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for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

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THE PORTUGUESE CASE

Work Package 8

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1. Introduction

The national case study related to Work package 8 – Quality and Management/ Governance starts with a brief overview of the Portuguese quality system, complemented with a description of the higher education institutions selected for the Portuguese case studies, including the reasons for their selection. The report proceeds with a description of the institutional policy context to understand the link between institutional policy and the corresponding European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) - Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions. The present report focuses on the policy and procedures for quality assurance (ESG 1.1) and on the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards as stated in standard 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, issued by ENQA:

Standard 1.1: Policy and procedures for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Standard 1.2: Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

Standard 1.5: Learning resources and student support: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student.

The analysis uses the available legal texts to understand the environment within which higher education institutions operate and policy documents issued at institutional level to analyse different aspects related to the reorganisation of formal structures following the Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions Law passed in 2007. In the second part of the report the findings across the four institutions are presented under

two broad sections: institutional context of governance and institutional governance and quality assurance using analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted under the framework of IBAR project.

Analysis of documents issued by the four Portuguese institutions previously selected – two universities (HEI α and HEI β) and two polytechnics (HEI γ and HEI δ) – were used. Document analysis was further complemented by the analysis of data from the interviews with different groups of actors in each of these institutions.

In the conclusions the identification of barriers and examples of good practice dominate the discussion on the management and governance structures of the institutions and how they define and implement policy and procedures for quality assurance.

2. National policy context

The Portuguese higher education system went recently through a deep process of change that followed reviews and recommendations by international organisations such as the OECD and ENQA. Following a review of the Portuguese quality system by ENQA (2006), the existent system was dismantled, under accusations of not being truly independent and not producing results, and a new one was initiated in 2009 under the influence of European developments, namely, the Bologna Declaration and the compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2005).

The former system was a very close adaptation of the initial Dutch system, based on self-evaluation followed by external peer review. The Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP) took the initiative of the design and implementation of the quality system, in discussion with the academic community. The characteristics of the system (Amaral, 1995) – no direct link between quality evaluation and funding; ownership awarded to a body connected to higher education institutions, similar to the Dutch VSNU; emphasis on quality improvement rather than on accountability and the bottom-up nature of its implementation – have contributed to create the idea of a collegial system among academics.

The new system is characterised by the establishment of a structure for assessment and accreditation of study cycles and institutions under the responsibility of a new and independent body for its coordination – the Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES). The Agency is also responsible for the pre-accreditation of proposals of new study cycles before they start operating. Within this new system, accreditation assumes a preponderant role as a way to assure that study cycles and institutions accomplish minimum standards leading to their official recognition.

The new legal framework for quality assessment and accreditation also determines that institutions should develop a quality assurance policy for their programmes, a culture of quality and quality assurance of their activities and a strategy for continuous improvement. This legislation makes it clearer that the quality of institutions is their major responsibility and that the role of outside agencies should be limited to quality audits.

Concomitantly there has been considerable focus on the governance of higher education institutions. The governance reform of Portuguese higher education institutions is characterised by the passing of legislation changing the legal framework.

The 2007 Legal Framework for Higher Education (RJIES) has introduced major changes in the governance structures of Portuguese higher education (HE). By 2009 HEIs had already adapted their statutes to the RJIES. It brought changes in the relationship between state and HEIs and it induced the reconfiguration of HEIs as organizations (assuming governance models coming from outside the academic world). Existing research reveals that RJIES strengthened organizational rationales as the enhancement of the managerial bodies in detriment of collegial bodies, the centralization of decision-making processes and the presence of external stakeholders at central and faculty/department/school level (Amaral et. al. 2011). Three universities have joined the foundational model and others may be pursuing, now, the same purpose. The changes introduced are transforming the Portuguese higher education environment. Institutions may opt for a specific identity (public institute versus a public foundation) and the strategic power of the central governance structure was enhanced.

The changes incorporated, as a consequence of the governance reform, drivers such as managerialism and perspectives related to New Public Management. These trends result

in an increasing centralisation of power at the institutional top, suppression (or weakening) of the collegial decision-making bodies and the creation of new ones. To this, one must add the strengthening of the presence of external stakeholders, the adoption of the foundational model, enabling institutions to rule themselves by private law, the use of output-based contracts and the emphasis on accountability, individual responsibility and performance. A wide range of regulative and non-regulative changes is affecting HEIs.

Evaluation of higher education has been recognized in the literature as a cornerstone between autonomy and accountability. This principle was enhanced in 2007 by the Legal Framework of Higher Education Institutions (RJIES) establishing that “the autonomy of higher education does not preclude (...) the accreditation and external evaluation”. This law also mandates higher education institutions to organise internal quality assurance mechanisms. Dimensions related with transparency, information and publicity of European standards and guidelines emerge as key features predicted under the RJIES for internal quality assurance systems.

Further, the new legislation focusing on quality assurance of higher education (Law 38/2007) establishes that HEIs must define a quality assurance policy and take the necessary steps for its implementation. The legislation also imposes that external quality assessment principles take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance procedures implemented by each HEI.

A3ES was established to supervise the quality assurance system. A3ES with the aim of supporting Portuguese higher education institutions to implement their own systems of internal quality assurance has made a concrete proposal about the standards for the certification of internal quality assurance systems, “which may steer national higher education institutions, without losing sight, however, of the flexibility necessary for the desirable development of innovative models which may arise within the ambit of the responsible exercise of institutional autonomy” (Santos, 2011).

3. Methodology

Four institutions have been selected to integrate the Portuguese case studies: HEI α (university), HEI β (university), HEI γ (polytechnic) and HEI δ (polytechnic). The criteria for selecting this sample are based on the need to cover both the university and polytechnic sub-sectors; institutions with different dimensions in terms of number of students (the HEI α is rather small when compared to the HEI β ; HEI δ is also a polytechnic smaller than HEI γ) and location (the four institutions cover the north, centre and south of Portugal, and reflect also geographical differences between those located in the coastline and those more inland since the former concentrates the richer and most heavily populated areas). The sample can then be seen as diversified and able to empirically base the research.

Due to methodological restrictions, a selection was made, first, of the scientific areas and, second, of the study programmes to which the members of this second group belonged. The intention was to choose contrasting scientific areas and respective study programmes offered in all institutions, regardless of their sub-sector (university or polytechnic). As a result, two major distinct scientific areas were chosen – Engineering and Arts – and two study programmes (first cycle level study programmes only), from each area, were selected in each institution: Civil Engineering and Design, in HEI α ; Civil Engineering and Communication Design, in HEI β ; Civil Engineering and Arts and Design, in HEI γ ; and Civil Engineering and Fine Arts, in HEI δ . For ease of reference and consistency, the broad terminology *Engineering* and *Arts* is used throughout the report to name the two investigated areas.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and targeted, in each institution, both members of the central management and administration and members of the faculty/schools. The first group comprised the Rector (or, in its place, a vice-rector, or a pro-rector) and the representative of the Quality Assurance structure (or, in its place, the representative of the Senate, of the structure responsible for study programmes, or for the Student Support Services). The second group was constituted by the Dean (or equivalent), the Head of the Pedagogical Council (or similar structure), the representative of the Quality Assurance structure (at unit level), and by two panels, one

composed of academics and the other of students (around ten participants in each panel).

The description of each institution that follows is based on information publicly available, including the official websites.

HEI α (university)

HEI α is a public institution of higher education whose origins date back to 1559. After being closed in the 18th century, the university reopened in 1979. At the present time, it is organised in departments which are grouped in schools related to specific scientific domains: Arts; Social Sciences; Sciences and Technology; and a School of Nursing (a public polytechnic school of higher education that has become part of the university).

The University has around 5,760 students (from all over Portugal and from foreign countries) enrolled in graduate programmes (1,588 in Master's programmes and 277 in doctoral programmes). Moreover, it has a teaching staff of 577, of whom more than half hold a doctorate, and administrative staff of 406.

In the academic year 2010/2011, the university offered 36 1st cycle degrees, 85 2nd cycle master's degrees (3 of which Erasmus Mundus) and 33 doctoral programmes, in almost all areas of knowledge, all in compliance with the Bologna Process.

The research activities of the institution are coordinated by the Advanced Training and Research Institute, an organisational unit of the University, and developed in 11 research centres.

HEI β (university)

HEI β has origins dating back to the eighteenth century. It is currently the largest education and research institution in Portugal. Spread over three university campuses, all located in the same city, it is organised in 15 schools (14 faculties and a business school) and 69 scientific research units. Overall it has around 31,000 students (6,500 postgraduate), 2,300 academics and 1,700 administrative staff members.

The University β provides a large variety of degree programmes, covering the whole range of study areas and all levels of higher education. In fact, it offers over 700 training programmes per year (from first cycle degrees to masters, doctoral programmes and continuous professional training).

Teaching staff comprises 1,860 full-time equivalent academics (of which 71% have doctorates), ensuring, in the perspective of the University, a high quality of training and the capacity to attract the candidates with the highest grades. Every year, around 2,000 international students choose this university for their higher education.

The University also puts a significant effort in its research mission, being responsible for over 20% of all Portuguese articles indexed each year in the ISI Web of Science and having some of the most productive and internationally renowned Portuguese R&D centres. In the last years, the University has been focusing in providing greater economic value to its scientific production and recent partnerships with Portuguese industry leaders have already resulted in several successful innovations in the national and international markets.

HEI γ (polytechnic)

The HEI γ is a public higher education institution with a defined mission of creating, transmitting and disseminating technical-scientific and professional knowledge through the articulation of study, teaching, applied research and development. HEI γ belongs to the European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET), whose main objectives include the transferability of professional skills and the integration of applied research in their professional and technological education mission.

Founded in 1983, the Polytechnic is divided into five schools: Agriculture; Public Management, Communication and Tourism; Education; Health; and Technology and Management. Nowadays, the institute offers one hundred study programmes, including post-secondary technological programmes (CETs), undergraduate degree programmes (first cycle), and master's programmes (second cycle).

As result of its educational offer and research activities, the Institute has witnessed an increasing growth of its student population, reaching the number of 7,500 students in 2011. The institute has also an internationalisation programme with widely recognised

success, including the annual mobility of more than 500 incoming and outgoing students and 100 teaching staff members, the result of the collaboration with several European higher education institutions and with universities from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

HEI δ (polytechnic)

With about 4,000 students, the HEI δ offers 23 undergraduate and 17 masters' degree programmes as well as several postgraduate programmes all adapted to the Bologna model. These programmes cover a wide range of training areas in order to meet business needs. In fact, the institute stresses that its teaching staff, facilities and services are directed to a practice-oriented training designed to facilitate access of graduates to the labour market. Also with this aim, the institute establishes strong links with the outside world through the provision of community services.

The campus comprises the School of Management (in one location), and the School of Technology (in a different location). These schools constitute the basic units of the institute.

4. Findings

This part of the report deals with the research questions that framed Work Package 8. These questions head each section of this part of the report.

1. Institutional context of governance

1.1 Main changes for institutional governance and quality

In 2008 the new statute of the university (HEI α) came into force. Institutional governance comprises: General Council (strategic function), Rector (leading and representing the university), Governing Council (administrative and resource management function), Academic Senate, Scientific Council (consultative function), Evaluation Council (promoting internal and external institutional assessment and self-assessment mechanisms). Five schools were created replacing a system of departments as a layer immediately below the Rector. Each school has a Director, a Pedagogic

Council, a Scientific Council and an Assembly of Representatives. Central representatives highlight as a great improvement the creation of schools, representing a middle level of management and responsibility. Before, management and communication lines ran directly between the rector and representatives of disciplinary areas (departments). The university is still learning to work within the new organisational model. Coordination, for instance of the strategic plans between the Rector's Office and Schools, often poorly aligned at the beginning, has been gradually improving. Central representatives describe this relationship as one of negotiation, since Schools now enjoy a wide degree of autonomy. A current challenge is to balance autonomy and university-wide coordination. Central university representatives describe the quality structures as centralized. Each school has a quality representative.

According to the vice-rector HEI β (university) responsible for quality (continuous improvement) national changes have so far had an impact on governance, namely with the new status of the university as a foundation, the election of the rector and the creation of the general council. One consequence has been the increased influence of external stakeholders (generally the council's president being from outside the university). The vice-rector is critical of the fact that they come with a managerial perspective and often fail to understand the academic one. They are more concerned with efficiency and more focused on results and indicators which have little relevance for academics, hence a new pressure on producing indicators and a new managerialism and accountability approach in the institution. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts believes that the new RJIES and the status of the university as a private foundation have meant that the Faculty has had to assume responsibility for its strategy and future projection; this includes generating own income and reduced dependence on state financing, a new development in the field of arts. However, setting a strategy has proven to be a complicated task given the difficulty of reaching consensus and making decisions in a context of traditionally high levels of academic authority and freedom.

At **HEI γ (polytechnic)** the major difference in the organizational structure is the General Council, which is a competent structure where people from different knowledge fields outside the institute are working. Lately, the institute has been promoting meetings with those people and the different schools in order to create more involvement and connection with the institute and its structure.

Moreover, simplification and effectiveness are two characteristics of the institute nowadays. In fact, the President considers that the different structures of the institute are simpler and more effective. The creation of “pro-presidencies” in areas which needed to be improved and developed. In this sense, there is a pro-president who promotes the entrepreneurship and the connection to companies; there is a pro-president who works with the image field and with student support; there is a pro-president associated with the academic area; and a last one who works with the information systems. The schools’ management was also simplified: the school directors are now responsible for the schools’ efficiency and the Scientific Councils are smaller than before. The general goal is to create a single and unified image of the institution, even in the decision making process, promoting the involvement of the schools in that process.

The original organizational model of **HEI δ (polytechnic)** was a classical and highly bureaucratized model, closer to a university structure and typical from the 60s and 70s. Moreover, the structure was highly divided, which meant that each study programme was basically a department. The new model is more flexible and agile and is characterized by a matrix system. The HEI has a less “departmental” and a more matrix system. The HEI extinguished the old departments, mostly associated with specific programmes, and created departmental units based on disciplinary areas, which are transversal to the schools. This new model allows for better human resources management. Before there was a tendency to have an excess of human resources in the departments, since they worked autonomously and, as a consequence, had their own people. Nowadays, the departmental units are more comprehensive (can embrace several of the old departments) and join the necessary number of human resources (comparatively less than in the model where each department had their own human resources). For a school director, one of the advantages of the new system is that the board panel is now nominated instead of being elected. The president of the HEI is elected, then he/she names the school directors, which subsequently name the departmental units’ directors, and finally the departmental units choose the academics they want to work with.

Impact on quality

At **HEI β (university)** as a consequence of the implementation of RJIES bringing in external stakeholders into the university, the institution had to formalise and standardise its structures, procedures and processes in order to be able to respond to requests for data, indicators, etc., necessary for the decision-making of the general council. Thus organisation and reporting mechanisms have improved. The vice-rector refers to higher levels of reporting than ever across the institution. However, he claims this has not yet had an effect on actual academic practices. The university has improved its self-knowledge from the data collected, but at the moment these only show the current situation, and not yet how this could be transformed. The unprecedented requests for objectives, planning and reporting are creating pressure on organisational support structures. A quality officer believes, however, that demands for indicators and reporting have always existed and are independent of the new legal regime and the subsequent changes. However, the novelty comes in the forms of reporting (time cards, activity plans, activity reports, etc.) which have come to be almost exclusively quantitative. She also believes that such data is not used for continuous quality improvement. Engineering academics do not feel that the new legal regime has had any impact on quality. They say, for instance, that course specifications and course evaluation reports already existed before in the Faculty of Engineering as quality tools. It appears that the RJIES has just given renewed impetus to initiatives already underway. At the moment further reports and regulations are being developed in the wake of the recent legislation, but this is still work in progress (see below the section on governance and QA). Arts academics complain about a change in the role of the lecturer which increasingly has to perform administrative duties. They sense an increase in bureaucracy and responsibilities. There is criticism of the fact that governance units have been created (i.e. scientific or executive council), yet these do not seem to be dealing with the issues that fall under their responsibilities (i.e. collect information to inform decisions, reflect, make decisions, etc.) and instead delegate work further down. The lack of clarity around responsibilities and division of labour is resented. In addition, they criticise a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to governance across all faculties and the fact that the same requirements apply to big and small units. For small faculties like Arts, having the same organisation and composition of governance structures implies that the same people often have to assume different roles in different councils, resulting in duplication of

efforts and lack of effectiveness, since issues are analysed again and again by the same persons with different hats on.

At **HEI α (university)** the Pedagogic Council director of the School of Arts welcomes the creation of the school as positive, although met with mistrust at the beginning. It has led to the formation of the School's identity and cross-over among the different areas, beneficial for student learning. The director of the Design programme also welcomes the establishment of the School of Arts as an artistic pole of the university and the town. The concentration of arts in one school has increased the quality of student learning through their experience of interdisciplinarity. Exposure to other artistic areas (architecture, theatre, etc.) is also going to be helpful in students' future professional life when they will be likely to come across these. It has also created higher levels of interaction among staff and an emerging sense of identity. Academics also speak positively of the new School of Arts, since the multi-disciplinary environment and cross-over between areas stimulates students and academic staff. Academics also welcome the fact of now having a middle management level (in charge of the School) which understands the issues arts programmes deal with. However, the creation of the schools is also perceived as centralisation, and academics are critical that the department has lost its autonomy to the benefit of the school. This translates in little room for manoeuvre for resource and budget management, little capacity for planning and less efficiency at departmental level.

HEI α (university) the School Representative of engineering describes a positive outcome of the schools' creation to be the proximity of this middle level of management to study programmes, academics and students, leading to swifter resolution of problems. Study programme directors also share this perception. He also refers to the university information system which allows for easy access to data and indicators on study programmes and to the services of the quality unit. This allows easy monitoring of indicators and of course compliance with requirements and plans, thus facilitating early problem detection. On the negative side, the new governance structure has led to an increase in bureaucracy which impacts negatively on academic duties. Study programme directors state that there are now more management levels or bodies which ask for paperwork (department, school, scientific council, rector's office, etc.) These

multiple bodies also issue simultaneous orders or papers (for instance on the school's restructuring) creating confusion over the course of action.

At **HEI γ (polytechnic)** first the ISO 9001 quality system was implemented and only later a set of procedures in order to support the pedagogic processes and guarantee the pedagogic quality will be implemented. The implementation of the ISO 9001 required a big institutional investment, in terms of operational preparation, but there are a number of advantages, for example, in the academic services. The institution called an external consultant to help in the implementation of the quality system, but this made the process even more difficult. According to the president's point of view, the consultant had some kind of recipe with standardized procedures to be applied universally to all HEIs, and this institution did not want to simply apply the recipe. They tried to understand what should and could be improved in its internal structure and identify waste and errors as well as possible solutions. In terms of quality, the new organizational structure allows for an easier and more agile response to pedagogic situations and, consequently, allows for a more effective application of the quality procedures, in the perspective of Arts. According to the academics, with the new system, the school director is now able to realize more easily the positive and negative situations and also to act accordingly, since the contact with the study programme directors and with the other elements of the study programme commission is closer. This intermediate management reinforces the quality mechanisms and this is, according to the academics, the main innovative change.

Central representatives of **HEI δ (polytechnic)** highlight as a great improvement in terms of the quality the concern to build an internal quality system. The HEI decided to implement an internal quality system, but it is not yet a reality. Formally speaking, there is not an internal quality system but when the changes to the organizational structure were being made, some quality mechanisms were being adopted. The HEI has a quality office since 2007, which is responsible for some mechanisms of quality control (as the survey for the assessment of academics' performance, of the physical equipment, etc.; the assessment of the study programmes; etc.). The changes to the internal model increased the will to improve the existing quality office, namely to improve the expertise and technical capabilities of its human resources, in order to better implement the internal quality mechanisms. The study programme director of engineering emphasizes that the proximity between the academics of different study programmes

may be a good advantage. Nevertheless, inside the study programme of Engineering, the concerns of the academics are basically the same: to encourage a close relationship with the students and to promote cohesion between the academics of Engineering. The autonomy to make decisions, related to the study programme operation is also highlighted as an important improvement in the context of the recent changes. On the other hand, for Engineering students, the changes are perceived as a centralisation and they are critical that Engineering (which always worked as a kind of “family”) has lost some of its autonomy to the benefit of the department unit and of the school, although they understand that the convergence of departments can be good for the HEI in terms of financial resources management. The ignorance regarding the organizational changes seems bigger among the academics as well as among the students of Arts than of Engineering at **HEI δ (polytechnic)**. Both academics and students stress the importance of the proximity between academics and students in order to understand the deficiencies in the study programme of Arts. In fact, that proximity and the informal conversations between academics and students are a characteristic of this study programme.

Drivers for change (national framework or internal context)

Decision making culture: bottom-up or/and top-down

At HEI α (university) compliance with the new RJIES led to the creation of new governing bodies and the reorganisation of the university. The creation of schools, in addition, was driven by a wish to ensure strategic harmonization and coordination of activities. Establishing the schools was done in order to decentralise the university. The pro-rector for quality refers to a past tendency of ‘worshipping’ the rector and assigning to him/her the achievements of the university. However, according to him top-management are facilitating agents and people across the university must do the work. He refers to the university activity report which this year was informed by the school activity reports, an exercise facilitated by the information system and expected to be improved the next year. The decision-making culture is described as a hybrid. On the one hand, services (academic, administrative, technical, quality) are centralised to minimise costs and also because of tradition. On the other hand, schools have decision-making power over pedagogic and scientific matters. The Pedagogic Council director of the School of Arts feels that the scale of the university enables an environment of

dialogue and accessibility and notes no tension between bottom-up and top-down forces. She describes a team spirit and close collegial communication at the various levels (Rector's Office, School, departments etc.). The director of the Design programme refers to an 'open door' policy to describe the working relationship between the different governance levels. Higher management levels (Rector's office, School management) are described as accessible, approachable and ready to lend an ear to issues and resolve them. He also states that higher governance levels show interest in what happens on the shop floor, i.e. representatives coming to the school to find out what is happening. The level of centralisation of services is felt to be balanced and not impinge on quality, mainly because of the accessibility and availability mentioned earlier. These, alongside the small scale of the university, would not justify the creation of sub-systems either. Academics resent the loss of departmental autonomy as a consequence of the creation of the schools (see above). They also complain about communication gaps: information requests they have to respond to (plans, budgets, etc.) are unidirectional (going up), but afterwards have no consequences on the ground floor. Resource and financial management is described as top-down and academics complain of receiving contradictory information regarding available resources. For instance, there is no clarity over the budget allocated to the department, impeding operational planning. Academics also complain about the new regulations for the assessment of academic staff (blaming not the university or the department, but the wider HE system). They criticise the definition of objectives which promotes mediocrity, the complicated formula to calculate achievement, the one-size-fits-all approach (all academics equally involved in teaching, research, external partnerships), and believe these result in loss of motivation and of quality. There is also criticism that the governing bodies understand little of management and are little efficient from this point of view, since most members are from the academia and not the outside world. Students cannot comment on changes from the previous governance system to the current one. They feel, however, that their voice counts and they are listened to and invoke the close student-academics relationship. Student representation has lately been formalised through the creation of the Arts Students' Nucleus, comprising representatives from all study programmes, now responsible for acting on behalf of students and taking student complaints further to relevant levels. The School Representative of Engineering notes a tension between top-down and bottom-up forces, but believes that the reorganisation of the university has helped balance the tension. Schools now have pedagogic, scientific and administrative

autonomy, although not financial. However, since the new governance system is recent, Schools and the Rector's office are in a process of negotiation of setting the boundaries of each other's area of operation. He believes a mixture of the two approaches is the adequate model. Study programme directors describe the decision-making culture as top-down. They feel that the Rector has the power to impose their decisions over the other levels and, depending on the rector's preferences, they can favour one school over the other. They also confirm the existence of a Students Nucleus for Engineering as a student representative body dealing with student concerns and communicating them to relevant levels. Academics find that decision-making is bottom-up. In this respect, they describe how student opinions are given due consideration and discussed higher up as well, being in fact the source of many changes. They also refer to the pedagogic autonomy (i.e. course plans, assessment and pedagogic methods): despite general regulations, there is flexibility for academics to adapt these to the circumstances of the courses they teach. Students feel that their voice has little weight and that the academics' openness to listen to their opinions is variable. They feel they have no role in decision-making. They claim that they are only now starting to be heard, for instance at course level through the presence of student representatives in course committees, or at institutional level through the election of student representatives in university student associations. However, they are uncertain about how much information actually reaches ordinary students and whether decision-making only applies to student representatives.

Changes in the modus operandi of the **HEI β (university)** have been triggered by the RJIES. In turn, the now more managerialist style has led to the formalisation of procedures and processes (see above). According to the vice-rector for quality, top-down decision-making does not characterise the university, not even after the RJIES, and there is great resistance to the loss of autonomy. He describes decision-making as diffuse, giving the example of the rector who, accountable to the general council, cannot force his/her decisions onto the faculty deans. These are accountable to the faculties' representative councils. He therefore feels that the decision-making loop fails to close. He claims that further to the RJIES, the scientific councils have also acquired more influence in decision-making. Although in some faculties the deans are presidents of the different councils (scientific, pedagogic etc.), generally he describes decision-making as shared. The quality officer does not feel that the RJIES has triggered changes in the decision-making culture. Faculties have maintained their autonomy and can disobey

directives, should they want to. According to the Pro-rector, this actually happens often. The Faculty Dean of Engineering claims that top-down decision-making cannot work in a university, academics being difficult to manage. He describes his strategy which consists of monthly meetings and discussions with heads of department (and persuasion tactics for the ones against), so that they do not feel that they are left outside the decision-making process. So although the Dean makes the final decision, this has been previously debated with colleagues. The study programme director believes the approach is a combination of top-down and bottom-up decision-making: the former because there are set rules fixed for all the study programmes, sometimes failing to take into account course specificities, and the latter because these rules are established further to discussions between management, pedagogic councils and study programme directors. Academics also feel that the RJIES has not resulted in a change in decision-making culture and more top-down decision-making. They confirm that the process continues to be participatory and collegial, as it used to be before. For instance, although the Faculty Dean now appoints the departmental directors (elected before the RJIES), he does so further to suggestions from the department. In relation to students' input in decision-making, this occurs through student representatives on institutional committees and structures. However, students point to inertia and lack of initiative among the student population which often does not escalate issues of concern to their student representatives. Students complain informally but take no action, either because of lack of willingness to do so or because they are not aware they have representatives who can speak for them. However, students also claim that when matters of concern reached the relevant committees, these were addressed. Student passivity thus appears to be an issue. The Dean of Arts finds it difficult the task of gathering consensus around the future strategy of the school and making decisions. He describes academics as 'very irreverent and independent', self-centred, with little collective awareness and sensitivity. He speaks of 'an excess of authority' on the part of the academics and of the need to create a culture of responsibility, where academic performance can be monitored. Some structures to support this process have been put in place, namely the creation of the position of Director supported by an executive council, working together with the pedagogic and the scientific council. These governance structures have been resented by academics, who perceive them as 'enemies' and as an exercise of authority. As to the Dean, he describes governance as a civic duty, an exercise of solidarity and citizenship. Students, too, appear to confirm the dissent and lack of communication among

academics and identify it as one of the biggest problems of the Faculty, ultimately affecting the students. Academics complain about the lack of clarity regarding the new organisation model and responsibilities. They refer to the institution's intention of creating a consistent strategy across its units, but feel that regulations and orientations are contradictory. They aim to innovate, while at the same time, in reality, they appear to maintain old practices. They criticise primarily the internal governance of the faculty, with lack of clarity about the responsibilities of the different bodies: scientific council, executive council, council of representatives. Students have a system of representation which informally gathers student opinions and works towards the resolution of problems. They say that are represented, too, in all governance bodies, except the scientific council, and resent that they have no input in decision-making there. Despite having representation, further to the RJIES, their numbers on the governance bodies (except the pedagogic council) have decreased. Consequently they feel that their have lost votes and decision-making power. They say they make increasing pressure through the student general assembly and attempt to ensure that all student representatives on all governance bodies speak with one voice in relation to problems in order to be heard. One student complains that academics overall have stronger representation and that this creates inequality in voting power and a hierarchy, primarily justified by the fact that students do not have scientific competencies to decide on issues. However, students are the target audience of education and lie at its centre (universities could not exist without them), therefore their feedback needs to be considered in issues like, for instance, the design of study programmes. In relation to the study plan, for instance, they state they were not consulted and had to require access to it as an exception to regulations. Students also claim that when consultations take place (for example about the new statutes of the faculty), there is no initiative on the part of the faculty to inform and engage them. Students overall therefore show little motivation and interest in such issues. They also mention the forthcoming implementation of staff evaluation procedures where they believe student feedback will be taken into account. However, since this is being discussed in the scientific council, they have no certainty.

Internal and external motivations led to the change of the organizational structures at **HEI γ (polytechnic)**. Firstly the polytechnic realized it had to make some changes, and secondly the external evaluation made in 2006/2007, and its consequent recommendations, drove some changes in the HEI. In fact, the external evaluation is an

important element to the polytechnic. According to the president, the moment of evaluation of the A3ES (Assessment and Accreditation Agency) is very important, because it can give indications about what should be changed and how. In this sense, the external evaluation led to the creation of new governing bodies and the reorganisation of the polytechnic. The creation of the study programme commissions, in addition, was driven by a wish to ensure proximity between the different bodies of the institute. In general, the decision making culture is top-down. According to the president, it was created a unified structure which means simplification, efficiency and less resources, but it does not mean centralization of the power. The polytechnic has a very democratic way to debate the institutional issues in the perspective of engineers, despite the major decisions depending on the Permanent Council, which has an advisory and non deliberative function, and where the directors' opinions are heard. In fact, the decision making process is more top-down, more centralized and less participative. The decrease in participative power in the decision making process is, according to the academics, due to the reduction in the number of members in the Scientific Council. In the Arts, the decision-making culture is described as a hybrid. On the one hand, the big decisions are made at the top of the hierarchy. On the other hand, the study programme commissions tend to have decision-making power over pedagogic and scientific matters. Despite the major decisions being made at the top, every school body gives its opinion and participates in the decision, so academics feel it is a transparent decision making process. Academics also try to decentralize to the study programme commissions all the activities which are transversal to the study programme, as the learning processes' decisions, conferences, study visits, means to promote the study programme, etc. Academics believe everyone is called to participate, even the students who are represented in the study programme commissions. Students can give their opinion and the academics have a good and close relationship with the students. Nevertheless, the students have a different point of view. They state that they are not called to participate. They feel that their voice has little weight and that they have no role in decision-making.

At **HEI 8 (polytechnic)** the perception is that the changes were driven by the internal context but also by the national framework. The organizational model of the institution was inappropriate for the present educational context and, consequently, had to be changed. However, these changes were constrained by the Ministry and the RJIES (the

juridical regime of the higher education institutions). In this manner, since the changes obey some “rules”, the institution could and can make the decisions to implement the internal changes that better suit these requirements. Neither the Engineering nor the Arts academics are absolutely sure about the motivations to the structural changes, but they both agree that there must be internal and external motivations. Engineering academics state that it is an internal will of change, supported by external studies and external visions of the HEI. The Arts school director believes that these changes have internal motivations, i.e., they are driven by the strategic plan of the institutions for the future; but they are framed in the national context, namely in the educational policies of the Ministry. The decision-making culture is described as a hybrid. On the one hand, services are centralised to minimise costs and also because of tradition. On the other hand, schools have decision-making power over pedagogic and scientific matters. The President of the HEI underlines two hierarchies: a matrix hierarchy, which is related to the line hierarchical model; and a functional hierarchy, which is related to the organization, the operation and the internal dynamics with different “tops” and “downs”. However, there are always some guidelines of the HEI which come from the top. The academics in engineering state that there is a top-down decision making culture. However, they also emphasize, particularly the school director and the study programme director, that in what concerns pedagogic issues, academics have the autonomy to make the decisions. Even the general guidelines and, for example, changes to the academic plan can be proposed and discussed by the academics, but, naturally, they have to be discussed with the top management. In Arts, dialog and discussion are probably the most used words by the academics in what concerns the decision making culture. While in Engineering, the autonomy to make decisions is highlighted, in Arts, not only the autonomy, but the possibility of dialog between the different levels of the hierarchy, the proximity with the academics and the school director and the president and the promotion of the debate of different opinions are constantly referred to by the academics. They underline their role in the decision making process and stress that in the HEI the traditional decision making system does not prevail. In what concerns the students, both from Engineering and Arts, invoke the close relationship between the students and the academics (more pronounced in the Arts), despite some students stating that the academics’ openness to listen to their opinions is variable.

Nevertheless, they feel that their voice has little actual weight, and that they have no role in decision-making. Furthermore they are uncertain about how much information

actually reaches ordinary students and whether decision-making only applies to student representatives.

2. Institutional Governance and Quality Assurance

2.1 Governance structures' role in institutional QA [ESG 1.1]

At **HEI α**, the university has a pro-rector for institutional quality assessment and promotion. A university office is responsible for quality (Office for Institutional Quality Assessment and Promotion) and Schools have quality representatives. Monitoring and coordination mechanisms have been designed centrally, but are flexible so that schools can adapt them to their own realities, such as pedagogic questionnaires or course evaluation reports and their timings. According to him, these mechanisms, aimed to monitor and improve quality, are helpful as they allow inter-school comparability. They are supported by the university information system. The vice-rector and pro-rector for quality refer to a current process of tightening procedures (new regulations) to make it compulsory for students to answer pedagogic questionnaires (non-response triggering blocked access to the online portal) and for staff to draft course evaluation reports (becoming a compulsory duty). Student response rates to questionnaires are still lower than desired. The School of Engineering representatives also report the low response rates, but the School director says they have been improving and gives an example of how feedback from student questionnaires has triggered programme improvements by linking teaching closer with research. He has doubts about compulsory questionnaires and believes the rate should increase through raising student awareness of showing how questionnaires can be beneficial. However, the existence of the Students' Nucleus and the close relationship between academics and students allows for problem detection and resolution, according to the study programme directors. The School of Engineering director discusses the course evaluation reports managed through PROQUAL. He describes how course reports feed into study programme reports, which in turn feed into departmental reports. These are submitted to the consideration of the school director, the Rector's office and the Quality office for detection of potential issues. According to him, the collection of information through PROQUAL has improved and it feeds back to study programme leaders and academics. Over the last year this has led to improvements: i.e. some timetable changes (e.g. the same course offered in subsequent

semesters so that students who lag behind can catch up) and the provision of support courses in mathematics in the evenings for students who experience problems. However, he is critical that the feedback loop is not closed, that the information and the indicators collected at the top often do not reach the ground floor and thus fail to have an impact. He describes the existence of a central quality unit and a pro-rector for quality as positive, as it ensures a level of harmonisation across the university with regards to indicators, student questionnaires, etc., while at the same time granting pedagogical and scientific autonomy. Study programme directors agree with the collection and centralisation of quality-related information in the university's quality unit. However, they criticise the fact that for the time being information does not go beyond the collection stage, i.e. into analysis, discussion with schools, study programme directors, academics, etc., and subsequent quality improvement.

The governance changes at **HEI β (university)** have also led to the formalisation of quality procedures and processes. The vice-rector is critical of the separation between quality and governance which has been heightened in the new regime. He believes that mechanisms for quality and quality improvement should be part of the wider management/governance mechanisms, since managing quality should be no different from managing other aspects. The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering says the new developments in the area of quality assurance, triggered by the legal changes, have been course evaluation reports and student questionnaires, managed in an increasingly organised manner. The quality representative says he fails to see the connection between such instruments and the quality of teaching and learning. For instance, the university information system allows the almost automatic generation of course evaluation reports, academics then having the possibility of making additional comments. However, according to him this exercise has not traditionally been valued. So the mere existence of such mechanisms, although better than nothing, does not necessarily impact on quality, especially when after reports are produced there is little discussion and reflection around the results. He believes reflection is crucial and should be promoted by the institution at all levels (management structures, programme directors, academics and students). Fostering discussion and reflection is one of the objectives of the new teaching and learning lab. He also mentions a changing student attitude, more engaged and prone to complaints, facilitated by formal institutional mechanisms such as the pedagogic questionnaires or the student ombudsman. This leads to increased academic

sensitivity and attention to quality issues. He remarks in this respect that questionnaire response rates and student satisfaction have been going up, as well as the number of timely and correctly drafted course specifications. The study programme director mentions that monitoring tools such as the student questionnaires (triggered by changes in governance) have had an impact on quality. He believes that academics make changes and improvements as a result of feedback from student questionnaires. Academics appear to confirm this. One former programme director gives the example of a few cases of poorly-assessed academics who, the following year, no longer received bad evaluations from students, suggesting that they had acted on student feedback. Academics also say that governance structures (such as the pedagogic council) sometimes take corrective measures regarding issues identified by student feedback. However, an opinion is also expressed that questionnaire results do not enjoy full credibility. Thus, regulations on the assessment of academics do not take them into account, deeming them to be of a qualitative nature and more appropriate for formative rather than summative assessment. Academics also complain that response rates are low, thus responses cannot be considered representative. Students have mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of the student questionnaires: some claim measures are taken as a result of their feedback, while others say they have not seen any changes. They believe the impact of questionnaires could be stronger if response rates were higher. They complain, however, that the questionnaires are difficult to answer: they are long, time-consuming, and not written in plain or clear language (e.g. whether attendance refers to student or lecturer attendance). They do not always address issues students would wish to raise. Moreover, they are administered in the exam period, which makes them a low priority for students. The Dean of Arts suggests that quality procedures or mechanisms have not yet been formalised or implemented at his Faculty. They are rather difficult measures to implement in a school where the academic had full authority and power ('what he said was sacred'). However, he believes quality mechanisms should now be a priority (i.e. tighter control on academics and evaluation of their performance) and become formalised (i.e. staff evaluation reports). Academics report the same difficulties with pedagogic questionnaires as above: mainly low student motivation, low response rates and struggles to increase these. They do acknowledge, however, that they are long, impractical and time-consuming. They are also deemed not to be representative. In addition, some questions are too general and cannot be applied to Arts courses. For this reason, at some point a separate evaluation system, more

tailored to the courses, was conducted in parallel individually by academics and it yielded better results. However, statistical treatment was not performed on the data. At the moment, academics report gathering informal opinions from students. Students, too, are critical of the pedagogic questionnaires. They justify low response rates by the size of questionnaires and concerns that anonymity is not safeguarded.

Concerning internal quality, there is a quality office at **HEI γ (polytechnic)**. The institution considers quality as a very important issue, which needs to be developed and improved in the polytechnic, mainly to improve two sides: on the one hand, the efficiency, i.e., to do more and better with less resources; on the other hand, the satisfaction of the people who make part of the institutions (the “clients”, as the president calls them).

In terms of the internal quality policy, the **HEI δ (polytechnic)** has, since 2007, an office of assessment and quality. This office is responsible for the implementation of some quality control mechanisms, as the questionnaires given to the students in order to assess academics’ performance, pedagogic material, pedagogic plans, physical structures of the institution, etc. This office has one academic who is responsible for the centre. Monitoring and coordination mechanisms have been designed centrally, but are flexible so that schools can adapt them to their own realities. However, the HEI plans to bring to the office people with special expertise and capabilities in the area of quality assessment, so that the HEI can go further in building an internal system of quality management.

2.2 Institutional quality cultures

At **HEI α (university)**, in Arts, a risk-taking approach manifests itself in: 1. A policy of encouraging students from the very beginning to participate in competitions; the department has received various national prizes in design, despite the programme being new. 2. A new model of curriculum design, giving students an overview of a potential professional area in each semester, rather than directing them towards a narrow specialisation (i.e. furniture design). The first year focuses on developing basic design competences and knowledge (‘a kind of alphabet’) for all students to bring them to a

level from which they will, then, be able to evolve a social and ethical responsibility approach. A professional practice approach is developed through relationship with companies, interdisciplinarity, projects and ways of working (studio-type) reflecting the world of work. Everybody believes in the quality of the programme and acts on this belief.

In Engineering, initiatives exist which are meant to equip students with a basic level of foundation knowledge (i.e. preparatory and support classes in maths) to enable their further progress into the study of engineering. Study programme directors describe the profile of the students they want to shape as having a level of knowledge which enables them to study deeper on their own. They will then be able to deal with a variety of problems and situations, rather than learn recipes of doing some things (as is more the case of polytechnic education), but then have trouble dealing with others. Both in Arts and Engineering small student numbers allow for a close relationship between academics and students, more individual attention and a personalised approach to teaching, impacting positively on the quality of student learning.

According to the Faculty of Engineering quality representative of **HEI β (university)**, the rector set up a working group at university level called 'Improving the educational model of the University of Porto', where he was leading a sub-group on the implementation of a student-centred teaching and learning paradigm. He refers to efforts to adapt pedagogy in order to improve academic achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering suggests that the Faculty engages extensively in collection of data on a wide range of aspects, from access, to student performance and completion, foreign students, mobility, relationships with industry and other institutions, internships, research performance, international activities and partnerships, etc. It also appears that this has been done more systematically over the past few years, the Dean declaring not having all this data prior to 2008. The Faculty quality representative says that they act in advance, taking preventive measures to pre-empt potential problems. Such measures are tutorials in maths and physics offered to students who struggle in these disciplines, timetables which allow students to catch up with courses in which they have fallen behind or general care with the quality of the timetable overall to suit student needs. He also refers to the recent creation of a teaching and learning lab aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning through various projects (i.e. peer-observation of classes; a pedagogic assessment project

comparing study programmes with significant different results in pedagogic questionnaires and in approval rates to understand the reasons behind the variation, resulting in measures to improve performance; an annual pedagogic exchange day for reflection and dissemination of good practices; and pedagogic incentive awards to academic staff with best results in pedagogic questionnaires).

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts mentions the School's intention to become an institution of excellence and prestige and the strategies for achieving this. Consequently, there is a high level of demand from very good quality students, which is then reflected on the assessment of student work. He also mentions an exhibition of the works of all final year students which allows for the scrutiny of the quality of student work and the visibility of a cross-over between different disciplinary areas (i.e. design and arts). It has external participation from galleries, museums and other institutions to ensure the institution is attuned to reality and receives external feedback. He reflects on the impact which a shorter programme, triggered by Bologna, has had on quality (including maintaining the same high levels of academic demand) and says that this aspect is still being assessed, for instance in ascertaining the function of the second cycle as a complementary, more focused and consistent preparation. Arts academics consider that artistic, creative practice (alongside academic duties) is a key activity academics should engage in to ensure the quality of Arts teaching, as teaching will then be informed by real artistic experience. This can also be beneficial for academics' motivation. However, multiple demands on academics (administrative, pedagogic, qualifying at PhD level, etc.) mean that artistic practice is often neglected. Students identify a number of contributors to quality as the strongest ones: the access to materials and to artistic practice that the Faculty provides (they claim that in other institutions the teaching of arts is becoming more conceptual and lacks the hands-on component); interdisciplinarity which characterises the relationships and interactions in the Faculty between teachers and between students and which allows students to experiment with different areas, mix them, and identify their own (wood, metal, ceramics, stained glass, mosaic video, photography, printing, graphics, etc.); good lecturers and close teacher-student relationships.

At **HEI γ (polytechnic)** in engineering there is a need to create a methodology to measure the quality of the learning and teaching procedures and, consequently, the quality of the graduates. Academics believe that the institution does not have a

standardized quality mechanism. Nevertheless, the school tries to guarantee the quality, namely through the Permanent Council, which is an executive body, where the departments are represented, that tries to promote actions to improve the quality of the teaching and learning procedures. There are also the questionnaires made to the students to assess different levels of the institute, from the pedagogic level to the resources level. In terms of quality, academics in Arts emphasize the questionnaires to the students at the end of each semester, which are a mechanism to assess the quality of the study programme, the school and the institute in several items.

At **HEI δ (polytechnic)**, the teachers, at Engineering, try to prepare the students for the labour market, so it is useful for the students to develop practical work, similar to what they will do in their future job. Initiatives exist which are meant to equip students with a basic level of foundation knowledge (i.e. preparatory and support classes in math's) to enable their further progress into the study of engineering, and professional practice in order to prepare the students for the labour market. In Arts, there is a policy of encouraging students from the very beginning to participate in competitions; and a professional practice approach through relationship with companies, interdisciplinary projects and ways of working reflecting the world of work. Both Arts and Engineering academics (especially Arts) highlight that the informal dialogue between the academics and the students is boosted by the small number of students in the courses.

3. Governance structures' intervention in the QA of study programmes [ESG 1.2], i.e.: Learning outcomes, Curriculum and learning and teaching design, Periodic reviews, Resources and student support

At **HEI α (university)**, according to the vice-rector and the pro-rector for quality, monitoring and coordination mechanisms already existed before regarding study programmes, i.e. collection of information, report writing, dissemination. What is now needed is fine-tuning and establishing firmer rules to do away with exceptions. An area which could be improved is increased attention and processing of the information contained in course reports, for instance through public presentations on how courses compare (despite some resistance) and discussing results with academics. He also mentions course enhancement plans (based on defining quality standards) as a project currently being implemented with a view to continuous quality improvement. He

considers that standards are already at a level where a continuous improvement and fine-tuning model is appropriate (i.e. detection of aspects which could be improved). The information system emerges in various accounts as a key tool to assist monitoring and coordination mechanisms for study programmes. According to the head of the Pedagogic Council Arts, at the time of the interview, the Council was leading a process to establish common procedures across all the study programmes. Learning outcomes must be listed in course specifications and these must be published on the university information system. The Pedagogic Council is working to establish some general rules for student assessment across all the departments and all the study programmes in the School to bring coherence and avoid contradictions, since students sometimes experienced confusion before the different practices allowed by academic autonomy. According to the Pedagogic Council director, Programme directors discuss teaching and assessment methodologies with academics at the beginning of the programme and some common criteria are established for the different courses. The School representative of Engineering mentions the university information system where all academics must make available course specifications with plans, objectives, assessment methods, etc. This is then exported into moodle for students to access this same information. Study programme directors say that it is a consequence of the establishment of the schools that new regulations were passed, requiring standardised course information (objectives, student competencies, student assessment, bibliography, etc.) to be published on the university information system. The head of Pedagogic Council of Arts talks about the intention to have all study programme directors analyse programme performance (student progress, completion, employability, etc.) with the contribution of ex-students and employers. The Pedagogic Council is recent, so discussions with study programme directors (and the Rector's office) are underway and creating common procedures is still work in progress. A proposal will be put forward to programme directors for feedback and then a process will be implemented regarding programme performance. Since the Design programme is only a few years old, some shortcomings were detected. This was facilitated by meetings with academics taking place at least twice a semester with the objective of an on-going revision of the programme and necessary adjustments. A proposal for the review of the study programme was made to the accreditation agency; this has been accepted and will be implemented the next academic year. Student feedback was also taken into account. Academics also mention these regular meetings each semester where they discuss the performance of the course and student progress,

and decide on adjustments to be made. Students, too, confirm that they are regularly consulted on their experience of the course, are aware of the new study plan and consider it has improved compared to the previous one.

The School representative of Engineering discusses employer and alumni feedback in course reviews. There has been no concerted initiative at school level to contact employers and ex-students to see where these work, whether the course has been useful, etc. However, some study programme directors have done it independently and taken it into account in course reviews. He believes more could be done to sound these actors' opinions on how the course could be improved. Study programme directors also confirm an employers' perception that they should have more input into study programmes. Study programme directors and academics mention that university regulations require course evaluation reports to be drafted at the end of the course. They also say that meetings are organised at the end of the year with all the courses to evaluate how they have functioned. They also refer to some restructurings of the programme conducted in the past few years. Another review tool is the report which must be drafted when more than 25% of students have failed a course, justifying the bad results; the report must suggest measures to resolve the problem. Academics report that the president of the scientific council had meetings with academics this year to find out what measures had been taken and that the scientific council advocates a policy of enhancement to improve student achievement. The head of Pedagogic Council of Arts identifies the lack of resources as a weak point. Since the programme is new and facing financial constraints, it is now gradually building up a resource centre and purchasing films, books, etc. This lack of resources has partly been dealt with by academics sharing their own with students. Academics, too, mention this creative approach to deal with the scarcity of resources. The programme director also mentions the gradual improvement of facilities and the gradual building of a library, understandable in the context of a new study programme. Academics mention students' low economic capacity and the difficulties in accessing culture. As a result, the department organises study visits, for instance to Lisbon, to make up for these shortfalls. Aware of the academics' multiple duties, the Pedagogic Council assumes a role of raising awareness and offering information and guidance to academics on special regulations, for instance regarding working students. Students are happy with the new building of the School and the working space it provides. The study programme director and academics of Engineering mention the provision of preparatory (and support) maths classes to make up for the

gaps in knowledge which students might bring from secondary school (or to help mature students to update their knowledge of maths). A tutor system for first-year students is also in place to support integration and help new students with problems they might face. Students complain about some resources and facilities such as: the library opening hours, study rooms which are not properly equipped to take many students (not enough sockets for computers) and do not provide sufficient space, poor transport to university sites outside the city centre.

At **HEI β (university)**, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering appears to suggest that rules and regulations applying to study programmes are now more formalised. He finds this development positive because it leaves no alternatives for people not to comply. He also welcomes the new accreditation agency as having a positive influence on the quality of study programmes: when a new study programme is proposed for the consideration of institutional approval (i.e. the Dean) and it does not meet quality requirements, it makes rejection more legitimate since it would not pass accreditation either. It thus represents an additional tool for institutional quality assurance. The online platform emerges as a key tool for the monitoring of programme compliance with institutional regulations. Students claim that they know the programme is of good quality (the Faculty makes public good results and achievements through its activity reports), but have no knowledge of the initiatives and measures taken to maintain or improve quality. Students thus appear aware of scientific output and achievement, of marketing strategies, but not of quality ones. Assessment regulations require course specifications to indicate learning outcomes. The vice-rector for quality describes learning outcomes as a 'difficult' area and reports that it is the area which has received most attention at institutional level after the governance/organisational changes. The university has put a lot of effort centrally and at faculty level to promote learning outcomes. He believes, however, that the exercise of defining learning outcomes does not necessarily translate in major changes in pedagogic methods yet. Instead, it is a slow and gradual change process. The Engineering quality representative associates the requirement regarding learning outcomes to the standards of the new accreditation system. He mentions a training course organised by the Faculty of Engineering on assessment design which is informed by learning outcomes. He also says that although such initiatives have impact on a low number of academics, he notes increased sensitivity to teaching design issues. Arts lecturers describe how course specifications

have become more systematic and more focused on what students are expected to achieve. This dimension is now taken into account both in teaching approaches and in assessment. The vice-rector for quality states that there exists a standardisation in the requirements for the conception and structure of study programmes (to include, for instance, objectives, plans, and learning outcomes) and courses, managed by means of the institution's information system. Study programme directors have the obligation to check that these requirements are met by the courses which make up a programme. He also talks about informal pressures (i.e. students) which have an impact on compliance with such procedures. The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering mentions that the Pedagogic Council is a forum of on-going discussion on pedagogic and assessment methods and how to ensure alignment between the two. He talks about a concerted institutional effort to increase continuous assessment and the importance of student tasks in the overall assessment. Apart from the course specifications, the study programme director gives an example of a concrete institutional intervention in teaching and assessment methodologies, namely the requirements for academics to make available lecture summaries or marks in the institutional online platform within a fixed deadline. He claims there has been much progress in these aspects in the past years. Some academics criticise the intervention of governance structures (for instance the pedagogic council) in curriculum design and teaching and assessment methodologies: by imposing general rules and regulations (e.g. regarding continuous assessment), they ignore the specificities of individual courses. The Dean of Arts and lecturers mention the standardised requirements applicable to the presentation and design of all study programmes and courses (i.e. objectives, course topics, teaching and assessment methods, etc.) and the academics' obligation to make available course summaries and other aspects. This is monitored by the pedagogic council and supported by the institutional online platform. The latter is criticised severely by some academics as a tool which has been imposed across the University without regard for the particularities of faculties. The vice-rector for quality says that the establishment of the national accreditation agency (and also the previous system managed by CNAVES) has led to more concern with the self-evaluation of study programmes. He claims that the university already has mechanisms for systematic programme evaluation, but from the coming year a system will be put in place for annual reviews for all the study programmes in accordance with the accreditation agency's guidelines. He describes reviews as the most developed aspect of the quality system of the institution. The study

programme director of civil engineering mentions a course review currently underway initiated by a workshop with all academic staff where different aspects of the programme (e.g. courses with poor student achievement, student questionnaire results, assessment, etc.) were discussed. Previous course reviews took place in 2003-4 and then further to the implementation of Bologna. The necessity of a new course review arose out of the identification of aspects that needed improving. At the same time it intends to include new elements based on external input from companies. The intention is to have the review as a yearly exercise from now on. He says that there used to be no tradition for course reviews and suggests this approach has been triggered by management changes. Academics also mention the review workshop as an opportunity to improve the programme. However, they complain that the preponderantly summative assessment and large student numbers prevent on-going course adjustments informed by student results. Arts lecturers refer to discussions between them regarding on-going changes to programmes and courses based on the previous year's experience.

Regarding student support, the University's Social Support Service supports students with different types of difficulties (disabilities, financial constraints, etc.). At Engineering, maths and physics tutorials aim to assist students who experience difficulties in these disciplines (for instance due to gaps in knowledge from secondary schools). The number of these classes has increased in the past years. Academics describe the tutorials as a success. Another student support measure is the avoidance of overlaps in courses of the same programme but of different years, to allow students who have fallen behind with previous year's courses to catch up. Academics believe that student support has undergone significant improvements in the past years. They also say that support is provided by means of personal contact and care for students with difficulties. Students confirm that the different committees try to act in advance to create support structures in order to meet student needs. They mention the tutorials, initially for maths, but later also offered for physics and programming. In relation to working students, they question whether teaching and assessment are adequate to meet their circumstances. Moodle is mentioned as a tool which supports learning, an advance in this respect, but students claim that some academics still resist it. At Arts there are no formal mechanisms to provide student support, academic or otherwise. Students say that tailored formal support is not really pertinent within the Faculty. Student support happens informally through the goodwill of lecturers, careful personalised attention to student progress and a close teacher-student relationship which facilitates the detection

of problems and their resolution. However, academics claim that not all lecturers display such openness.

In relation to resources, the Dean describes a dynamic artistic environment with frequent conferences and classes offered by international artists and high staff and student mobility, giving the school high levels of exposure and interaction with other arts institutions. Students identify lack of resources as a shortcoming, primarily due to the fact that for an Arts school material and human resources are expensive (equipment, maintenance, technical staff, perishable materials, etc.) and the funding has become limited. With the new statutes the Faculty has become autonomous and needs to generate its own income in addition to state financing, now increasingly lower. However, they say they have been noting improvements.

In what concerns the internal quality at **HEI γ (polytechnic)**, there is a quality office. The institution considers the quality as a very important issue, which needs to be developed and improved in the polytechnic, mainly to improve two sides: on the one hand, the efficiency, i.e., to do more and better with less resources; on the other hand, the satisfaction of the people who make part of the institutions (the “clients”, as the president calls them). In Engineering there is a need to create a methodology to measure the quality of the learning and teaching procedures and, consequently, the quality of the students, and academics believe that the institution does not have a standardized quality mechanism. Nevertheless, the school tries to guarantee the quality, namely throughout the Permanent Council, which is an executive body, where the departments are represented and tries to promote actions to improve the quality of the teaching and learning procedures. There are also the questionnaires made to the students to assess different levels of the institute, from the pedagogic level to the resources level. In arts, in terms of quality, academics emphasize the questionnaires made to the students at the end of each semester, which are a mechanism to assess the quality of the study programme, the school and the institute in several items. Learning outcomes must be listed in course specifications and these must be published on the polytechnic information system. There’s a mandatory document, done before the academic year, where all the information related to the course, namely the assessment regulations and all the pedagogic procedures are specified. The students have all this information as well as the study programme information (objectives, student competencies, student assessment, bibliography, etc.). This document is run by at least four levels: the teacher,

the school director, the study programme director and the school board. The Engineering students state that the teachers give them a document with all the assessment and pedagogic criteria. Those criteria are previously defined, so the students do not have a lot of say about it. In Arts, students and teachers claim that the students can see all the information online at the beginning of the semester. But, despite the online platform, at the beginning of the semester the teachers explain the pedagogic methodologies and procedures to the students. The academics make changes in the study plans, taking into account the students' views and the employers' feedback of the labour market. The Arts study programme tries to assure that the reviews and changes to the study plans are done properly. Usually students make an internship and the institute is always aware of the students' performance and of the companies' quality. In this sense they can evaluate if the internships are a good learning mechanism and if the companies where the students are working are fulfilling the purposes of the internship. Academics also try to contact alumni, so they can answer some questions, such as if they are employed, where, for how long, if they felt prepared to enter the labour market with the knowledge learned at the institute. There is, though, the problem of the non-systematization of the information collected from alumni and employers. The questionnaires made to the students help to monitor different resources, services and structures, such as the social support service, the pedagogic material, the library, the study rooms, etc. The academics also highlight the questionnaires which reveal the students' opinions in what concerns the study programme, the materials, the physical equipment, etc. so that the academics can be more aware of the resources that the students need. In terms of pedagogic issues, they are analysed and the academics make decisions trying to improve the pedagogic indicators. In what concerns the learning methodologies, academics analyse which are the most effective for the students' success and they review periodically the study plans. The Arts' academics stress that there are resources to support the students, at different levels, from the financial level to the pedagogic level. The academics also emphasize the e-learning platform which allows a closer proximity between students and academics and allows students to access, for example, the summaries, the programme, the evaluation methodologies and a vast information related to the several disciplines.

In terms of the internal quality policy, the **HEI 8 (polytechnic)** has, since 2007 the office of assessment and quality. This office is responsible for the implementation of

some quality control mechanisms, as the questionnaires given to the students in order to assess academics' performance, pedagogic material, pedagogic plans, physical structures of the institution, etc. This office has one academic who is responsible for the centre. Monitoring and coordination mechanisms have been designed centrally, but are flexible so that schools can adapt them to their own realities. However, the HEI plans to bring to the office people with special expertise and capabilities in the area of quality assessment, so that the HEI can give a bigger step to build an internal system of quality management. The teachers of Engineering try to prepare the students for the labour market, so it is useful for the students to develop practical work, similar to what they will do in their future job. Initiatives exist which are meant to equip students with a basic level of foundation knowledge (i.e. preparatory and support classes in maths) to enable their further progress into the study of Engineering. There is a professional practice approach through relationship with companies, interdisciplinary projects and ways of working reflecting the world of work. Both Arts and Engineering academics (especially Arts) highlight that the informal dialogue between the academics and the students is boosted by the small number of students in the course. Learning outcomes must be listed in course specifications and these must be published on the university information system. In Engineering, the study programme, the contents and the assessment methodology are explained to the students. The assessment methodology varies with the degree (undergraduate, master's), with the type of students, with the goals, etc. Before the semester begins, the academics officially deliver the information about the study programme to the students. In Arts, academics promote close and informal relationships with the students also to understand the negative and positive aspects of the assessment and the contents of their study programme, so they can adjust or change it. The issue of the interdisciplinarity (promoted by the new departmental units) is also emphasized by the academics as an advantage, in the sense that it can improve the dialogue between academics to think and rethink assessment procedures and pedagogic methodologies. There is a set of mechanisms which are used to adapt the contents of the study programmes to the professional reality. These mechanisms include the feedback of companies and alumni and an observatory of employability (which has been working for some time and collects information from alumni). The questionnaires made to the students about several issues, namely the pedagogic contents of the study programmes are also used to review what is being taught. It should be noted that some changes, as the introduction of new study programmes, were made taking into account

what alumni felt was lacking them. In order to have the feedback from the alumni, the Engineering academics and students already made two events. As part of the celebrations for the 12th and 25th anniversaries of the study programme they made a conference with alumni so that they could speak about their experience as students and as professionals. This is a way to know if the students are applying professionally what they learnt in the HEI and to know if they miss any knowledge or skills required in their professional activity. Sometimes academics organize lectures, where the employers are invited, which allow them to learn what the employers and the job market need. These different means are used by the academics to review the study programmes. Nowadays, with the Bologna process, students will have to choose different disciplines and the study programme board is thinking about asking for the feedback of ex-students who are already in the job market about what they think could be helpful in terms of options that the study programme can offer. The Arts academics are also concerned with the feedback of the students and the advantages it could bring. However (and once more), they focus in the importance of the dialog with students and alumni, to understand what they think it should be rethought and changed. The questionnaires made to the students help to monitor different resources, services and structures, as the social service, the pedagogic material, the library, the study rooms, etc. The academics are especially concerned with the availability of the necessary material resources for the students and with the pedagogic support given by the academics. In general, they think both resources are available. The academics stress the needs in terms of rooms, equipment and materials, which are, however, improving year after year. They also highlight the support (especially financial support) to organize conference, exhibitions (with recognized artists) and exhibitions outside the institute (with students' works).

5. Conclusions

The identification of barriers and good practices for the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance should be read in context. National and institutional features will determine the borderline between factors hindering or fostering the implementation of policy and procedures. Additionally, the features of academic discipline also bring in the importance of internal factors. The analysis of the Portuguese case allowed for the identification of the following:

- Governance reform as an opportunity to raise the awareness of quality assurance;
- Governance reform inducing the centralisation of quality management activities;
- Presence of external stakeholders promote the development of reporting mechanisms to improve decision-making processes;
- Governance structures and processes created appear to have increased bureaucracy;
- Establishment of internal quality assurance systems with impact on the development of quality control mechanisms;
- Hybrid decision-making cultures, top-down and bottom-up, to cope with coordination difficulties;
- External evaluation processes conducted under the framework of A3ES have impact on the reorganisation of structures and processes;
- Institutional quality cultures vary across disciplines and higher education institutions being difficult to determine and define quality management mechanisms;
- Development of information and communication systems appears to strengthen the QA of study programmes.

6. References

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