



**INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DO PORTO**

***FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT***

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## **1. The place of follow-up in the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP)**

Since 1998, the European University Association (EUA) has offered to its member institutions, as an extension to its Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), the possibility of a follow-up to the initial IEP. Instituto Politécnico do Porto (IPP) invited EUA to make an institutional evaluation in 2006. The preliminary and the main visit took place in November 2006 and March 2007 respectively. The IEP evaluation team consisted of Professor Bent Schmidt-Nielsen, Former Rector of the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark, chair of the Team, Professor Robin Farquhar, Former Rector of Carleton University and the University of Winnipeg, Canada, Secretary-General Luc Van de Velde, Flemish Council of Institutions of Higher Education, Brussels, Belgium and Associate Professor Airi Rovio-Johansson, secretary of the Team, Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The evaluation report was presented to IPP in June 2007.

Professor José de Freitas Santos requested a follow-up evaluation in December 2008. Due to the elections of a new President and management at IPP in February 2010 the follow-up visit was postponed and took place from 10 to 13 October 2010.

The IEP Team for the follow-up 2010 visit consisted of:

- Professor Bent Schmidt-Nielsen, Former Rector of the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark, chair,
- Professor Ivan Leban, former Vice-Rector, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- Student representative Alina Gavra, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania and
- Professor Airi Rovio-Johansson, Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden, coordinator.

## 2. The follow-up process and the follow-up report (IPP, 2010a)

The IEP follow-up consists of one visit (two and a half days), interviews and an oral report during the last day of the visit followed at a later stage by a short written report.

The aim of this follow-up process is to evaluate IPP's capacity for change and to contribute to the dynamics of its development. The distinctive features of the follow-up process are:

- (1) a strong emphasis on the follow-up phase as a self-evaluation
- (2) a peer-review approach
- (3) an European and an international perspective
- (4) a support to improvement and
- (5) a focus on the institution as a unit.

It is a voluntary process without a standardised solution or imperative proposals, considering external and internal constraints, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The rationale is that a second visit can assist the institution to evaluate the progress it has made since the original review in 2007 and result in recommendations of strategies to develop and improve further the quality of activities at the IPP.

The IPP's *follow-up report* (FUR, IPP, 2010a) was prepared by a working group appointed by the President, Professor Rosário Gambôa, and the management of IPP, representing all Schools, students, academics and administrative staff. This FUR (self-evaluation report) gave an excellent overview of the IPP and was comprehensive in its analysis of *Strengths* and *Weaknesses* as well as its *Lever for future changes* (FUR, page 10-11). In the self evaluation report presented to us we also saw the Strategic Plan for 2008-2012 (FUR, page 57).

We also received the Presidential *Action Programme* (AP, IPP, 2010b) from January 2010. This paper, we found, was valuable background for further development. The paper covers in great detail all aspects of IPP. It gives a description of action lines and measures, but it does not give a clear implementation plan with precise milestones and an indication of a monitoring process in relation to reaching these milestones. We understand that the purpose of the paper was not to be a detailed description for the future activities. So far, we know that the AP paper has been presented and discussed by the members of the board.

We see the description of the mission and vision for IPP in FUR (2010a) and a long term strategic plan in AP (2010b). On basis of these documents IPP has formulated goals and a new strategic plan. We see the strategic goals as rather general and without a clear basis for making priorities in key areas. It is also difficult to see the AP (2010b) as a tool for prioritising goals, resource allocation and setting milestones for activities, i.e., as a rationale for strategic planning.

We have noted the commitment of the new Presidency to implement a shared dialogue and an organisation based on shared values and corporate leadership and we want to stimulate and compliment this development. The follow-up Team acknowledges the steps already taken by the Presidency and the management to prioritise and enhance the activities set down in the FUR (2010a) and the AP (2010b).

### 3. IEP 2007 and follow-up 2010

In the past few years, IPP and other higher education institutions (HEI) in Portugal have been exposed to dramatic changes. “The overall reform process was launched in autumn 2005 through an institutional assessment of higher education system and its institutions, involving organisations of recognised experience and standing such as the Organisation for Economic-Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and European University Association (EUA)” (FHEQ Portugal, 2009, p. 3). In 2006 OECD presented its report, an overall evaluation of the higher education system, and ENQA presented an evaluation of the system of quality assurance of higher education and accreditation practices in Portugal. The EUA/IEP evaluation started late autumn 2006 and the report was presented in June 2007 (EUA Evaluation Report, 2007).

New legislations for Higher Education Institutions in Portugal, a new university law (Law 62/2007) and new career development law (Law 12-A/2008), were launched in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Together with present national economy and economical difficulties new challenges for universities and polytechnics were obvious.

The development taking place at IPP between the EUA/IEP Evaluation in 2007 and the follow-up in 2010 are acknowledged and appreciated by the follow-up Team. However, we also acknowledge the very good position of IPP within polytechnics in Portugal in Iberoamericano rankings. In particular we would like to offer the following observations and comments, which we consider relevant for the aim of this follow-up process.

#### 3.1. Leadership: IPP and Schools

New European and international challenges have to be reflected in internal management and leadership. For a young institution like IPP this leadership has to take into account the historical development of the institute: an institution based on 7 active Schools – some with a long historical tradition and established well before IPP itself - some new Schools owing their present status to the establishment of IPP.

A stronger IPP – an institution able to cope with the challenges of 2010 and the future – must be developed on the basis of a sincere and shared dialogue between the President, the central leadership, the Academic Council, and the Schools. This dialogue must be carried out in respect of the autonomy of Schools as given by law and in existing statutes. At the same time the development shall be in line with tendencies found throughout Europe to further strengthen the identity of IPP and making it an attractive partner in society and making it known for its quality and accountability.

The key performance indicators give figures for expected development in basic parameters such as student training programmes, distribution of graduates within different fields and qualifications of teaching staff. However, we do not find a description on how to implement and how to monitor progress in the *Strategic Plan 2008-2012* (IPP, 2010a, p. 58-61).

We recommend that IPP, on the background of a realistic and clear mission statement and vision for future development of IPP:

- review its strategic planning, its implementation based on precise milestones, and a formulated monitoring programme
- base the plans on a broad discussion of shared values at IPP
- base these also on a well defined background of various data and
- create a sense of ownership among the staff throughout IPP
- and finally: broadly communicate the mission statement and vision internally and externally.

*To sum up: We recommend IPP review the Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and its implementation as well as the possibility to create a state of ownership based on: transparency, shared values, shared data collection and shared information.*

### **3.2. Management**

Following an intense discussion on leadership, strategic planning and development it is important also to focus on institutional management (management v. leadership). Having participated in university evaluations throughout Europe we had (in our mind) to translate the structure of IPP into an organisational structure of European universities. In this translation we had to remember the strong feeling of School autonomy based on the historical development of IPP: *a central organisation and a structure with 7 Schools – each having a structure and support offices which could be similar to independent institutions themselves*. However, we find that this structure is unnecessarily complicated. We find duplications between schools where a structure based on shared values could contribute to increase efficiency and effectiveness. We do not find structures geared for sharing facilities, equipment, human resources or student services.

It would be easy to accuse us of tending to centralise activities or to focus on an administration with a highly centralised structure: *That is not our intention, but if we were to try to point to possible reduction in managerial costs and better use of existing facilities and resources, we would rethink the management structure of IPP in the light of shared resources*. These considerations would, in our view, also be valid when we are discussing support structures, facilities, and staff and student services.

*We therefore recommend IPP to review:*

- Its organisation structure
- Its economy
- Its support structures concerning the use of facilities, teaching staff and educational offers to students internally and externally

### **3.3. Available resources**

The income structure of IPP should be analysed, and attention given to self-generated income is important in a period with declining state budgets (FUR 2010a, Appendix 27). The quoted self-

generated income should be discussed and a clear description of total income and expenditure should be presented in terms of all activities: administration, management, education and research.

We are aware of the difficult economic situation of HEIs in Portugal and IPP in particular. With this in mind, we admire the firm statement made in the FUR: "However economic limitations cannot and should not be an impediment for IPP to improve the quality of its educational offer" (FUR 2010a, page 2). Maybe this could be considered as an easy statement to make but difficult to follow. It shows the determination of IPP to stand up to and try to cope with external challenges.

*We therefore recommend IPP review:*

- the infrastructure of its facilities
- its available equipment
- Human resources
- Student services

### **3.4. Quality management**

We highly appreciate the initiatives taken by IPP in order to stimulate quality management (QM) in a pro-active way. The regulations concerning teachers' career development shows an awareness of the challenges to which IPP is exposed, e.g., *specialists, teachers' evaluation, job description, guest teaching staff, sabbaticals and seniority*.

The programme for qualifying teachers in relation to PhD requirements has been described to us. During our interviews the academic staff recognised the support of this development as very beneficial to active teachers. We fully support the development of this programme, and we hope it will be possible to find the financial means to pursue it at full speed.

We have learnt that the Bologna transitions will be stimulated on the basis of a subcommittee under the Academic Council. We support this activity and we urge IPP to create common rules for student rights and equal treatment of students across IPP. Students are, in general, satisfied with the overall quality of teaching, especially at the faculty of education, and we support the dissemination of experiences from this faculty to the Schools concerning course and programme evaluation. Students are satisfied with the social services, but point out the lack of sufficient number of scholarships, computers and study places at the library for full-time students and for part-time students.

Research enhancement and assessment is important and should be based on a well developed database giving a full description of projects, publications, invested resources and results.

*We therefore recommend IPP review:*

- Teacher qualifications and evaluations
- PhD programmes addressed to teachers at IPP

- Bologna transitions
- Students rights and equal treatment
- Research enhancement and assessment

### **3.5. Quality assessment**

A subcommittee under the Academic Council has been established with the aim of supporting common rules for Quality Assessment (QA). It is our hope that the two subcommittees will draw upon the expertise that already exists at different schools and not only reflect presidential intervention at IPP and school level.

In this process it is of great importance that student involvement is clear and that the development process is based on firm and precise data e.g., on students, graduates and research.

*In conclusion we recommend:*

- Further development of an integrated quality assessment and quality management system
- Promotion of best practice from internal, national and international sources, e.g.,
  - School of Education
  - A3ES
  - EUA Quality Culture
  - European Standards and Guidelines

### **3.6. Networking**

Through our own interviews and through FUR, we have seen a devoted commitment to community service and we fully support this commitment. In a very fruitful discussion with external stakeholders we noted a deep appreciation for the collaboration between IPP, IPP-Schools and the community around IPP. Many universities suffering from the 'Ivory Tower Syndrome' could learn from IPP.

We admire the interest shown by external members of the General Council and the devotion expressed by the president of the General Council. On the other hand we also feel that the General Council will be occupied with so many strategic discussions that the support to cooperation between IPP and external stakeholders cannot and should not rest only upon the General Council and its external members. Other structures (e.g., external advisory board recommended in the EUA report of 2007) should be considered.

*We recommend IPP review:*

- Its service to community
- Closer cooperation with external stakeholders
- National institutional networking with University of Porto and other universities and Polytechnics

- Traceability of graduates
- Establishment of an Alumni Network
- International networking concerning (a) Student/teacher mobility and (b) Research

### **3.7. Capacity for change**

In conclusion we have looked on what we see as the IPP's capacity for change. Our question is: *Is the institution able to cope with all the challenges it has met and challenges it will meet in the future?*

*We are sure that the new President and the management of IPP are:*

- *Aware of national and regional constraints imposed by*
  - The competitive environment
  - Legal restrictions
  - Economic difficulties
- *Aware of the enthusiasm and commitment expressed by*
  - Leadership
  - Staff and students

## 4. Summary of recommendations

### 1. In terms of Leadership

A new *Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014* must be developed for the future of IPP. This new long term strategic plan needs to be firmly linked to key decision-making within IPP. In order to achieve this, the IEP Team recommends that a new *Action Plan* incorporating priorities, a time schedule, resource requirements, and a resource availability schedule should be linked to *the Strategic Plan 2010-2014* as well as a state of ownership based on: *transparency, shared values, shared data collection and shared information*. Student involvement must be enhanced in governance since they are the key stakeholders of IPP. This is the rationale for future development.

### 2. In terms of Management

The President and the Vice-Rectors are unambiguously the locus of strategic management and they play an important role which can be further enhanced. We recommend IPP review its organisational structure as well as the support structures concerning the use of facilities, teaching staff and educational offers to students internally and externally. We also recommend the Presidency review the decentralised budget within the organisation related to a new *Action Plan 2010-2014* since funding for research and teaching must be diversified in the future and based on full cost analyses. The Presidency should consider the possibility of developing an Action Plan for financial management and fundraising.

### 3. In terms of available resources

We also recommend the Presidency review the infrastructure of facilities, available equipment, human resources and student services. As mentioned above, strategic planning must be focused on the long term strategic development of IPP and avoid short term problems and activities, since economic restrictions will be in place for the foreseeable future. Therefore, a clearly defined managerial system with core responsibilities on each level of IPP in the coming *Action Plan 2010-2014*, will strengthen set priorities and support the development of an effective infrastructure.

### 4. In terms of quality management

The president has the overall responsibility for the institutional policy of quality management. This work includes responsibility for teacher qualifications and evaluation as well as the PhD programmes addressed to teachers at IPP; students rights and equal treatment; and enhancement of research and assessment of research. The work of the Vice-Rector for Quality Development must be further supported and developed. There is still work to be done at IPP in order to develop a quality culture. The team acknowledge the work IPP already has done related to the Bologna system.

### 5. In terms of quality assessment

Quality management must be centrally organised and supported by a quality assessment system for the entire IPP, since it affects every activity, such as teaching, research,

administration, student services, internal and external communication, internationalisation, and IPP's reputation nationally and internationally. Further development is needed in order to promote best practice from internal, national and international sources, e.g., School of Education, A3ES, EUA Quality Culture and European Standards and Guidelines. IPP also needs a database for all activities in teaching and research related to quality assessments, for student and staff information as well as for information and communication internally and externally.

#### **6. In terms of networking**

IPP acts in a national competitive market and has the ambition to offer a service to the community in terms of a highly qualified work force, knowledge transfer and community service, i.e., life-long learning and continuing education opportunities. At the same time IPP wants to develop and strengthen its relations with stakeholders. Most academic institutions are interested in finding international partners and networking is one such way of doing so and to develop exchange possibilities for student/teacher mobility and research. The IEP Team acknowledges IPP's extensive research network, however such networks need continuously to be strengthened. Other networks need to be stabilised such as national and institutional networks with the University of Porto and other universities and Polytechnics. An important target group for networking is also former students and graduates. IEP Team recommends IPP establish an Alumni Network.

#### **7. In terms of capacity for change (3.7)**

The Follow-up Report (2010a, p. 57) stated the Mission statement of the IPP and its values. A clear and well defined mission statement is an important prerequisite for strategic planning, capacity for change and the ability to adapt to new prerequisites and working conditions. In this future work, the IEP Team recommends IPP (a) be aware of national and regional legal constraints in a competitive environment and economic difficulties; (b) and pay attention to the enthusiasm and commitment expressed by IPP leadership, staff and students, which we met during our Follow-up visit.

## **5. Envoi**

The IEP Follow-up Team wants to extend sincere thanks to President Professor Rosário Gambôa, and many other academics, administrative staff and students as well as external representatives for their warm reception and generous hospitality during our visit. We extend special thanks to the Vice-Rector Professor Cristina Pinto da Silva, the liaison person and her support staff for their helpful efforts and careful attention to all our logistical arrangements.

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