plans with the city of Lisbon). In order to further develop UL's institutional research policy, it would be useful to integrate the viewpoints of those departments that already have a good model for their research.

### ***3.3. Services to society (the third mission of a university)***

The link with society is crucial for UL. For many departments, working with the community is important (e.g. with the Olympic committee, sports federations, and hospitals). UL has developed projects for service to the community located in UL's immediate environment (e.g. a health club for elderly in the neighbourhood, and a help line for secondary school teachers).

Department heads and faculty members do work together with many outside partners, which gives UL opportunities for collaboration (e.g. tourism project with the tourism sector, project about witnesses with judges), and opportunities for employment of their students and for sponsoring of some projects (e.g. media).

The team observed that the external partners whom they interviewed (industry, trade, embassies) were positive about their cooperation with UL but felt that external links could be further developed. Further follow up of UL alumni and the development of a long-term relationship with this group could have positive effects for the societal recognition of the university, and could help UL to attract diversified funding.

UL is looking at the necessary funding and the right governance structures for all these ventures. Recently an advisory board has been set up to strengthen links with the external community.

UL will further develop its research and development structure and patent ownership policy; there is no Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regulation at public universities; individuals can get a patent, not the university. UL has a close relationship with companies and students are encouraged to start their own companies.

## **4. THE CAPACITY FOR CHANGE**

### **4.1. The vision and the mission**

The University mission comprises the promotion of educational and research activities that contribute to the scientific, cultural, and economic enrichment of all countries that share Portuguese as a common heritage.

As stated in its SER, the university positions itself as the leading private higher education and research institution in Portugal and in all countries that speak the Portuguese language. The mission of the university is driven by the “Lusófona space. The University mission implies the promotion of Portuguese-speaking countries’ development through education and culture. The team observed that this original mission enables the university to serve the Portuguese-speaking world culturally, scientifically, and economically.

The team was informed that, today, UL is the largest private institution of Higher Education in Portugal and the cooperative body for the university – COFAC – is directly responsible for the management of nine other Higher Education Institutions in Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinean-Bissau and Cap-Verde. This group of institutions is commonly organised under the designation “Lusófona Group”.

The University positions itself in Portugal as both a training and research school, offering degrees and promoting R&D activities in a wide range of disciplines. UL degrees currently range from the Humanities to Engineering and from Economics to Health and Arts areas. The university seeks to play a leading role within the Portuguese higher education sector.

This specific orientation of the university towards the Lusófona world does not mean that it neglects its European dimension and its responsibility toward the local region, particularly the development of the city of Lisbon. The team observed that the university provides many successful services for the city and region.

The university has a considerable list of international/European agreements with partners in the EU and in other regions. Being based in a peripheral geographical space far from the centre of Europe is not regarded as an obstacle to its international reputation. Through its inclusion in the European Exchange Programs and the promotion of training and research programs in partnership with other European institutions, the University seeks to strengthen its European position.

UL has chosen a specific focus, which differentiates them in the market. From the outset of the institution, its founders and leaders wanted to preserve the culture, history, and language of the Portuguese-speaking world. This aim is strongly linked to UL’s social goal: attracting foreign Portuguese speaking students, less well-off students, secondary-school leavers with good grades who could not find a place at a public university, and recently “23 plus” students.

UL plays the role of change driver. It has demonstrated its innovativeness and capacity to change by the creation of a number of unique and innovative academic programmes, its early adoption of the Bologna process, its involvement in emerging areas of science, its active recruitment of “23 plus” students, and its implementation of numerous and varied linkages with the external community.

## 4.2. Institutional policies, including human resource strategies

There is a very strong sense of community that is widely shared among and between students and staff. In short, the university demonstrates a refreshing spirit that can be considered an asset in terms of its ability to build consensus around strategic orientations.

The notion of family has often been referenced in the various meetings held with the evaluation team. This constitutes strength and demonstrates closeness, informality, and mutual support. As the institution grows in size and becomes more complex, it may face the need to build more complex structures while preserving its family characteristics, its culture of trust, and its spirit of great liberty.

UL would like to stabilise the teaching staff. Some staff members are older (retired from the public system). A large proportion of the teachers are working part time and are not often present at the university, a situation which is also attributable to the space problem. The latter does not seem to be a problem for students as they perceive that teachers are easy to contact, in particular, by e-mail.

In order to improve the capacity of the staff to do research and, with the aim of attracting the best staff for the niche areas in which they want to play an important role, UL is trying to recruit more PhDs. PhDs who are currently teaching at UL are often doing their research in other places where space and funding are available.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the portion of their research production that is conducted at and published through membership in an Associated Lab cannot be counted toward the performance of UL, and this feature works to UL’s disadvantage when UL researchers and administrators are applying for acceptance of funding proposals.

Regarding the balance between teaching and research, UL is currently preparing policies which would require staff to do both teaching and research, and would allow them to negotiate a workload balance between the two tasks. This ability for faculty to qualify for an unbalanced workload will help UL build its research productivity and profile. However, since the legal context is going to change this year, it appears wise to wait until the law becomes clear before finalizing and implementing UL’s new policies. If the law changes the statute of the teachers (PhD required, teaching/research, evaluation, sabbaticals), and if it would apply also for private universities, mobility between public and private universities could increase.

Although, currently, there is no legal framework for the staff of private institutions, UL uses the framework for the public universities as a model. However its faculty salaries are 20 % lower than in public sector universities in Portugal. The latter deficiency is addressed, at least in part, by several policies to make Lusófona an attractive place to work, giving more flexibility to the staff (e.g. giving them the option of trying out new methods of teaching, promotion of a culture of ‘excellence’).

### 4.3. Mid-and long-term strategies

Understandably, the current differences between the treatment of public and private universities has negative consequences for UL. Changes in government laws and regulations are needed. Among others, equal conditions for course approval (which does not exist at this moment) and increased access to public resources (for social support of students, for research) would acknowledge the efforts UL has been making in trying to be among the best private universities in the country and would create trust and increase credibility for the private sector institutions. Such social recognition is important for UL, its students and its teachers.

UL is pursuing different kinds of selective, ‘focus’ or ‘niche’ strategies at different levels in both teaching (different target groups of undergraduate versus graduate students) and research activities (specific disciplines or cross-disciplines). These may have to be further clarified and integrated.

As a primarily (90%) tuition-fee funded institution, UL’s operations are highly enrolment dependent. As a consequence, the size of the institution’s financial and human resources can dramatically fluctuate, causing instability. For example, last year the focus on attracting the “23 plus” group of mature students produced a dramatic increase in total UL enrolment of about 10 % or 1,000 students. This enrolment surge, together with the university’s widespread implementation of Bologna, put significant pressure on the UL system and compromised the capacity of UL to change quickly in quantity and quality of student services and these change delays may have adversely affected the quality of the teaching environment as well. Greater attention to managing the size of student enrolments, in particular for its small-sized main campus, would reduce institutional fluctuations and would foster a more controlled development of the institution. This matter is addressed in the recommendations section of this report.

Since UL depends on students for its revenues, its value proposition to the students should be right. This means that a high level of quality of the services to students should be achieved and maintained, a difficult task unless demand (enrolment) is properly managed. If the optimal size for the institution were to be reached by having more graduate students and fewer undergraduate students this would be consistent with a strategy of increasing the research profile of UL and, in turn, an enhanced research image would help UL attract graduate students.

However, more research will cost money for hiring more PhDs, for providing enhanced research facilities, and for providing other research supports to faculty and graduate students that would keep UL competitive with other higher education institutions. Funding for research is linked to the funding policies of the government.

In the previous decade, private universities did not experience a significant student recruitment problem because the capacity in the public universities was not sufficient to accommodate student demand for university placements. However, a negative demographic in Portugal has produced a decline in the size of the typical university entrance age student population and the competition among universities for enrolment has increased. It is reasonable to expect that there will be an increase in the university registration or participation rate among the university age cohort that will partially buffer the effects of the negative demographic. Nevertheless, UL is implementing an active and specific recruitment strategy aimed at specific student groups (niches) in the market. The students UL wants to recruit are: good quality Portuguese students (those with high level grades in the national exams whose preferences is to attend a private university or who are unable to get a

placement in a public university), “23 plus” students, niche seekers (in terms of program or discipline), and international students (from Portuguese speaking countries and Erasmus). Most UL students come from Lisbon or the region around Lisbon; 20% to 30 % come from other places.

UL has 150 agreements with Lusófona countries of which 75 % are working and providing mobility opportunities. The office for African countries is responsible for the scholarships. Among the obstacles which prevent mobility are: fear (e.g. equivalences of diplomas, language) and economic problems (e.g. insufficient monetary value of Erasmus scholarship). The issue of lack of opportunity for English language courses at UL concerns Erasmus partners (e.g. Sweden) as well as Lusófona country students. The latter see UL as their window on the world (outside the Lusófona world) in which English is important.

Thus, by way of summary for this section, it is clear that, in some areas, UL has demonstrated significant innovativeness and capacity for change, and it appears to have an attitude that welcomes and embraces change. UL has a definite strategic orientation and has moved decisively in some areas as its environment has changed. It has demonstrated a capability to moving swiftly into new areas of academic programming, and is an early adopter of the Bologna system. UL has a modern central marketing unit, has evolved in its student recruitment approaches, and is well connected to its external community. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, UL needs to further develop its systems for evaluating teaching and research. Furthermore, it faces a major challenge to recruit increased numbers of PhD qualified faculty to create a critical mass of human resources required to serve as a basis for its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle degrees and for establishing UL among the quality international research institutions.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Academic leadership**

#### Governance

- The university should continue with its efforts to secure equal treatment of private and public universities while preserving the flexibility UL now has, as a private university, in hiring and releasing staff; the latter is a crucial flexibility because UL’s major revenue source (90%) is fees from student enrolment and UL is vulnerable to large fluctuations in income.
- The question of the succession of the current leadership needs close follow up and should be well prepared.
- The advisory board which has recently been set up may have the potential to help UL strengthen links with the broader society and may serve as a starting point in structuring a governing board depending on the specification in the expected new law for universities. Regardless of the new law, UL should continue to strengthen its linkages to the external community.

## **5.2. Strategic management and capacity for change**

### Structure:

- Any changes in internal organisation of the university (such as a move from a departmental structure to a faculty/school structure) should lead to higher efficiency and higher quality and should be in line with UL's strategies.

### Size:

- A decision should be taken on the optimal size of the university. There are limits to growth at the main UL campus site and unmanaged growth has its consequences. It is important to manage and stabilise enrolments in order to ensure a quality teaching and learning environment. UL should develop an enrolment management function based on a study of best practices among universities.

### Education:

- The full implementation of the Bologna degree structure of study organisation and the redesign of study programs and curricula according to Bologna should continue. UL should be aware of the Bologna requirement to identify learning outcomes for each study programme.
- The information for students and staff about Bologna reforms should be expanded.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on providing English and other non-Portuguese language courses for incoming Lusófona group/country students and for exchange students and the university should consider developing a formal language policy for the institution.
- The development of the university's European dimension (including greater opportunities for and participation in student and faculty exchanges) should be continued.
- Better follow up and support for specific groups of students, such as the "23 plus" mature student group, should be organised.
- Although UL has made significant progress in implementation a quality assurance system for teaching, the central guidelines for pedagogical matters, issued by the central pedagogical council could be improved by a general guideline and standardized procedure for conducting the student course/teacher evaluation surveys and by improving the content of survey form.

### Research:

- It is important to enhance UL's research profile. A selective research strategy should be pursued, even if it may compromise the objective of becoming a university with all fields of study.
- A balance should be worked out between the associated laboratories strategy and the single umbrella university research institute concept. A dual strategy may serve the university well. This is linked to the size issue. A research institute can play a role here. It can "host" (incubate) small groups. If small research groups do not have such support people may be tempted to look elsewhere.
- The efforts to hire more PhD research staff should continue.

Service to society:

Region and Community Partnerships

- The support of the Lusófona language community should continue by keeping in mind that these students see UL as a door to the rest of the world (and may respond well to increased opportunity to pursue courses in non-Portuguese languages at UL).
- The development of contacts and relationships with external partners in Lisbon city and region should be continued and greater effort should be devoted to strengthening linkages with UL alumni.

Know-how transfer in the broad sense

- Projects with companies and organisations should be continued. They are of great mutual benefit to UL and its students.

### **5.3. Quality management**

Quality Assurance

- European trends in QA in higher education should be looked at and used as much as possible under local circumstances. This involves particularly the trends toward external institutional audits, which become possible when universities evaluate their own activities and programmes in a routine way (with the assistance of external expert panels).
- Although UL has a number of the elements of a teaching quality system in place, it seems that the central guidelines for pedagogical matters issued by the central pedagogical council could be improved by general guidelines and standardized procedures for conducting the student course/teacher evaluation surveys and by improvements to the content of survey questionnaires. Content improvements should include more specific questions related to a specific course and specific teacher; and sufficient space should be allocated for students to add qualitative written comments; students should be asked to provide open ended written comments regarding the specific course and teacher. In addition, a more standardized procedure should be devised (and backed by appropriate policies) to ensure consistent administration of the student course and teacher evaluation questionnaires – this procedure must, in all cases, have the teacher absent from the classroom at the time the questionnaires are handed to, filled out by, and collected from the students, and the completed questionnaires must be sealed and delivered to the department chair or other appropriate administrative authority by someone other than the teacher. Finally, greater effort should be given to having the summarized results of the specific course and teacher evaluations made public on campus.
- The quality assurance system with regard to research performance should be further developed and UL should study and implement best practices on this matter. Researchers should be rewarded for achieving success in publishing in highly recognized international journals as a means to strengthen UL's research profile nationally and internationally; whereas UL's own journals can provide an "incubator" outlet for increasing exposure to UL research, these journals will take time to achieve international status and are unlikely to soon qualify as major international journals.

## **6. ENVOI**

The evaluation team was impressed by the firm determination of the Rector and General Manager to sustain and enhance an effort to change the traditional public perception of UL as a private university and by their determination to position the university among distinguished universities in Portugal. The team observed that there is common support given by a number of dedicated academics, administrators, managers, and students to such effort. Mutual trust and belief in the university mission are among the highest values of UL.

The UL is determined to implement the necessary changes under difficult circumstances, moving away from a traditional view and approaches. The evaluation team was also impressed by the student's enthusiastic and open attitude showing that they are highly adaptable and will be readily open for change if the proper environment is created.

The evaluation team is convinced that the UL is collecting the ingredients appropriate for successful change that will strengthen its position in the Portuguese higher education system. The team hopes that this report will help UL implement the necessary changes and achieve a sustainable future.