



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A. General considerations

The public universities and *Universidade Católica Portuguesa*, represented in the *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas* – CRUP (Council of Portuguese University Deans), were responsible for the launching of the public debate on the evaluation of higher education aimed at analysing the established systems in other countries together with foreign experts, and in 1993 instituted a self-evaluation process within the scope of a pilot experience that was to be sanctioned by *Lei da Avaliação do Ensino Superior* (Higher Education Evaluation Law), for which purpose the *Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas* (Portuguese Universities Foundation) was set up.

Law 38/94 of 21 November, the Higher Education Evaluation Law, laid the bases of the evaluation and monitoring system applicable to public and private university and polytechnic higher education institutions, by creating the general framework of the evaluation model.

Significant is the wording of Article 76 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, amended in 1997 by Constitutional Law 1/97 of 20 September, which rendered the legal, scientific, pedagogic, administrative and financial independence of *Universities* subject to *positive evaluation of teaching standards*.

With a view to drafting the instruments required to establish the provisions of the Higher Education Evaluation Law, by way of Order 147-A/ME/96 published in *Diário da República* (Official Journal), I Series – B, no. 192-A of 21 August, the Education Minister appointed the Reflection and Steering Group for the Evaluation Process of Higher Education Institutions, composed of a number of personalities from the



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

subsystems and structures involved in the process and from the academic, scientific and professional community, which was entrusted the task of proposing rules and general principles aimed at defining and ensuring the implementation of the evaluation system for higher education institutions, the setting up of the representative entities and the cohesion and credibility of the higher education evaluation and monitoring system. The Reflection Group was also entrusted with creating self-evaluation guidelines, by areas of knowledge, for the baccalaureate and degree courses given at private and cooperative higher education institutions and at higher polytechnic institutes. Upon the general guidelines being approved, the Reflection Group prepared a bill that, with amendments, resulted in Decree-Law 205/98 of 11 July.

Decree-Law 205/98 of 11 July created the *Conselho Nacional de Avaliação do Ensino Superior* – CNAVES (National Higher Education Evaluation Council), instituted the general rules for the implementation of the higher education evaluation and monitoring system, the general principles applicable to the setting up of the entities representing the public and private university and polytechnic higher education institutions and the general principles to ensure the harmony, cohesion and credibility of the system, and provided for the possibility of the system's target-evaluation being carried out by a national or foreign independent entity in coordination with the Council.

In line with the provisions of Law 38/94, the evaluation system is applicable to all university and polytechnic, public and private, concordatory, private and cooperative, military and also police and safety higher education institutions.

B. Main characteristics of the system



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

Scope

The higher education evaluation and monitoring system covers all public and private university and polytechnic higher education institutions, irrespective of the type of governance or supervision to which these are subject.

Under Article 2 (1) of Decree-Law 205/98 of 11 July, all institutions are entitled to participate in this system. Pursuant to Article 2 (2) of this Decree-Law, the institutions not exercising this right will be subject to an evaluation to be carried out under such terms as may be fixed by an order of the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education.

Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation system enshrined in the law are:

- To promote improved quality of the activities undertaken;
- To inform and clarify the teaching community and the Portuguese community in general;
- To ensure more accurate knowledge and more transparent dialogue between higher education institutions and to contribute to the adjustment of the higher education institutions network.

Principles

- Independence and impartiality of the evaluating entity, as a guarantee of the reliability of the results, by appointing national or foreign independent experts, teachers or personalities of recognised merit in the areas of education and research to the external evaluation committees and, depending on the nature of the activities to be



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

evaluated, other personalities of recognised artistic, cultural and entrepreneurial merit;

— Actual participation of the evaluated institutions in the evaluation process, either through their governing bodies, where self-evaluation is concerned, or through the representative entities responsible for the coordination of external evaluation;

— Hearing of the teaching staff and students of the evaluated institutions;

— Publication of the evaluation reports and of the evaluated institutions' response.

Focus

The evaluation and monitoring system focuses on the quality of the scientific and pedagogic performance of higher education institutions, with particular emphasis on teaching, qualifications of the teaching staff, the research carried out, provision of services to the community and cultural actions undertaken, condition of the premises and pedagogic and scientific equipment, and international cooperation projects.

Without prejudice to other aspects, the following must also be considered:

— Actual student demand, academic success and social support mechanisms;

— Integration of graduates in the labour market;



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

- Interdisciplinary, interdepartmental and interinstitutional cooperation;
- Organisation and management efficiency.

Contract-based links

The contract-based link of the evaluation process between the political power and the academic power is reflected by the signing of protocols between the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education (formerly the Education Minister) and the Representative Entities – *FUP – Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas* (Portuguese Universities Foundation); *ADISPOR – Associação dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos* (Association of Higher Polytechnic Institutes) and *APESP – Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Superior Privado* (Portuguese Private Higher Education Association).

Harmony, cohesion and credibility of the system

A global coordination structure – the National Higher Education Evaluation Council – was set up to guarantee the harmony, cohesion and credibility of the system. The law also provides for the same external evaluation committees for each area of knowledge in each university or polytechnic higher education subsystem.

Financing

Evaluation costs and self-evaluation costs are borne by the relevant institutions; external evaluation is co-financed by the Ministry for Science Technology and Higher Education and the institutions.

Stages of the evaluation process



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

Succinctly speaking, evaluation can be broken down into two stages, which are self-evaluation and external evaluation, culminating in the overall institutional evaluation of higher education.

The target-evaluation of the system can be carried out by a national or foreign external entity in coordination with the National Higher Education Evaluation Council, in its capacity as the system's national leading body, the purpose of this target-evaluation being to ensure the total harmony, cohesion and credibility of the entire higher education evaluation and monitoring process, with a view to complying with the standards of excellence that must preside over the system's overall performance.

Institutions pertaining to the system

The system's national coordination body is the National Higher Education Evaluation Council. Its goal is to ensure the harmony, cohesion and credibility of the higher education evaluation and monitoring process, with a view to complying with the standards of excellence that must preside over the system's overall performance.

In order to contribute towards the high technical standards of the evaluation system being maintained, the National Higher Education Evaluation Council shall:

- On the basis of updated information, perform an ongoing critical evaluation of the evolution in the standards of excellence both in Europe and across the world;
- Observe the interdependences between the overall higher education system and the national and transnational civil society,



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

formulating the principles to be observed in order to ensure sustained development.

It is responsible for examining the overall cohesion of the evaluation system based on the comparative study of the reports issued, focusing on:

- The indicators used in the different types of education;
- The requirement levels applied;
- The relation between the courses given and the labour market trends;
- The perspective of the European dimension of the evaluated courses.

From the standpoint of the overall evaluation of the higher education system, the National Higher Education Evaluation Council is responsible for issuing prospective reports and recommendations for the rationalisation and improvement of the higher education system.

Within the scope of its powers, the following intervention areas are considered to be of particular relevance:

- Evolution of institutional cooperation;
- Preparation of the higher education system for integrated economic, cultural and social development;
- Analysis of the performance of the existing institutions in light of the internal and external requirements of a knowledge and wisdom information society;
- Convergence of the higher education system to exercise citizenship.

To be noted is that, with a view to achieving articulation with society, the Council may set up Committees with Associations,



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

Professional Business Associations and Scientific and Cultural Organisations.

Composition of CNAVES

The National Evaluation Council is composed of:

- (a) The Chairman, appointed by the Government from among highly prestigious personalities by way of a resolution of the Council of Ministers;
- (b) Personalities of recognised competence appointed by the Government by way of a resolution of the Council of Ministers;
- (c) The chairmen of the evaluation councils set up in the representative entities;
- (d) A representative appointed by the Council of Portuguese University Deans;
- (e) A representative appointed by the *Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos* (Coordination Council of the Higher Polytechnic Institutes);
- (f) A representative appointed by the Portuguese Private Higher Education Association;
- (g) Students representing the higher education students' associations for each type referred to in subparagraphs (d) to (f) above.

The Council operates in plenary session and through committees: the standing committee of the Chairmen of the Evaluation Councils, the higher university education committee and the higher polytechnic education committee.

In order to guarantee the credibility of the process, the Council must ensure:



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

- (a) Recourse to the same external evaluation committees in all cases relating to the same area of knowledge or scientific expertise in each of the higher education subsystems;
- (b) High requirement standards, with duly selected indicators whenever possible;
- (c) Adopting the same guidelines for each subsystem thus allowing for uniform indicator approval criteria to be applied to all the institutions giving the same type of education.

In addition to the information it must be regularly provided by the *Instituto Nacional de Estatística* (National Statistics Institute), the Council may request any public or private entities to supply it with the data it considers essential to fully perform its duties. The evaluated institutions and evaluation councils shall provide all such information as the Council may request of them.

The law sets forth the principles to be observed by the Representative Entities responsible for external evaluation, which are recognised as such by a protocol to be entered into with the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education. The following entities are currently recognised:

— *Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas – FUP* (Portuguese Universities Foundation) – recognised to be the entity representing the state Universities and *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* (Portuguese Catholic University) by Protocol of 19 June 1995;

— *Associação dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos – ADISPOR* (Association of Higher Polytechnic Institutes) – recognised to be the entity representing the public higher polytechnic institutes by Protocol of 16 de December 1998;



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

— *Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Superior Privado - APESP* (Portuguese Private Higher Education Association) – recognised to be the entity representing private higher education institutions by Protocol of 3 March 1999.

Evaluation Councils are set up in each representative entity to act as coordination structures for the evaluation and monitoring activities carried on by the institutions that form part thereof.

The External Evaluation Committees, the composition of which is proposed by the Evaluation Councils to the National Higher Education Evaluation Council, are the same for each higher education subsystem and the corresponding areas. Upon being approved, the composition of the External Evaluation Committees is sent to the Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education for sanctioning.

Consequences¹ of evaluation and non-integration in the system

Under the terms of the law, evaluation results are taken into accounts by the Education Ministry for the purpose of applying measures adjusted to the nature of the evaluated activities, notably:

- Increase of public funding;
- Incentive to creating new courses or developing existing courses;
- Increased support to scientific research activities;
- Drawing up of development plans, with a view to correcting the malfunctions and disparities detected in the course of the evaluation process.

¹ The consequences have not been regulated by the Government.



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

To also be noted is that where the results of the ongoing evaluation of higher education institutions are negative, the following measures can also be taken:

- Reduction or suspension of public funding where institutions fail to observe recommendations;
- Suspension of course registration;
- Cancellation of course registration;
- Cancellation of degree recognition;
- Closing down of the institutions.

With regard to the effects of non-integration in the evaluation system, the law sets forth that institutions not exercising their right to participate in the system shall be subject to:

- No State funding, this not applying to those falling within the scope of school welfare;
- Refusal of authorisation to enrol new students in the available courses;
- Suspension of course registration or cancellation of authorisation to give courses, depending on whether public universities and higher polytechnic institutes, or the official recognition of private and cooperative teaching establishments are involved.

Decree-Law 205/98 restated the principle of institutions being required to consider evaluation results as a directive to improve the quality of their performance and to publish the internal measures they may adopt. In light of results, institutions shall prepare plans that can be converted into programme-contracts to be entered into with the



CONSELHO NACIONAL DE AVALIAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

State, in order to attain concrete objectives within an established time frame, notably:

- Support to qualification programmes for the teaching staff;
- Support to teaching methods and equipment;
- Support to student accompaniment projects;
- Support to projects for the interaction of research with education.

Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations contained in the External Evaluation Reports and in the Overall Summary Reports, the main recommendations to the Government are set out in the reports published by the CNAVES.

José Fontes

Secretary-General