

**ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon**

***FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT***

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Team:

Jürgen Kohler, Chair

Melanie Gut

Ivan Ostrovsky

Christina Rozsnyai, Team Coordinator

## **Contents**

1. Introduction.....	3
2. General impressions.....	6
3. Governance and management.....	7
4. Teaching and learning.....	10
5. Research.....	12
6. Service to society.....	13
7. Internationalisation.....	13
8. Quality assurance.....	14
9. Conclusions.....	15

## **1. Introduction**

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL). The European University Association’s (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated ISCTE-IUL in 2013, with the report submitted to the University in July 2013. In 2015 the university subsequently requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

### **1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process**

IEP is an independent membership service of the EUA that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As with the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

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

### **1.2 ISCTE-IUL’s profile**

ISCTE-IUL is one of three universities in Portugal, alongside the universities of Porto and Aveiro, with foundation status<sup>1</sup>. The arrangement, which places institutions under private law, confers on them greater autonomy in their finances and governance than public universities. The legal standing of foundation universities was not consolidated at the time of the first IEP review. In 2015 the government reconfirmed the foundation status. Given that foundation universities

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<sup>1</sup>As reported by ISCTE, as well as on its website. Research produces varying numbers, likely due to the uncertain categorisation of foundation universities.

have proven to be viable as higher education institutions and to meet societal needs, and, although no decision has been made, the ISCTE-IUL leaders believe that it is now generally accepted in Portugal, and other universities are adopting this status.

The status has allowed ISCTE-IUL to sharpen its profile on “innovation, quality, internationalisation and development of an entrepreneurial culture.”<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on Master’s studies was increased between 2012 and 2015 from some 50% to 54% of students at post-graduate level, including PhD studies. A new strategic plan for the period 2014-2017 was produced taking into account the recommendations of the 2013 IEP evaluation. Motivated by the 2013 evaluation report, ISCTE-IUL has begun to reorganise some of its units.

The formerly nine research centres were reduced to eight. An International Studies Research Centre was established, incorporating the former Centre for African Studies. Research in history, which had a separate centre, is now part of the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology. The former Adetti Research Centre was reorganised into ISTAR–IUL, the Information Sciences, Technologies and Architecture Research Centre.

Research, as a major strategic area of ISCTE-IUL, has grown, with more internationally refereed publications by university staff, international and national projects, and the establishment of new research laboratories, such as Vitruvius FabLab for fabrication and innovation.

A possible reorganisation of schools is still under discussion. At the time of the team’s follow-up visit, ISCTE-IUL continues to operate with 16 departments in its four schools: Social Sciences; Sociology and Public Policy; Business; and Technology and Architecture. There are between one and three research centres in each school.

Since 2013, the number of students at ISCTE-IUL has grown from 8 872 to 9 326. Academic staff increased from 453 to 468, including 378 staff with PhDs, up from 346. While the general population has been declining, ISCTE-IUL expects to increase its student numbers gradually over the coming years, most of them in Master’s studies. In line with this trend, ISCTE-IUL foresees and welcomes an increase of post-graduate students which, in relative terms, exceeds the growth in numbers of undergraduate students. ISCTE-IUL has developed its infrastructure in many ways during the past three years. To name a few examples, the number of study places for individual and group work was increased and library hours have been extended. Courses and programmes taught in English, e-learning, double degrees and joint programmes have increased. The ICT infrastructure has been further integrated and developed.

As to the future, a major planned development is the extension of the campus into the newly acquired adjacent property. This property will provide space for both a new, privately run hotel and a sizeable school building. This new complex, with these two elements interacting, will

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<sup>2</sup> [http://iscte-iul.pt/en/quem\\_somos/apresentacao.aspx](http://iscte-iul.pt/en/quem_somos/apresentacao.aspx)

allow to expand current teaching fields in a strategic manner by focusing on the interdisciplinary areas of tourism and hospitality.

### **1.3 The evaluation process**

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a seven-member self-evaluation group, four of whom were also part of the 2013 group, thus ensuring consistency in the process. The group was headed by the Vice-Rector for Institutional Innovation and Development and included the vice-president of the student association. The compact, 25-page self-evaluation report, if not analytical, responds factually to the recommendations in the 2013 IEP report. However, the follow-up element of the quality assurance process helps institutions to go beyond responding to recommendations and to identify and pro-actively meet new challenges. Therefore, the evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) was pleased to observe during the site visit that the 2013 recommendations have been discussed extensively within the university community at all levels. The self-evaluation report is only one product of their input, and a number of strategic actions, some of them described above and in the following sections of this report, have been planned or achieved.

The self-evaluation report of ISCTE-IUL, together with ten appendices, was sent to the team in May 2016. The visit of the team to Lisbon took place from 21 to 24 June. The team was able to consult with a wide range of university representatives, including the rector, vice-rectors and pro-rector, school and department directors, the representatives of various governance bodies, researchers, quality assurance officers, student representatives, undergraduate and graduate students, and external partners. Several academic staff and students from abroad took part in the interviews. The first meeting day focused on fact finding, while on the second day the team held two-hour round-table discussions with a cross-section of university representatives around two themes: governance/management/leadership, and teaching/learning/research, both with attention to outreach to society and internationalisation.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Jürgen Kohler, Professor of Law, former Rector, University of Greifswald, Germany, team chair
- Melanie Gut, student, Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Science–Biology and Chemistry, ETH Zürich, Switzerland
- Ivan Ostrovsky, Professor of Analytical Chemistry/Hyphenated Techniques, Vice-Rector for Development, Comenius University, Slovak Republic
- Christina Rozsnyai, Programme Officer for Foreign Affairs, Hungarian Accreditation Committee, team coordinator

The team thanks Rector Luis Reto, Vice-Rector Antonio Caetano, and Director Anna Sampaio for their organisation of the evaluation and their hospitality, and the staff and students at ISCTE-IUL for the open and informative discussions in the interviews during the team’s site visit. The visit provided the team with both clarification on the issues of its inquiry and the

impression of a collegial atmosphere that drives the quality culture embraced by all members of the university.

## **2. General impressions**

During the site visit, the team gained the overall impression that ISCTE-IUL has been effective in making its mark as a successful, modern university with a recognised brand.

The ISCTE-IUL community shows a strong sense of ownership that, together with a well-developed quality assurance system, results in a quality culture that has become an integral part of its everyday life. Quality assurance is worked out in great detail, supported by know-how at the technical level, and run in a collegial style.

The interviewees with whom the team spoke, across all levels, appeared to be well-qualified and committed. An entrepreneurial approach and drive for innovation are at the core of the community. The university explores niches in the higher education market and ventures into new areas. This approach is also an indicator for ISCTE-IUL's endeavour to foster its links with society. The establishment and reinforcement of the foundation status, sustainability via steady own income and investment, the expansion into overseas teaching opportunities as well as taking on new educational fields, such as hospitality and tourism, are examples of good practice on an international scale.

The team commends ISCTE-IUL for specific achievements in response to the 2013 recommendations by IEP. These include the actions taken to stimulate timely payment of tuition fees, to take steps in reorganising research centres, to raise the ratio of foreign students on campus to 20%, and to proceed in the development and integration of the ICT network. The team recognises that the culture of discussion takes time but strengthens the sense of ownership and is likely to ensure long-term endorsement of changes.

The team also notes that ISCTE-IUL faces possible constraints. Among these, the emphasis on costs rather than results in the national legislative and financing framework is a core issue. Another key obstacle must be seen in the processes concerning hiring and promoting academic staff, which leaves little room at the central and department level for selecting incoming staff who would share the university's philosophy. This is also true regarding the appointment of existing staff to higher levels or to raise their income, even when they have met the qualitative targets set for promotion. This problem forces the university to seek other ways of incentivising staff. ISCTE-IUL has responded with various measures such as sabbaticals for academic staff and – in as much as budgetary restrictions do not pose obstacles – reductions in teaching load to balance research time. The regulated governance structure is another case in point, since it leads to redundancies with overlapping functions in multiple committees. The team recognised, however, that the Portuguese culture of discussion is a point to consider when re-evaluating the governance structure.

### **3. Governance and management**

#### **3.1. Mission and Vision**

The team noted ISCTE-IUL’s revised mission and vision statement, which took into consideration the 2013 recommendation to focus on the university’s profile. The new mission statement signals that ISCTE-IUL sees itself as a fully-fledged university with professional standards and an applied focus, supporting multidisciplinary and linking research with learning and innovation. *The team encourages ISCTE-IUL to consider going further at some point to include in its mission statement other values that permeate its community, namely internationalisation, outreach to society, and students’ personal development.* The latter translates into practical aspects, such as *explicit emphasis on development of soft skills and self-confidence, with a view to not only fostering their individual opportunities but also to becoming a supportive member of society and placing value on democratic citizenship.* That would be in line with the four purposes of higher education set down by the Council of Europe, namely to prepare students for democratic citizenship, employment (and, more generally, to be relevant in practical terms, both to students and to the general public), personal development as well as maintaining and developing a broad knowledge base. These values are currently implicit, but if made fully explicit, they would more clearly position the ISCTE-IUL hallmark in the outside world and also with its internal members. While the team understands that the university considers internationalisation as “just a tool”, the team nonetheless does not see this approach as a valid argument against including internationalisation in the mission statement, since even the existing mission statement does list tools in its second paragraph. Another tool to be mentioned explicitly is outreach to society, which, again is a strength of ISCTE-IUL and worthy of standing out as a hallmark.

ISCTE-IUL’s strategic goals are to become a stronger research institution; to increase the number of post-graduate programmes; and to establish itself as an international player by continuing to increase the enrolment of foreign students, having sustainable franchises with international partners, growing its number of double degrees and joint programmes, etc. An important step in this direction has been the recent successful accreditation of the Business School by AACSB and the accreditation of four engineering programmes by EUR-ACE.

The teaching and research profile of ISCTE-IUL as a problem-based, rather than disciplinary-based, institution is a strength that is prevalent at the university and is to be advocated publically. It is important that the profile fits into ISCTE-IUL’s overarching goals and hallmark and links to its dynamic outreach to society in line with its mission.

#### **3.2. Structures and Processes**

As regards the university structures, the team notes that there is an official structure consisting of a University Council and Senate as advisory bodies. The team recognises that the university

council is becoming obsolete. The senate may be dispensable, but it also may have a good purpose as a top-level discussion forum with an advisory capacity. *The team considers it a rational move to have one single body at this level, as is under discussion at ISCTE-IUL. At the same time, ISCTE-IUL should make certain that the effectiveness of such a sizeable body is ensured in operational terms, for example, by providing such internal structures and processes that make a sufficient degree of quality input and follow-up both of discussions and decisions likely.*

There are two decision-making bodies at ISCTE-IUL, the Management Board and the General Council. The former is largely concerned with administrative matters, namely regarding funding, while the latter is largely concerned with strategic decisions. The team appreciates that – contrary to practice in other Portuguese universities – there is a student representative on the Management Board, even if there is no legal necessity for it, and that five students sit on the General Council, making up the maximum 15% allowed by law. The team believes also that the monthly meetings of the rector with heads of schools, departments, councils, research units and students is an important management tool.

On the level of the schools and departments, management structures between these result in an opaque relationship, largely due to the fact that the structures run in parallel, rather than being hierarchical. ISCTE-IUL is well aware of this and is in ongoing discussions at various levels. The team understands, as noted earlier, the discussion culture in Portugal, which marks also the operations of the schools and departments and establishes elaborate negotiation processes that seem to be working for the time being. In this context, the scientific committees serve as indispensable bridges between schools and related departments by means of sharing information and expertise, which is safeguarded by the presence of the same persons in these bodies. *The team encourages ISCTE-IUL to continue its discussions.* ISCTE-IUL should consider the following points in this regard:

External partners reported that they find this structure too complex, not transparent and the reporting lines unclear; they would like to have a clearer access to the institution. Although the partners with whom the team spoke may not be wholly representative throughout the community, such a voice could be harmful for ISCTE-IUL.

Moreover, from the internal perspective, the structure lends itself to simplification. Study programmes are not necessarily aligned to departments, given that most are interdisciplinary, spanning across departments and even schools, and are coordinated by programme directors. *Therefore, departments should not be seen as legal entities, instead the responsibility for each programme form should shape its organisational set-up ('form follows function').*

The team took note of the law calling for the Scientific and the Pedagogical Council at the university level. Splitting responsibilities into teaching and learning is not ideal, in particular if responsibilities for teaching and learning are divided between the two bodies, with the former being responsible for structural design of programmes and the latter for more operational and personnel-related matters of the learning and quality processes. However, the team

appreciates that ISCTE-IUL tries to mitigate the situation by having a joint chair at the schools' commissions level. A possible future scenario, should legislation allow, would be the merging of the two bodies to increase efficiency. The team believes, however, that students would be constructive contributors to discussions on both scientific/research and academic/teaching-learning issues in both these bodies. The team also learnt that organisational structures at school and department level are not prescribed by law to the same extent. Therefore, *ISCTE-IUL might consider implementing a "streamlining policy" at the school/department level, namely by joining the two bodies, with student representation being safeguarded.*

The team appreciates that there is an institutionalised quality check linking to the Scientific Council. Programmes are initiated on the ground level and before they reach the Council the Curricular Analysis Commission acts as a gatekeeper and the planned programme's quality is scrutinised before it reaches the decision-making level.

The team notes that initial steps to push change have taken place, such as allotting certain funds to school directors to be used autonomously. The team commends this initiative on the rectorate level, which allows school directors to set priorities.

Constraints regarding staff hiring and promotion have been mentioned earlier, and make it difficult to bring in academics best suited for the university's needs. The team commends ISCTE-IUL for its staff development activities in which it instils the university philosophy and quality culture in staff. A review on the need for even more schooling to balance the hiring constraints might be useful.

### **3.3 Strategic and Operational Planning**

On the process level ISCTE-IUL has a running strategic plan as well as action plans. The team saw an English summary of the strategic plan, which seems to extend to an extensive list of goals but does not prioritise them. Since capacity is always limited, *setting priorities could ensure that the most important things get done.*

Action plans are linked to the strategic plan and meet the SMART<sup>3</sup> criteria; they are actual work plans. On the third level there are implementation plans with an indicator system establishing achievements and responsibilities. The team, therefore, commends the functioning planning and implementation system. A key to its success is a good ICT network, which seems to be in place and continues to be improved.

On the informal level, the team, again, appreciates the informal communication that exists at ISCTE-IUL, such as the rector's monthly meetings, which it considers to be an essential management tool. In research centres in particular, there are informal 'meet for lunch' practices, and other discussion fora.

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<sup>3</sup>Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-related

Finally, it is worth mentioning with respect to governance and management, the commendable communication process with external partners. Their formal involvement takes place in the General Council, where almost one-third are external members. External partners are also involved outside the organisational structure, such as in programme design and teaching activity.

## 4. Teaching and learning

### 4.1 Quality Concept and its Implementation

An overarching issue regarding teaching and learning is the shared understanding of quality behind it. The team saw many tools, such as benchmarking and problem-based teaching, but did not see a clear reflection on what the educational concept at ISCTE-IUL is. The team found that there is a blend of goals: fitness for purpose, excellence, market demand. The fitness for purpose aspect is quite strong, and there are many quality policies, and there is focus on learning outcomes and alignment of input, competencies required, and resources needed to accomplish intended learning outcomes. In fact, the complexity of the goals is very impressive and extends well beyond that to which many universities in Europe aspire.

On the other hand, the team felt that the *fitness of purpose, that is, a concise analytical view of identified learning outcomes could be stronger*: What constitutes employability? What is quality with respect to personal development in terms of self-management? What really is a 'research mind'? What do the markers, such as "employability", "democratic citizenship" etc. really mean when translated into competences?

In terms of profiling, ISCTE-IUL states in relation to its mission statement that it aims at "improving the research-teaching nexus with a strong applied focus, by fostering interdisciplinary learning, and by maximizing the interplay between entrepreneurship, technology and innovation so as to prepare professionals able to deal effectively with the forthcoming challenges of society ...". Translating these aims – research in teaching, employability and fostering students' personal development – back into the teaching philosophy to mark what distinguishes ISCTE-IUL from other universities would strengthen the university's hallmark and guide the teaching philosophy of academic staff. The team heard of a project headed by the pro-rector examining how research is actually translated into teaching, and what contributes to the "innovative mind"? The team commends this initiative, which is valuable also for the Curricular Analysis Commission when it checks how the ISCTE-IUL mission is visible and tangible in its programmes.

The team commends the university's structures and practices supporting interdisciplinarity in teaching. The team noted the methodical approach to programme design, whereby programme directors lead the design and oversee the lifetime of a study programme with the contribution of staff from various departments and schools. The well-structured, holistic approach is implemented throughout the university. The support units, such as the Vitruvius

FabLab, also foster interdisciplinarity as well as the university's practical orientation, focusing on a problem-solving approach.

The team noted ISCTE-IUL's attention to various aspects of the Bologna Process, such as fair access and social inclusion for students; transferability of studies and openness for transversal learning paths; transparency of the educational offer and degree content; the application of ECTS and safeguarding recognition of learning results; and issuing the Diploma Supplement.

#### **4.2 Quality Assurance Focus and Processes**

The latest accreditation in 2014 by the national agency A3ES audited ISCTE-IUL's internal quality assurance system and accredited the university for a period of six years without conditions. This status is supposed to mean that ISCTE-IUL's ongoing programmes would not be required to undergo separate accreditation as far as issues of incremental improvement were concerned.

New programmes have to be accredited. However, the acknowledged internal quality assurance of programmes at ISCTE-IUL, with the programme director and staff/Curricular Analysis Commission together with the Studies, Evaluation, Planning and Quality Office/Scientific Council chain of scrutiny, is prepared to align them with the agency's – and thereby the European – standards.

As far as the internal scrutiny of ongoing programmes is concerned, operations take place under the responsibilities of the quality committee and the scientific committee of schools. *ISCTE-IUL is advised to maintain and strengthen the role of the quality committee as a 'robust' gatekeeper to quality-related decisions and measures in teaching and learning.* Robustness means being operational as a professional body with expertise in the broad issues of quality in teaching and learning, serving quality in teaching and learning before the involvement of the scientific committee by involving academics, but also quality officers in the administration and students.

ISCTE-IUL has a number of measures in place. The two main strands are pedagogical and programme monitoring.

The student evaluation scheme, which is at the core of pedagogical monitoring, is carried out mid-term and at the end of the semester, and the system allows students to make comments and suggestions. This scheme appears to be effective. If there is any need to improve teacher performance, there are measures in place to ensure this by discussing the matter with the person in question or else by excluding this person from further teaching, which may be done particularly in the case of non-permanent staff.

The ongoing review of programmes is statistic-based. Here *the team suggests that ISCTE-IUL considers a more holistic approach, not only the individual course or teacher but extending to the entire student life-cycle, from entrance requirements to the selection process to support systems, ICT, library service, blended and e-learning, the examination system, and learning outcomes and attained competences, keeping in mind that a programme is not just the sum of*

*its tutorials but rather a matter of fit for purpose compilation in terms of coordination and progression.* The team notes, however, that systems for alumni and employer feedback regarding the success of graduates are in place, as are measures that may be taken in case of failure of teacher performance.

### **4.3 Special Issues**

The team explored the question of part-time students and notes that, again, national regulations set specific limits to the time and ECTS points for this mode of study. The team appreciates ISCTE-IUL's flexible approach whereby students are able to discuss attendance, individual work and alternative examination times on a personal basis. While the team heard from both teachers and students that class attendance is the widely accepted form of university studies in Portugal, it also heard that many students are in employment. Therefore, *the team suggests that ISCTE-IUL continues to think about possibilities for developing blended and e-learning methods that would allow for a more customised learning, and to reconsider its compulsory attendance policy for courses.* Given the cost of *blended and e-learning provisions*, they could be developed in conjunction with partner universities or through joint programmes.

## **5. Research**

The team supports the focus of ISCTE-IUL on research and notes the five priorities regarding research carried over into the new Strategic Plan 2014-2020. The team also notes the efforts made in the past three years. ISCTE-IUL focuses on applied research in line with its mission and considers research in a holistic way with strong links to social partners and services.

ISCTE-IUL has a number of incentives for its staff to conduct research, such as the reduction of teaching load to increase research time; an award scheme with money channelled back into research; the dedicated staff for the research support office planned for 2016; financial support in all schools for conference attendance; the acquisition of literature or the submission of publications, to name a few. However, the team noticed that in reality the concept of teaching time reduction is difficult to implement due to shortage in funding for the teaching staff needed to compensate such reductions. This leads to some frustration amongst academic staff. The team thus recommends to consider modalities to facilitate the implementation of the scheme.

The team was impressed by the effort that goes into increasing the standing of ISCTE-IUL in international ranking which allows researchers to focus on desirable indicators for maximum results.

Academic staff and researchers at ISCTE-IUL participate in a number of national research centres, which are rated and funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. For the university's own research centres a monitoring scheme is in place and seems to be functioning well. Research units produce annual strategic plans, and achievement is monitored by scientific advisory committees. Each research centre has an international advisory board, which is especially commendable.

## 6. Service to society

One of the strands in the mission of ISCTE-IUL is its “applied focus ... [to be achieved] by maximizing the interplay between entrepreneurship, technology and innovation ...”, which also constitutes the third axis of its strategic plan.

ISCTE-IUL has set up four subsidiaries in order to optimise service to the community. INDEG-IUL provides executive post-graduate courses geared toward private companies and has also been launching in-company training courses since 2013.

AUDAX-IUL organises “entrepreneurship the ISCTE-IUL way”, including life-long learning, and is an incubator for some 25 companies. To quote from ISCTE-IUL’s 2013 self-evaluation report, it is “targeting young people from high school and young professionals to poorer populations in articulation with local governments. It was the first entrepreneurship centre to be set up at a Portuguese university”.

The two youngest organisations are Global-IUL, which conducts consulting projects, and IPPS-IUL, the Institute for Public and Social Policies, which provides post-graduate training for the public and non-profit sectors.

In almost all the interviews during the site visit the team heard about various forms of interaction between ISCTE-IUL and companies and local government, for example, in urban planning projects. The team commends ISCTE-IUL for its social responsibility and strongly supports its strategic objective to strengthen outreach, for both its own value and for securing revenue. Moreover, these collaborations are of mutual benefit for companies and society, and for ISCTE-IUL, for instance in securing internships for students at all levels of study and in identifying enterprising students as future staff.

The essential message that the team heard in the interview with ISCTE-IUL’s social partners was that the university listens to their needs with an open mind, which was succinctly coined as “lack of arrogance”, by one of the partners. In another interview, the head of one entity underlined that services are tailored to the request of the customer, and not vice-versa to the profile of the university’s academic staff. *This kind of openness to the customer is a clear trademark of ISCTE-IUL and it would benefit from emphasising this approach in its marketing.*

## 7. Internationalisation

As noted, internationalisation permeates ISCTE-IUL’s full range of activities as set down in its strategic plan: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, as well as resource management and quality.

In 2012, 13% of students at ISCTE-IUL were foreign; by 2016 this proportion has reached 20%. Three years ago only some courses were taught in English, whereas today, according to the self-evaluation report, “one undergraduate, eleven masters’ [programmes] and seven PhDs, which account for 220 curricular units” are taught in English. The team also heard of double or

multiple degree and joint programmes with foreign partners. The *Handbook for Prospective International Students* is informative, and local support for incoming students from abroad via a “buddy system” is well developed. A policy for recognising study abroad credits is in place. ISCTE-IUL also has partners in study programmes in several, mainly Portuguese-speaking, countries, but China has also been a strong market for the university in the past years and these programmes have been reinforced.

In research and knowledge transfer, ISCTE-IUL is involved in numerous international projects listed in its self-evaluation report and website, and has contacts and collaborations the world over, which the team also heard in many interviews. The international recognition of research, especially in publications, has been mentioned above. The mobility of staff is another aspect of internationalisation that ISCTE-IUL actively promotes.

The need to reinforce ISCTE-IUL’s mission by communicating its commitment to internationalisation has been mentioned. The team would like to note two additional points concerning internationalisation. Firstly, that expansion into foreign countries needs to be backed by a sound business plan, which ISCTE-IUL may have but which the team did not explore. Secondly, *ISCTE-IUL should take care of the quality assurance of its international activities in a holistic way, and not only by way of the internationally required programme accreditation.* Moreover, *ISCTE-IUL should make sure to continuously track the academic, institutional and financial success and viability of their international programmes, both collaborative and franchised.*

## 8. Quality assurance

The recognition by the national accreditation agency A3ES of ISCTE-IUL’s internal quality assurance system has been mentioned earlier but is also relevant to this section, as are the initiatives of ISCTE-IUL to acquire international quality evaluation. Beyond the AACSB accreditation of the Business School and four engineering programmes by EUR-ACE, there are the ISO certification of some services and the 2013 IEP evaluation and current follow-up evaluation.

The team saw an extensive quality assurance manual in Portuguese and English. A hierarchy of commissions ensure the functioning of the quality assurance system, from quality strategy to the technical management of the implementation. The team was assured that the quality loop, from analysis to implementation, to feedback and improvement is conducted on an ongoing basis. In fact, the team saw a quality culture and the philosophy of quality enhancement, which both consist of the presence of adequate concepts and tools as ‘hard factors’ and of a mind-set to be described as an enhancement culture based on openness and service approach as ‘soft factors’. The members of the community of ISCTE-IUL live by these factors which are exemplary both in their technical refinement and, as it appears, in their broad acceptance in the institution.

## **9. Conclusions**

ISCTE-IUL is a well-managed, forward-looking university with a staff and students who work together in a collegiate atmosphere and with a shared mind for quality and ongoing enhancement. The follow-up review has confirmed that ISCTE-IUL continues to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to apply management skills and dedication to move forward. The team commends the activities of ISCTE-IUL and as such the recommendations provided in this report and summarised below are not issues that require urgent attention, but rather some suggestions for further development which could help ISCTE-IUL in steering towards its goals.

### **Summary of recommendations**

1. The team encourages ISCTE-IUL to go further in its mission statement to include other values that permeate its community, namely internationalisation, outreach to society, and students' personal development, such as explicit emphasis on development of soft skills and self-confidence, with a view to not only fostering their individual opportunities but also to becoming a supportive member of society and placing value on democratic citizenship.
2. The team considers it a rational move to have one single advisory body with the merging of the University Council and the Senate, but the desired effectiveness of such a sizeable body needs to be ensured in operational terms, for example, by providing such internal structures and processes that make a sufficient degree of quality input and follow-up both of discussions and decisions likely.
3. The team encourages ISCTE-IUL to continue its discussions on the restructuring of departments/schools under consideration of their fitness for purpose and departments should not be seen as legal entities; instead the programme responsibilities should shape its organisational set-up.
4. ISCTE-IUL might consider including students in both the scientific and pedagogic committees at the school/department level and even joining the two bodies.
5. If the full strategic plan of the university does not set priorities, ISCTE-IUL should consider defining these in order to ensure that the most important things get done.
6. ISCTE-IUL might start discussions on what constitutes fitness of purpose, that is, a concise analytical view of identified learning outcomes in teaching could be stronger.
7. ISCTE-IUL is advised to maintain and strengthen the role of the quality committee as a 'robust' gatekeeper to quality-related decisions and measures in teaching and learning.
8. The team suggests that ISCTE-IUL considers a more holistic approach to evaluating ongoing programmes, not only the individual course or teacher but extending to the entire student life-cycle, from entrance requirements to the selection process to support systems, ICT, library service, blended and e-learning, the examination system,

and learning outcomes and attained competences, keeping in mind that a programme is not just the sum of its tutorials but rather a matter of fit for purpose compilation in terms of coordination and progression.

9. The team suggests that ISCTE-IUL continues to think about possibilities for developing blended and e-learning methods and reconsiders the compulsory attendance policy of the courses that would allow for a more customised learning process and facilitate part time studying.
10. Openness to the customer, especially in its subsidiary organisations, is a clear trademark of ISCTE-IUL and it would benefit from underlining this approach in its marketing.
11. ISCTE-IUL should take care of the quality assurance of its international activities in a holistic way, and not only by way of the internationally required programme accreditation.
12. ISCTE-IUL should make sure to continuously track the academic, institutional and financial success and viability of its international programmes, both collaborative and franchised.