

ACTIVITY REPORT
(Management Report)
2011

1. Introduction

The Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education, also simply called Agency, has fulfilled its third year of existence in 2011. Over this third year of existence, the activity of the Agency has focused on the implementation of the first formal assessment/accreditation processes for those study cycles that in the preliminary accreditation analysis have not provided enough evidence that they complied with the minimum quality standards; on the definition of the timetable and organisation of the first regular accreditation cycle that will take place from 2012 to 2016; on the implementation of the certification system for internal quality assurance systems by selecting the first institutions for the initial experimental phase; on the selection of students for the experimental participation as members of the External Assessment Commissions.

Over this period the second cycle of previous accreditations of new programme proposals presented by institutions for 2011/12 was completed, and the submission of new study cycle proposals by institutions for 2012/13 was also completed. The Agency has also published in its INTERNET site the full list of all study programmes with preliminary accreditation.

The legislation determines that the Agency will be responsible for developing studies and analyses of the higher education system, namely about the quality assurance component. Therefore the Agency has promoted a number of studies, to be completed in 2012, addressing problems such as the network of higher education institutions, the training efficiency of higher education institutions, the academic staff of higher education institutions and the employability of graduates. These studies are made with the direct participation of several research centres and higher education institutions, such as ICS (Instituto de Ciências Sociais), CIPES (Centro de Estudos de Políticas de Ensino Superior) and ISEG (Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão).

As already referred in previous reports, the option to use an electronic platform was fundamental for the success of the whole operation of the assessment/accreditation system. One of the tasks performed in 2011 consisted in ensuring that the A3ES data basis was compatible with the GPEAR1 data basis.

2. Previous accreditation of new study cycles de novos ciclos de estudos

The institutions have submitted 431 proposals for new study cycles to be initiated in the academic 2011/12. The results of the accreditation exercise are summarised in Table 1:

Table 1 – Results of the previous accreditation of new study cycles, 2011/12

Previous accreditation of new study cycles submitted 2010		
Submitted proposals:	428	
With a CA decision:	425	99%
Favourable:	176	41%
Favourable with conditions:	44	10%
Unfavourable:	205	48%
Decisions in disagreement with CAEs:	13	3%
In favour of IES:	6	1%
Against the IES:	7	2%
Revisions:	22	10%
University Education:	261	
With a CA decision:	258	99%
Favourable:	112	43%
Favourable with conditions:	29	11%
Unfavourable:	117	45%
Decisions in disagreement with CAEs:	9	4%
In favour of IES:	4	2%
Against the IES:	5	2%
Polytechnic Education:	167	
Com decisão do CA:	167	100%
Favourable:	64	38%
Favourable with conditions:	15	9%
Unfavourable:	88	53%
Decisions in disagreement with CAEs:	4	2%
In favour of IES:	2	1%
Against the IES:	2	1%

The deadline for submission of proposals for accreditation of new study cycles for the academic year 2012/2013 was October 2011. 293 new proposals were submitted (see Table 2) which represents a decrease of 32% relative to the previous year. It is possible this decrease already reflects the system's stabilisation once completed the implementation of the Bologna process, namely in what concerns the proposal of new masters.

Table 2 – New study cycles submitted for accreditation (2011)

New study cycles submitted for accreditation	294
University Higher Education	184
Public university education	120
Associations of institutions	2
Private university education	61
Associations of institutions	1
Association of public with private university institutions	3
Polytechnic Higher Education	110
Public polytechnic education	81
Associations of institutions	4
Private polytechnic education	25
Associations of institutions	0
Association of public university and polytechnic institutions	2
Association of private university and polytechnic institutions	1
Association of public university with private polytechnic institutions	1
Submissions for the degree of Licenciado (1st cycle)	72
Public university education	21
Private university education	20
Public polytechnic education	19
Private polytechnic education	11
Association of public and private university education	1
Submissions for the degree of Masters	200
Public university education	82
Private university education	37
Public polytechnic education	62
Private polytechnic education	14
Association of private university and polytechnic institutions	1
Association of public university and polytechnic institutions	2
Association of public and private university institutions	1
Association of public university and private polytechnic	1
Submissions for the degree of Doctor	22
Public university education	17
Private university education	4
Association of public and private university institutions	1

3. Preliminary accreditation of study cycles already in operation

As planned, the deadline for submission of demands for preliminary accreditation of study programmes already in operation was April 2010. Using the data provided by the institutions it was possible to build a data basis including every institution and every study cycle. The analysis of the data basis has shown there were 776 study cycles that apparently did not comply with the minimum accreditation standards. These results were individually discussed with each institution. Following the discussions, the institutions decided voluntarily to close down an additional number of 335 study cycles (see Table 3), while the remaining 421 study cycles were subjected to a more detailed accreditation process including a visit of a team of external experts.

The accreditation process of those 421 study cycles, to be completed in 2012, as also allowed for some minor adjustments of the self-evaluation and evaluation guidelines. Therefore this process has allowed for the improvement of the guidelines to be used in the first regular cycle of accreditations.

Table 3 – Study cycles in operation submitted for preliminary accreditation

		1st cycles	Integrated Masters	2nd cycles	3rd cycles	Total
Study cycles submitted	Total	1 669	138	2 004	568	4 379
Discontinued study cycles	Uni.	76	1	146	36	259
	Poly.	38	-	38	-	76
	Total	114	1	184	36	335
Study cycles for accreditation	Uni.	125	8	90	59	282
	Poly.	85	-	54	-	139
	Total	210	8	144	59	421
Study cycles with preliminary accreditation	Total	1 345	129	1 676	473	3 623

However, it can be seen that the higher education system is still undergoing a transformation dynamic as institutions continue to adapt their offer of study cycles in order to comply with the minimum quality standards and to increase the institutional efficiency to face the present funding restrictions. At present, the Agency INTERNET

page lists 3541 study cycles with preliminary accreditation and 418 new study cycles with accreditation, 202 of those relative to 2010 and 216 relative to 2011.

4. The first regular accreditation cycle

As planned the first regular cycle of accreditations of all study programmes will take place between 2012 and 2016. This process will be used for 3541 study cycles as detailed in Table 4. In 2017, after completion of this first regular cycle, the Agency's data basis will be updated.

Table 4 – Annual allocation of the regular accreditation of study cycles*

<i>Year</i>	<i>1st cycles</i>	<i>Integrated Masters</i>	<i>2nd cycles</i>	<i>3rd cycles</i>	<i>Total</i>
2012	276	10	264	41	591
2013	285	27	334	105	751
2014	219	34	397	136	786
2015	359	6	362	72	799
2016	180	50	268	116	614
Total	1 319	127	1 625	470	3 541

* Data collected in 31 January 2012.

The first regular accreditation cycle will be made by training areas (code CNAEF) so that there will be a single visit for the accreditation of all the study programmes in each area for each institution. This strategy will strongly reduce the operational costs. It is interesting to stress that over the period given to institutions to check the planning of the accreditations, they have informed the Agency that an additional number of 82 study programmes of those 3623 that were had obtained preliminary accreditation were discontinued, reducing to 3541 (Table 3) the total number of study cycles.

All institutions must fill the self-evaluation guidelines until the end of April 2012, when the cycle of visits will be initiated.

5. Internal Quality Assurance Systems

As it has been referred in previous activity plans, the Agency adopts the principle that the responsibility of ensuring the quality of education is first of all a responsibility of each individual higher education institution. Therefore, each institution must implement the structures and internal procedures more adequate to promote and guarantee this quality. The role of the Agency will mainly consist in performing audits aiming at certifying the internal quality assurance procedures of each institution.

The report *Análise Comparativa dos Processos Europeus para a Avaliação e Certificação de Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade*, was developed in 2010 with that objective in mind. The report was widely discussed with the higher education institutions and their representative organisations. Following those debates the Agency has defined a set of referentials for the internal quality assurance systems. These referentials were formulated as non prescriptive propositions, describing the main characteristics of a well-developed and consolidated internal quality assurance system. These referentials were not conceived to be considered as absolute standards. Instead they aim at providing guidance to help institutions in developing their own internal quality assurance systems, preferably starting from mechanisms and procedures they already have and matching the profile and specific needs of each institution.

Starting from this initial work the Agency has developed a Project of guidelines for the audit process of internal quality assurance systems. This Project was presented and discussed with the organisations representing the higher education institutions in the first semester of 2011 before being formally approved and published in the Agency's site¹.

As planned higher education institutions were invited to declare their interest in participating in the first experimental exercise using the audit model, to be developed in 2012. Until the deadline, set for 30 November, 14 institutions declared their interest but it was found that only five already had a quality manual or equivalent document, formally approved by the academic authorities and a minimum of one year of effective use. Those five institutions were selected for the exercise and were invited to participate in an workshop in preparation for the audit process.

In the meantime the Guidelines for Self-Evaluation were completed and approved by the Administration Council. The Guidelines are available in the A3ES INTERNET page and will be filled by the participating institutions in the Agency's electronic platform until 31 May 2012.

6. The participation of students in accreditation

In 2010 the Agency has promoted a debate of the report "Student Participation in the Assessment of Portuguese Higher Education Institutions: a contribute for its

¹ Auditoria dos Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade nas Instituições de Ensino Superior – Manual para o Processo de Auditoria, A3ES, Julho de 2011.

definition”, which was also appreciated by the Advisory Council. Following this debate it was decided to implement an experimental exercise by including students in the External Review Teams, provided there was a voluntary agreement of the assessed institutions. The results of this experimental exercise will be used to make a decision about the participation of students, once the assessment/accreditation system becomes stable.

Therefore, the Agency in 2011 opened a tender for recruiting students for the external review teams, 211 proposals being received. Due to the nature of the study cycles that will initiate their assessment/accreditation processes in 2012 and 2013, and as the students must have training in the area of the study cycles to be assessed/accredited, 56 students with this characteristic were selected from the initial list of 211 students. These students had training sessions (one session was held in Porto and another in Lisbon) and are waiting for their integration in the External Review Teams that will start operating in May 2012.

7. Staff management

Three years have passed since the Agency initiated its operations. This initial period has allowed for a more consistent vision on the perspectives for the Agency’s future development. Aiming at clarifying the terms of reference for the Professional career structure of its permanent employees the Administration Council has decided to open a tender among specialised firms to collect proposals for the elaboration of a Project for a framework regulating both the career and the discipline rules of the Agency’s staffs.

After analysing the different proposals received the Administration Council has decided to prefer the Deloitte proposal, that presented the project “Programa Evoluir RH”, including a component of “analysis and qualification of functions”, another on “Professional careers” and at last a third component on the design of a “code of ethics and Professional behaviour”.

The documents already produced by Deloitte received the preliminary approval of the Administration Council and were made available to all the Agency’s personnel. Once the personnel presents its contributions, the Administration Council will analyse them and produce a final version that will be implemented in 2012.

8. Scientific Council

The Agency’s Scientific Council held its annual meeting on the 2nd February 2011 at the Agency’s headquarters. The report of the meeting is presented as Annex I and as agreed with the Administration Council it deals mainly with the implementation of internal quality assurance systems.

9. Internationalisation

The Agency has continued to develop activities aiming at promoting its internationalisation, namely by participating in activities promoted by ENQA. In 2011 the following activities have taken place:

- 1) Visit to the Spanish Agency for Quality Assessment, ANECA – Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación.
- 2) Participation in the Conference “Quality Assurance: Foundation for the Future”, organised by INQAAH, Madrid, 3-7 de April 2011.
- 3) Participation in the Conference “Contemporary Threats and Opportunities”, organised by the Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum, Bologna, 15-16 September 2011.
- 4) Participation in the Seminar “European Seminar on QA in e-learning”, organised by UNESCO, Paris, 17 June 2011.
- 5) Participation in the ENQA Seminar on Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), Helsinki, 16-17 June, under the theme Learning from each other – using benchmarking to develop IQA.
- 6) Participation in the European Quality Assurance Forum, Quality and Trust: at the heart of what we do, Antwerp University, Artesis University College, 17-19 November.
- 7) Participation in the Annual Conference of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavik, 23-25 June.
- 8) Participation in the Annual EAIR (European Association for International Education) Conference, Bridging cultures, promoting diversity: higher education in search of an equilibrium, Warsaw, 28-31 August.
- 9) Participation in the third RESUP Conference, Reforming Higher Education and Research, Paris, 27-29 January 2011.
- 10) Participation in the Conference on the Future of Higher Education – Bologna process researchers’ conference, Bucharest, 17-19 October.
- 11) Participation (invited) in the Conference Aseguramiento de la Calidad: Políticas Públicas Y Gestión Universitaria, Buenos Aires, 15-16 Setembro.
- 12) Participation (invited) Empower European Universities, Maastricht, 22 November.
- 13) Participation (invited) in the meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group, Brussels, 16 November.
- 14) Participation in the Sixth meeting of the AHELO Group of National Experts, OCDE, Paris, 28-29 March 2011.
- 15) Participation in the Seventh meeting of the AHELO Group of National Experts, OCDE, Paris, 01 July 2011.
- 16) Participation (invited) in the Conference of the Rede Ibero-Americana de Investigação em Políticas de Educação (RIAIPE), financed by the ALFA

programme, 22 March 2011, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologia, em Lisboa.

Sónia Cardoso is a member of the Advisory Board of the ESU (European Students Union) project, Quest for Quality for Students – QUEST (2010-2012).

The Agency also participates in the IBAR research Project funded by the European Union, on the analysis of implementation barriers to the European Standards and Guidelines. For this Project the Agency has produced several reports on the Portuguese case, namely Survey of Internal Quality Assurance Systems; Quality and Access and Quality and students. These reports are case studies of four Portuguese higher education institutions.

9. Publications

Books:

1. Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (2011). *Higher Education in Portugal, 1974-2009. A nation, a generation*. Dordrecht: Springer.
2. Sérgio Santos (2011). *Análise Comparativa dos Processos Europeus para a Avaliação e Certificação dos Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade*. Lisboa: A3ES.
3. Sérgio Santos (2011). *Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade nas Agências de Avaliação e Acreditação*. Lisboa: A3ES.

Papers:

1. Veiga, A., Rosa, M.J. and Amaral, A. (2011), "Understanding the impacts of quality assessment: an exploratory use of cultural theory", *Quality in Higher Education*, 17.1, 53-67.
2. Dias, D., Marinho-Araújo, C., Almeida, L. and Amaral, A. (2011), "The democratisation of access and success in higher education: the case of Portugal and Brazil", *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 23.1, 23-42.
3. Sá, C., Tavares, D., Justino, E. and Amaral, A. (2011), "Higher Education (related) choices in Portugal: joint decisions on institution type and leaving home", *Studies in Higher Education*, 36.6, 689-703.
4. Rosa, M.J., Cardoso, S., Dias, D. and Amaral, A. (2011), "The EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme: an account of institutional best practices", *Quality in Higher Education*, 17.3, 369-386.
5. Veiga, A. and Amaral, A. (2011), "Uma interpretação do olhar da História sobre Bolonha", *História, Revista da FLUP*, IV série, Vol.1, 29-40.
6. Cardoso, S. and Machado dos Santos, S. (2011). "Students in Higher Education

Governance: The Portuguese case”, *Tertiary Education and Management*, 17.3, 233-246.

7. Machado-Taylor, M.L., Meira Soares, V., Ferreira, J.B. and Gouveia, O. (2011). “What factors of satisfaction and motivation are affecting the development of the academic career in Portuguese higher education institutions? *Revista de Administração Pública* 45(1): 33-44.
8. Machado-Taylor, M.L., Brites, R., Magalhães, A. and Sá, M.J. (2011). “Satisfaction with Higher Education: critical data for student development. *European Journal of Education*, 46.3, 415-432.
9. Cardoso, S., Carvalho, T. and Santiago, R. (2011). “From Students to Consumers: reflections on the marketization of Portuguese higher education”. *European Journal of Education*, 46.2, 271-284.
10. Magalhães, A., Santiago, R., Ribeiro, F., Sousa, S., Machado, M. L., Tavares, Or., (2011), “A Criação da área Europeia de Ensino Superior e o Impacto das Reformas Curricular e da Governação”, *Fórum Português de Administração Educacional*, no7/8, 5-16.
11. Machado-Taylor, M. L. (2011). Complex adaptive systems: A trans-cultural undercurrent obstructing change in higher education. *International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, 3(2), 9-19.
12. Machado, M. L., Meira Soares, V., Brites, R., Brites Ferreira, J., Farhangmehr, M., & Gouveia, O. (2011). Uma Análise da Satisfação e da Motivação dos Docentes no Ensino Superior Português. *Revista Lusófona de Educação*, no 17, 167-181.
13. Machado-Taylor, M. L., & Gouveia, O. M. R. (2011). Academic Satisfaction as an Amplifier of the Organizational Intellectual Capital. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 32(32), 58-71.
14. Dias, D., Sá, M. J., & Machado-Taylor, M. L. (2011). The faculty conjugated as feminine: a portrait of Portuguese academia. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, DOI:10.1080/0309877X.2011.643776, 1-17.
15. Machado, M. L., Meira Soares, V., Brites, R., Brites Ferreira, J., & Gouveia, O. M. R. *A look to academics job satisfaction and motivation in Portuguese higher education institutions. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 29, 1715-1724. ISSN: 1877-0428 (ELSEVIER)

Book chapters

1. Amaral, A. (2011), ERA and the Bologna process: implementation problems and the human resource factor, in Avveduto, S. (ed.), *Convergence or Differentiation. Human Resources for Research in a Changing European Scenario*, Napoli, Scripta Web, pp. 13-54.
2. Cardoso, S., Rosa, M.J., Tavares, D. and Amaral, A. (2011), “The increasing

role of market forces in HE: is the EUA institutional evaluation programme playing a role?" In Teixeira, P. and Dill D. (Eds), *Public Vices, Private Virtues?*, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, pp. 91-110.

3. Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (2011), "Introduction: On Exceptionalism: The Nation, a Generation and Higher Education, 1974-2009." In Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (eds). *Higher Education in Portugal 1974-2009. A Nation, a Generation*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 1-46.
4. Veiga, A. and Amaral, A. (2011), "The Impacts of Bologna and the Lisbon Agenda." In Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (eds). *Higher Education in Portugal 1974-2009. A Nation, a Generation*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 265-284.
5. Machado-Taylor, M.L. and Cerdeira, L. (2011). "The Rise of the Administrative Estate in Portuguese Higher Education." In Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (eds). *Higher Education in Portugal 1974-2009. A Nation, a Generation*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 353-381.
6. Fonseca, M. (2011). "The Student Estate." Neave, G. and Amaral, A. (eds). *Higher Education in Portugal 1974-2009. A Nation, a Generation*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 383-415.
7. Machado-Taylor, M. L. (2011). Planeamento Estratégico Aplicado às Instituições de Ensino Superior. In B. Cabrito e V. J. Chaves (orgs.), *Políticas de Financiamento e Acesso da Educação Superior no Brasil e em Portugal - Tendências actuais*. 1 ed. Lisboa, Portugal: Educa – Organizações, pp. 297-317.
8. Carvalho, T., & Machado, M. L. (2011). Senior Management in Higher Education. In Barbara Bagilhole, B., & White, Kate (Eds.), *Gender, Power and Management: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Confereces and dissemination seminars

1. Recent trends in European Higher Education: Bologna, the Lisbon strategy and economic crisis. Closure of the UNESCO catedra, Universidade Politécnica de Barcelona. Barcelona, 19 January 2011. Alberto Amaral
2. Participação dos Estudantes na Avaliação das Instituições de Ensino Superior Portuguesas: um contributo para a sua definição. January 2011, Instituto Politécnico do Porto. Sónia Cardoso.
3. EUROSTUDENT IV Final Conference, 15-16 June, Copenhagen, Denmark, Closing The Gap – New data on the social dimension on higher education in Europe, with a public debate on Danish higher education in the light of EUROSTUDENT. Orlanda Tavares and Amélia Veiga.
4. Third RESUP Conference, Reforming Higher Education and Research, Paris, 27-29 January 2011. Higher education reform in Portugal: an historical and

comparative perspective of the new legal framework for public universities, Alberto Amaral, Orlanda Tavares and Cristina Santos.

5. Third RESUP Conference, Reforming Higher Education and Research, Paris, 27-29 January 2011. "Higher Education Accreditation in Portugal: Year zero 2010. Madalena Fonseca.
6. Third RESUP Conference, Reforming Higher Education and Research, Paris, 27-29 January 2011. Higher Education Reforms: reflections on academic job satisfaction and motivation. Machado-Taylor, M. L.; Meira Soares, V.; Brites, R.; Ferreira, J. B.; Farhangmehr, M.; Peterson, M.; Gouveia, O.
7. Federação Académica do Porto, March 2011, Guimarães. A Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior. Alberto Amaral.
8. Rede Ibero-Americana de Investigação em Políticas de Educação (RIAIPE), Universidade Lusoófona de Humanidades e Tecnologia, Lisboa, 22 March de 2011. Bologna and the moment of truth? Amélia Veiga.
9. CESPUI, May 2011. A Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior. Alberto Amaral.
10. Participação dos Estudantes na Avaliação das Instituições de Ensino Superior Portuguesas: um contributo para a sua definição. May 2011, Federação Académica do Porto. Soónia Cardoso.
11. History of European Universities, University of Lisbon. The massification pathway in Portugal: from elite universities to higher/tertiary education. Madalena Fonseca.
12. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavik, Iceland, 23-25 June. The Perceptions of Portuguese Academics on the Purposes of Quality Assessment. Maria João Rosa, Cláudia Sarrico and Alberto Amaral.
13. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavick, Iceland 23-25 June 2011. Enrolment choices in Portuguese higher education: do students behave as consumers?, Orlanda Tavares and Sónia Cardoso.
14. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavick, Iceland, 23-25 June 2011. Enrolment choices in Portuguese higher education: do students behave as consumers? Tavares, O. & Cardoso, S.
15. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavick, Iceland, 23-25 June 2011. Meta-governance in the Portuguese context: the cases of the curricular reforms. António Magalhães, Amélia Veiga, Filipa Ribeiro and Alberto Amaral.

16. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavick, Iceland, 23-25 June 2011. What are the perceptions higher education institutions have about their changing environment? The case of the Bologna process. Amélia Veiga
17. 24th Annual CHER Conference, What are the prospects for higher education in the 21st century? Ideas, research and policy, Reykjavick, Iceland, 23-25 June 2011. Academic job satisfaction and motivation: findings from a nation-wide study in Portuguese higher education. Machado-Taylor, M. L., Meira Soares, V., Brites, R., Brites Ferreira, J., Farhangmehr, M., Gouveia, O., & Peterson, M.
18. CEPOL course 76/2011. European Police Education Systems, 21-25 June. Higher Institute of Police Sciences and Internal Security. Módulos de formação: Bologna process and Bruges/Copenhagen process. Madalena Fonseca.
19. 10th Conference of the European Sociological Association, "Social Relations in Turbulent Times", Victoria Hall, Geneva, 7-10 September 2011. Academic inbreeding: contributing to enlighten the phenomenon in the Portuguese academia. Sónia Cardoso, Orlanda Tavares, Teresa Carvalho, Sofia Sousa and Rui Santiago
20. Escola Superior de Enfermagem do Porto, June 2011. A Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior. Alberto Amaral.
21. Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Desporto, 12 July. Avaliação: Objectivos e Consequências no Ensino Superior em Portugal. Alberto Amaral.
22. 33rd Annual EAIR Forum, Bridging cultures, promoting diversity: higher education in search of an equilibrium, Warsaw, 28-31 August. What do academics think of quality assessment? A discussion using the Cultural Theory. Amélia Veiga, Sónia Cardoso, Maria João Rosa and Alberto Amaral.
23. Compostela Group of Universities, Universidade do Minho, 10 September. Costs and Benefits of Quality Assurance for HE. Alberto Amaral
24. Fórum Pedagógico da Associação Académica de Coimbra, A Avaliação e a Garantia da Qualidade no Ensino Superior, 12 de Outubro. Avaliação Externa. Alberto Amaral.
25. Conference on the Future of Higher Education – Bologna process researchers' conference, Bucharest, 17-19 October. Higher Education Reforms in Europe: A Comparative Perspective of New Legal Frameworks in Europe, Alberto Amaral, Orlanda Tavares and Cristina Santos.
26. Um ensino superior para o século XXI: Diferentes olhares, Comissão Sectorial para a Educação e Formação, Grupo de Trabalho do Ensino Superior. Universidade de Coimbra, 19th October. Organiser and raporteur Madalena Fonseca.

27. Encontro Nacional das Escolas Superiores de Educação, ARIPESE – Associação de Reflexão e Intervenção na Política Educativa das Escolas Superiores de Educação, Viana do Castelo, 20-21 October. As Escolas Superiores de Educação em Mapas e Números. Madalena Fonseca
28. 6th European Quality Assurance Forum, Quality and Trust: at the heart of what we do, Antwerp University, Artesis University College, 17-19 Novembro. Regaining Trust. Is it possible? Alberto Amaral, Orlanda Tavares and Sónia Cardoso.
29. Conference, Universidade Lusíada, Lisboa, 30 de Novembro. Bolonha: implementação e problemas. Alberto Amaral.
30. Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa, 27 Abril 2011. Cultura de Qualidade nas Instituições de Ensino Superior. Sérgio Santos.
31. CESPU, Conference “Bolonha nas Ciências e Tecnologias da Saúde”, 05 May 2011. Modelo de Auditoria Institucional – Projecto de Manual. Sérgio Santos.
32. Universidade do Minho, 17 May 2011. O Papel das Estruturas de Coordenação e Apoio a Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade. Sérgio Santos.
33. Universidade do Minho, Escola de Ciências, 01 June 2011. Sistemas Internos de Garantia da Qualidade – Quadros de referencia. Sérgio Santos.
34. Universidade do Minho, Gabinete de Relações Internacionais, 14 June 2011. Trends on Quality Assurance in Higher Education – U. Minho’s International Week: IRO’s. Sérgio Santos.
35. Fórum Excelencia Portugal 2011, 36th Colóquio da Qualidade, Museu do Oriente, Lisboa, 29 June 2011. Garantias da Acreditação dos Cursos para os Agentes Económicos. Sérgio Santos.
36. Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra, Sessão Solene do Dia do IPC, 08 Julho 2011. Qualidade e Avaliação Interna – Para uma Cultura de Qualidade nas Instituições de Ensino Superior. Sérgio Santos.
37. Rencontre CRUP/CPU, Lisboa, 16 September 2011. Trends on Quality Assurance in Higher Education – The Portuguese Case. Sérgio Santos.
38. 10th Conference ESA, 7-10 September 2011, Geneva, Swizerland, Meta-governance and institutional autonomy: governing in higher education in turbulent environments. Amélia Veiga, António Magalhães, Filipa Ribeiro and Alberto Amaral.
39. Fórum Pedagógico da Associação Académica de Coimbra, A Avaliação e a Garantia da Qualidade no Ensino Superior, 12 October 2011. Avaliação Interna. Sérgio Santos.

40. Encontro Nacional da ARIPESE, Viana do Castelo, 20 October 2011. A Importância dos Sistemas Internos na Garantia da Qualidade das Formações. Sérgio Santos.
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11. Final comments

The Agency has always developed its role in close cooperation with the higher education institutions, either directly either through their representative organisations, namely the CRUP, the CCISP and the APESP, as well as with the students, professional organisations and employers represented in the Advisory Council. This has allowed the Agency to adapt its activity by taking into account the informations receives and the opinions of the different partners, which sometimes results in the adaptation and adequacy of the different processes presented in successive activity plans.

Among the changes introduced in answer to demands of representative organisations it is important to call the attention to the changes of the amounts to be paid for the assessment and accreditation processes and on the dates determined for different procedures. It is also relevant to underline the process for defining the first regular assessment cycle that was based on the of valuable collaboration of every institution, namely regarding the adequate classification of the different study cycles in the respective training areas (CNAEF). Finally we would like to underline the regular collaboration with the Direcção Geral do Ensino Superior.

The Agency had also foreseen to produce the first analyses the Portuguese Higher Education System, by making public data that may contribute to support decisions on the reorganisation of the system and of its offer of study programmes. However, it was found that it was very difficult to ensure the compatibility of the Agency's data basis with those of the GPEARI, due to their different structure (for instance, the GPEARI considers the different branches of the same study programme as different independent study programmes; there was a significant number of study programmes with different designations in the two data bases; the GPEARI data base still includes study cycles that were already cancelled but which still have some students completing their degree; therefore the GPEARI data base still contains more than 12000 registrations when there are less than 4500 accredited study cycles, etc.). These differences have taken 3 researchers to work for more than 4 months before they were completely eliminated. Therefore only in 2012 the first data on the structure of the higher education system will be made available.

The Administration Council,

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ANNEX I

2nd Report of the Scientific Council to A3ES

Meeting of 2nd of February 2011

The Scientific Council hereby submits its second report to A3ES. Once again, we are grateful for the hospitality and engagement that met us at A3ES, and for the detailed discussions on the activities and challenges facing the agency. We see the repeated invitation to join in the discussions as a sincere attempt to bring about change and improvement in higher education in Portugal, and are honoured to take part in this process.

Our report follows the outline of last year's report. First, we would like to acknowledge the activities of A3ES that we think are very promising and relevant for higher education in Portugal. Second, we allow ourselves to bring to the table a number of issues and suggestions which we hope can provide inspiration and reflection within A3ES. We make these recommendations in the knowledge that we as foreigners may have an insufficient understanding of the many factors that may hinder or stimulate the improvement of the sector, and that quality improvement – in essence – is a responsibility of those closest to the action.

Commendations

Although the agency is very young, we already notice a spirit of engagement and entrepreneurship within it. One sign of such engagement is the swift and efficient way in which the agency has dealt with a great deal of work - measured in the number of accreditations undertaken. (More than 4,000 study programmes in all three cycles have been accredited in two years' time.) There is good reason to think that a key factor here is the technology-based accreditation platform, an innovation we commended in our last report, which seems to be continuing to provide added-value to the whole system. However, while technology certainly might play a central role, the influence of what seems to be a very thoughtfully selected cadre of staff, combining academic and administrative competence with a wealth of experience of the sector itself, should not be underestimated. That such competence is complemented by further training – often in close collaboration with staff from higher education institutions – is highly commendable. In sum, what has been created is an agency with capability, competence and, along with these qualities, sensitivity and adaptability, grounded in understanding of the higher education system.

Moving to a closely related theme, we admire and would like to give further encouragement to the reflective and research-driven approach of the agency, with respect to gaining knowledge of how the new system of quality assurance in higher education in Portugal is received within the sector. This curiosity-driven approach is

not the most typical characteristic of quality assurance agencies in Europe, and demonstrates A3ES's readiness to take advantage of the opportunities for learning from experience both within and beyond its borders.

Building support for and involvement in the decisions facing the agency is one of the central conditions for developing a successful agency, and the systematic surveillance by the staff of trends in QA in Europe provides a good knowledge base for any decisions taken. An example of this is the current study undertaken by Machado dos Santos on audit procedures in Europe. The Scientific Council believes that surveillance of this kind can also be considered as a vital part of a well-functioning internal quality assurance system; systematic interest in what happens in the rest of Europe is perhaps one of the key drivers for more reflective practices, and for constantly questioning existing procedures and processes.

We have seen further evidence of the agency's commitment to building trust and support in the sector in the number of conferences, seminars and also meetings with individual institutions they have held throughout Portugal. The dual approach to the establishment of trust through systematic analysis and research and close engagement with the sector, (already commented upon in the Scientific Council's first report) has been sustained and seems already to be bearing fruit and to have been of value to A3ES in meeting the challenge presented by the preliminary accreditation process. We have learned how it successfully, and deftly, managed to accommodate the existing standards and rules in a way that allowed for the closure of a significant number of programmes with little or no chance of meeting the requisite quality standards, without recourse to formal accreditation procedures that might have been both costly and painful.

A3ES now is considering adopting an audit procedure as an alternative/complementary method to accreditation. This has much to recommend it, not least in the light of European lessons of diminishing returns when evaluation methods become too standardised and routinised. Since the higher education system in Portugal is highly diversified and includes some institutions that have already established systems for internal quality assurance, installing a more flexible and user-oriented system that takes this into account, is commendable. We also think a more experimental approach to audit is a good idea, although such a step does require some thoughts on the contextual factors influencing the success of such an approach. Hence, in the next section we give some recommendations and reflections as to how this might be implemented.

Recommendations

This section lays out some more detailed reflections, and some recommendations as to how A3ES may develop further activities in relation to the planned audit piloting project. Some other minor issues are also addressed in the end of the section.

The challenging relationship between quality audits and quality culture

The Scientific Council noticed that much mention was made in our discussions and in the A3ES documents of developing a “quality culture” in Portuguese higher education institutions. The ambition of encouraging a commitment to quality in all activities of higher education institutions through external audits is admirable. However, we wonder whether the initial scope of the new audit approach is perhaps unrealistically broad. New national policies in Portugal on research evaluation/funding and on the use of performance-based contracts are likely to create powerful incentives for improving a number of institutional processes of interest, including research management. Yet, given the increasing adoption among EU countries of higher education policies emphasising research productivity, university rankings, bibliometric measures, economic development etc., most countries are discovering that the greatest challenge is how to create effective incentives for the assurance and improvement of academic standards in degree programmes. A key question is therefore how to develop a robust culture of quality in teaching and student learning at all three degree levels within higher education institutions.

A strong case may be argued for teaching and student learning to be the primary focus within an audit process geared towards developing a quality culture. Such a focus would also be more consistent with the shift from a systematic review of all degree programmes to a “lighter touch” audit regime, since to do so responsibly will require evidence that higher education institutions have in place effective processes for assuring the academic standards of their academic programmes.

Going beyond institutional QA-systems based on “student satisfaction surveys”

Strengthening institutional processes for evaluating and improving the quality of teaching is a critical priority in most EU countries. As in other countries, so in Portugal the most commonly reported QA procedure is “student satisfaction surveys.”² However, while the adoption and use of student surveys of instruction can contribute to improving instruction, they have their limitations. Research suggests that student ratings of teachers may be affected by students’ conventional views of what constitutes good teaching, by class size and by grading/marking leniency (thus encouraging grade inflation/compression and the decline of academic standards)³. From a conceptual perspective, moreover, student satisfaction surveys measure short term satisfaction with teaching rather than long term satisfaction with learning. Over time the ritualistic employment of such surveys may paradoxically lead to less attention being paid to improving teaching and student learning. In our view, A3ES has much to gain from experimenting with external reviews that do not highlight a single mechanism for evaluating teaching, but rather encourage higher education institutions, as in the process of research itself, continually to seek more valid, reliable

² Fonseca, M. (2011) Higher Education Accreditation in Portugal: Year Zero 2010. Paper presented at the Third International RESUP Conference: Reforming Higher Education and Research, Sciences Po – Paris, 29 January.

³ McKeachie, W. J. (1997) Student ratings: The validity of use. *American Psychologist*, 52(11):1218-1225.

and effective means of assessing and improving education, by including mechanisms such as peer evaluations of teaching, external reviews of course syllabi, validation of student assessments plus student and alumni interviews etc..

Assessing Learning Outcomes and Improving Student Learning

Improving instruction is important, of that we are convinced. Yet, the ultimate social benefits of higher education are what students actually learn from their academic programmes. Learning outcomes increasingly figure in Europe-wide developments in higher education. For this reason, some subject assessments and accreditations as well as academic audit procedures have been criticised for focusing insufficiently on the improvement of student learning and/or failing to provide incentives for higher education institutions and programmes to develop effective measures of learning outcomes. When improving its subject accreditation reviews and developing the academic audit process it envisages, A3ES may wish to study the methods particularly of those subject accreditation agencies that have achieved a firm track record for focusing their criteria and reviews successfully on student learning and on the assessment of learning outcomes. Among them, it may care to note the accreditation process of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) in the USA, the accreditation and quality processes of the General Medical Council in the UK, and the ABET international accreditation process in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology⁴. These external reviews all appear strongly to emphasise a culture of evidence-based decision-making within institutions directly applied to the improvement of teaching, student learning and academic programmes. Accordingly they place much weight on assessing the validity and reliability of institutional measures and mechanisms to ensure the quality of teaching and student learning. Given the research strength A3ES marshals, one project that might be envisaged in the year ahead is to investigate in depth how higher education institutions interpret – and what they understand by - “learning outcomes”, and, further, how such representations relate to broader objectives that concern both qualification frameworks and internal quality assurance systems.

Design options within an audit approach

The Scientific Council applauds the initiative to develop an audit approach in the higher education system in Portugal. The recent A3ES exercise of benchmarking internal quality assurance processes is for this reason a valuable contribution⁵.

⁴ E. El-Khawas, The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) in the USA (pp., 37-54) and L. Harvey, The Accreditation and Quality Processes of the General Medical Council in the UK (pp. 249-274). In Dill, D. D. and Beerkens, M., *Public Policy for Academic Quality: Analyses of Innovative Policy Instruments*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2010.

Prados, J. W., Peterson, G. D., Lattuca, L. R. (2005) Quality Assurance of Engineering Education through Accreditation: The Impact of Engineering Criteria 2000 and Its Global Influence, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 94(1): 165-184.

Volkwein, J., Lattuca, L. R., Harper, B. J., and Domingo, R. J. (2007) Professional Accreditation On Student Experiences And Learning Outcomes, *Research in Higher Education*, 48(2): 251-282.

⁵ Machado dos Santos, S. (2011) *Comparative analysis of European processes for assessment and certification of internal quality assurance systems*, A3ES.

However, while a number of studies suggest that subject-oriented external quality assurance is able to provide incentives for improving academic quality⁶, the evidence supporting the benefits of a comprehensive academic audit process as it is outlined on pages 98-102 of the Machado dos Santos report (2011) is perhaps less clear.

Given that an audit approach ought to be designed to take full account of the needs of higher education and the diverse institutional landscape in Portugal, we would suggest that A3ES consider the “frame of reference for internal quality assurance systems” (Machado dos Santos, 2011: 8.1.1) as working hypotheses for the development of an academic audit process. A3ES may wish to think about some pilot testing with a sample of Portuguese institutions as a way to experiment with a preliminary model of academic audit. This would provide an opportunity to evaluate the results of these “pilot” tests and make the necessary adjustments to the audit model before fully implementing the audit procedure. An organically developed model of academic audit which is appropriate to the specific needs of Portuguese higher education and *informed* rather than *determined* by the experience of other systems, is, we believe, most likely to lead on to an audit procedure that is successful and useful.

Considerable weight should, we suggest, be placed on the focus of the audit process. The proposed frame of reference, as we have had cause to note, is highly comprehensive. To put in place mechanisms for each of the 10 references runs, however, the risk of distracting institutions from the basic task of developing and strengthening the core QA processes which are necessary if the academic standards of their study programmes are to be assured. Whilst we take the view that the 10 References are indeed valid indicators and highly relevant in a longer term perspective, A3ES may even so wish to consider setting priorities within these 10 References and introducing them stepwise and incrementally into the audit process rather than including them all from the outset. Thus, for instance, the first wave of audits might focus on References 2&3, which are most closely associated with assuring the quality of study programmes. Later audits might then successively add further References as planned.

Such a way of implementing the audit approach is, we believe, consistent with A3ES’ commitment to the principle that the higher education institutions are themselves responsible for assuring the quality of their own academic programmes, a stance we support strongly. This implies, however, that institutions have certain processes to assure academic quality already in place. Hence, the major task is one of quality enhancement, to support institutions in strengthening and making existing processes for assuring the academic quality of study programmes more rigorous and more effective. The Scientific Council notes that over 48% of Portuguese institutions report having no internal quality assurance system. However, over 70% say they have mechanisms for assessing teaching and learning, monitoring teaching, assessing study

⁶ See for example: Dill, D. D. and Beerkens, M., *Public Policy for Academic Quality: Analyses of Innovative Policy Instruments*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2010.

programmes, assessing teachers, and student surveys (Fonseca, 2011). This suggests some disagreement or at least a degree of uncertainty in Portugal as to what the term “internal quality assurance system” means. To avoid creating an overweening “quality bureaucracy” and a no less undesirable “culture of compliance,” we would suggest A3ES consider concentrating on a review of processes already common to, and well understood by, all or almost all of its institutions, when designing its academic audit procedure.

A useful example of an audit process focused on assuring academic standards in study programmes is the system of quality audit developed by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of Hong Kong⁷. Since the main objective of the Hong Kong audits is to ensure the quality of student learning, they focus on several processes higher education establishments already have in place. Amongst them: processes of programme development and approval; programme monitoring and review; curriculum design; programme delivery, including resources, teaching mode, and student learning; assessment; teaching quality and staff development. Auditors evaluate these processes at the institutional level. They then confirm the degree of effectiveness by assessing influence and impact on the quality of teaching and student learning in a sample of study programmes within each institution.

Some minor points bearing on the administration of, and activities within, A3ES

In the course of our discussions, the Scientific Council learned that some institutions misunderstood how the appeals process worked. While we are well aware of the close attention A3ES is paying to this issue, we would strongly recommend that the legal framework of the appeals process be clarified or revised, if only to rule out the possibility that higher education institutions perceive it as an opportunity to secure rapid re-accreditation.

Follow-up of evaluations already carried out has been a challenge to many quality assurance agencies in Europe. Since A3ES is currently considering the introduction of an audit approach a major question follows. It is this: how is the agency to follow up such audits? So long as the audits have not been activated, this issue is not of pressing immediacy. Even so, we think it wise to begin weighing up ways and means by which the impacts an audit may have on higher education may be optimised. Despite its currently limited capacity for disseminating, diffusing and bringing its activities to the attention of the public, A3ES ought not to underestimate the degree of interest the public might have in its work. Both the research the agency carries out, and the results its activities achieve are key to its public standing. They are also of great promise in raising public awareness and interest in the nation’s system of higher education to a higher level.

The Scientific Council was informed that A3ES will start to monitor how higher education institutions are fulfilling their performance contracts. This activity has the welcome potential of providing the Agency with a more stable financial base. It is

⁷ See *Audit Manual*, Hong Kong Quality Assurance Council: <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/doc/qac/publication/auditmanual.pdf>

commendable on that account. However, the Council is concerned lest monitoring activity such as this give rise to tensions as to the exact role the Agency plays in the Portuguese higher education system. The Council is of the view that extreme care to maintain the Agency's independence – vis-à-vis both the Ministry and higher education institutions – is a matter requiring constant vigilance as the prime condition of its role as “honest broker”.

These are our collective views and conclusions. We submit them to you for your earnest consideration. In doing so, we wish once again to express our heartiest appreciation for the spirit of openness, commitment and firm resolution for the future in which the Secretary General of A3ES and his colleagues engaged in discussion with us.

We remain Yours truly

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