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Strategic Plan

PLANO ESTRATÉGICO

2015 | 2019

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Strategic Plan 2015 | 2019
Universidade Aberta

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opening note

The Strategic Plan, for the four-year period 2015-2019 constitutes the steering document for the development of the governance and action of Universidade Aberta (UAb) throughout the reference period. It is a document that arises from the provisions of the Action Program, in particular the strategic questions and the lines of action which are now presented to the consideration of the General Council in compliance to the competences of this body and in accordance to the provisions of article 22nd, 2nd paragraph of the statutes of UAb.

In view of the nature of this document, namely as an operationalization instrument of the objectives shown in the Action Program for the Application to Rector of the UAb, its organisation was carried out in two main areas: *Strategic Issues* and *Lines of Action*.

The first encompasses the contextualization of strategic thought and the definition of objectives for the consolidation of the mission and action of UAb, both at a national and an international level and it is developed within the guiding objectives listed below:

- i) Consolidate the leadership in research and in distance education and in a network;
- ii) Promote the internationalisation of UAb;
- iii) Foster the creation of scale;
- iv) Enhance the quality of education;
- v) Develop sustainability;
- vi) Project the partnership UAb and UC.

In the second part of this document the lines of action for the implementation of the goals and their respective measures of fulfilment are formulated, which I believe are not only instruments for the strategic planning to be developed throughout the four-year period as well as the means to monitor the expected levels of achievement.

This is an action plan that aims to consolidate the intervention of Universidade Aberta at a national and international level, providing continuity to the cooperation processes under way and to be established with other institutions, in particular, within the scope of the partnership between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade of Coimbra and also to promote quality in distance learning practices and in a network within the emerging contexts of cultural, scientific and technological globalisation.

It is a strategic plan drawn from the concept that the sustainability of the mission of Universidade Aberta finds in the processes of pedagogical innovation the means to reassert the mission of the institution, which must be formalised in leadership in distance learning and in a network.

Distance learning and in a network constitutes the specialisation of Universidade Aberta and its differentiating factor in relation to the other institutions of the network of Portuguese higher education, the leadership in research therefore being not only a challenge but above all a requirement for the quality and social trust in the education and learning in a network as a means to the creation of knowledge and the projection of the Portuguese language and cultures.



Founded in 1988, Universidade Aberta is the only public higher distance learning university in Portugal.

Universidade Aberta, the public university of distance education, has as its **Mission**, within the Portuguese academical context and in accordance to the framework of the law, the creation, transmission, dissemination of culture, knowledge, the arts, science and technology at the service of society through the articulation of studies, learning, research and the provision of services.

Universidade Aberta is based on organic units essentially on a subject basis, that interact in the organisation of education, reserach and cooperation programs with society in a fruitful view of interdisciplinary collaboration. The requirement for interdisciplinary collaboration placed by the organisational structure favours the integration and

cohesion of the mission areas of the University and enables flexibility, the ability to provide fast responses, of high productivity, creativity and innovation.

In addition to Distance Learning, the University focuses on activities and interventions in a wider scope and within the conceptual framework of Distance Education, as well as targeting Lifelong Learning.

A University in any place of the world. Rooted in the promotion of a solid culture of quality, the UAb as a public university of distance learning should have a key role in the dissemination of the Portuguese language and culture to create a clear competitive advantage in its statement as a Global University.

The University will leverage its resources integrating collaborative networks, present in all its areas of specialisation. The courses lectured in partnership with other Portuguese and foreign universities, and the European project partners deserve a special mention. Developing an organizational culture of proximity,

territorially without frontiers, entrepreneurial, integrated in national and international networks, Universidade Aberta states its identity with pride.

The UAb fosters **Transparency** either in decision making or in the dissemination of information. Transparency creates reliability, enables mutual trust between UAb and all its *stakeholders*, implies the clarity about what we do and how we do it, passing through the involvement of *stakeholders*, the information made available and by the comprehension of all of the actions taken by top management.

The **Credibility** of UAb is stated in the national and international recognition of its excellence as a public Portuguese University of distance learning and *eLearning*.

Ethics expresses the commitment of UAb with the highest standards of honesty, transparency and integrity. We value the integrity of our staff, the people that represent UAb, as well as, of all our *stakeholders*.

Ethics in our activity is a value creation factor and its activity is asserted by citizen action, that happens in the internal context of service to the university community, and in an external view of the common good, in the service to the community in general.

UAb provides **Innovation** in any place in the world and “**Openness**” through *online* training based on an innovative and pioneering pedagogical model.

strategic issues

Form strategic issues for the thought and planning of action in the scope of the mission and activity of UAb the consolidation of the leadership in research and in distance learning in a network; to promote the activity at an international level, in particular for the intervention in Portuguese speaking countries; to foster the creation of scale for a decisive intervention in the new settings and contexts of education; strengthen the quality of the pedagogical practices and processes in distance teaching in the area of education; develop sustainability through the enhancement of organisational and scientific knowledge in distance learning, which is the specialisation of the UAb; and, finally to boost the partnership between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade de Coimbra, as a means for the creation of scale, for innovation and leadership

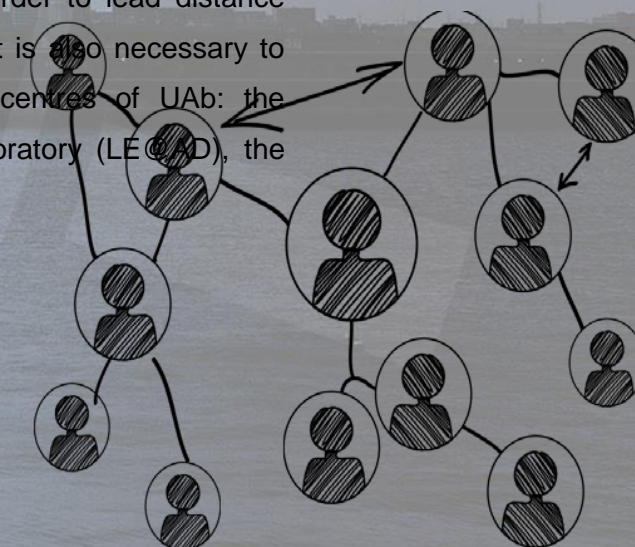
in the provision of education in distance learning and in a network in Portuguese speaking countries.

consolidate the leadership in research and networked distance education

Give continuity to the innovative project of UAb, it is a priority to ensure the leadership in research and in distance learning practices and in a network in Portugal. For that to happen it is fundamental that UAb can transform its organisational, technological and pedagogical knowledge in an added value in its intervention in the network of higher education. The partnership between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade de Coimbra assumes particular importance in this matter due to the thought and pioneering of the actions that will arise from it. In order to lead distance learning and in a network in Portugal it is also necessary to strengthen the role of the research centres of UAb: the Distance Learning and *eLearning* Laboratory (LEQAD), the Centre for Intercultural Relations and

Migration Studies (CEMRI), the external research centres based at UAb. Also, the Observatory of Quality in Distance Education and *eLearning* has a complementary role to be developed as an advanced generator of knowledge in this area.

The definition of an ambitious research agenda in distance learning and networking, that commits all the faculty and researchers of UAb, constitutes one of the tasks that is a priority for the sustainability of the activities of UAb, not only in the present but also in the future.



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The results of the study made by the Observatory of Quality in Distance Education and *eLearning* in regard to the way how distance learning is carried out in Portugal shows that there is a wide diversity of concepts and distance learning practices as well as a lack of response from the higher education institutions of a sustained thinking in this area.

This diversity arises from the lack of public regulation but arises also from the lack of pedagogical training of the teaching staff. It is the obligation of UAb, as the pioneering and leading institution in this area in Portugal, to promote quality thinking and its sharing, under certain conditions, with other institutions.

It is thus necessary to undertake an oriented leadership

either to the regulation of distance learning practices on behalf of the political power, in which necessarily UAb will have to be heard, either for the change and innovation in the thinking of distance learning and in a network in current Portuguese society. The leadership of UAb will have to be able to continue to provide continuity to what is already being done in terms of online training for faculty, but also goes through being able to ensure the standardisation of practices and the quality of the educational courses in this area of teaching.



promote the internationalisation of UAb

UAb is, by nature, an institution dedicated to international intervention, which implies a concept of faculty and administrative organisation guided to that goal. More than the facility of access to learning in a network it is necessary to understand that distance learning in a network is a social and cognitive process

which occurs in a digital society seeking the enhancement of self-regulation skills and social and collaborative mediation of the learners. To learn in a network means to participate in the creation of knowledge in a shared and active manner by the members of a virtual community. It is through the processes of collective learning that the education models in a network are shown to be profoundly innovative in the current scenarios of the digital society.

It is necessary to strengthen the internationalisation of UAb, enhancing in this movement the creation of knowledge in Portuguese, being aware that it was done by participation in an active manner in the globalisation networks of learning and creation of knowledge through educational courses that respond, in an innovative manner, to the training needs of ever more demanding international publics.

foster the creation of scale

Innovation is of the greatest importance to the action and thinking of UAb as it enables strategic gain in the creation of scale through networks of learning.

The creation of scale currently constitutes the most important aspect for the development of distance learning and in a network in the multitude of dimensions of the globalisation of knowledge. In addition to its undeniable intervention in the lessening of physical and social frontiers in teaching and learning and in the creation of knowledge, the scale is operationalised through the opening of new scenarios and contexts of education in a network.

The university that I foresee is not configured in terms of the size of the site, but, on the contrary, is a university that in addition to being a local reference, asserts itself globally and makes it its territory for the creation of knowledge.

The creation of scale is a goal of the university of the future (it should be read, of Universidade Aberta), seen as a networked university that through its network defines its own operational size for the development of a shared thinking that will generate change and innovation for the creation of knowledge.



strengthen the teaching quality

The quality of educational courses and support services of virtual learning constitutes a condition for the success of the process of internationalisation and active participation of UAb in globalisation.

The challenge of internationalisation consists in creating educational courses of quality for citizenship and the

creative participation in the economy of the globalisation of knowledge. It is the main challenge that UAb faces to prepare itself for the future of education in a digital society and the enhancement of the creation of knowledge externally, particularly by Portuguese speakers.

It is a challenge that requires a greater dedication and investment of faculty and researchers of UAb in the creation of new educational paths directed not only to initial training as well as to the demands of the digital

society for lifelong learning.

The Observatory of Quality in Distance Education and *eLearning* has been developing a pioneering work in the assessment of distance learning in a network in Portugal. In this sense, the Observatory, in continuing its activity, should work actively in the definition of indicators for the quality of the system of distance learning in a network.

Quality also constitutes a strategic objective to ensure the competitive, scientific and pedagogical sustainability of UAb in globalisation.



develop sustainability

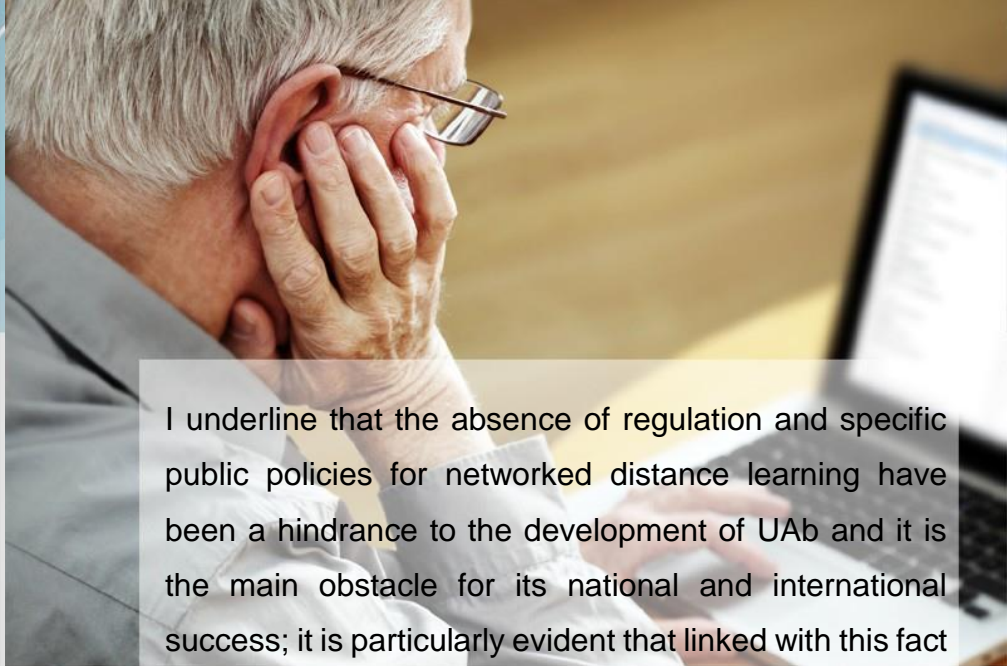
UAb occupies a strategic position in the Portuguese higher education network as the only higher education institution exclusively dedicated to networked distance learning.

The activity of UAb extends to 31 countries, which represents both an operational knowledge capital and an organisational culture of undeniable strategic value

that, however, has not deserved the necessary appreciation and institutional recognition on behalf of the central authorities. This situation must definitely change. The creation of UAb in 1988 resulted from the perception, by the government of the time, of the strategic value to Portugal of the existence of an institution of higher distance learning that was able to qualify adult population and requalify the active population and, thus, serve as a means of creation


of social and cultural capital essential to the development of the country. Twenty-seven years after the creation of UAb, distance learning presents itself as the most up-to-date for the intervention in cultural and scientific development of society, not only in the training and requalification of the adult population but, as with the passing of time, in the training of young adults, either in terms of initial training programs or in lifelong learning programs.

The lack of regulation of distance learning in Portugal has direct implications not only in the absence of criteria and indicators to ensure the quality in the network of public and private higher education, as well as the sustainability of the financing model of the institution. In effect, since its Foundation, the only public funding of UAb is state funding not based in any type of indicators.



I underline that the absence of regulation and specific public policies for networked distance learning have been a hindrance to the development of UAb and it is the main obstacle for its national and international success; it is particularly evident that linked with this fact the lack of an enlightened policy to support the intervention of UAb, as is required, alongside the Portuguese speaking countries.

To ensure the quality and sustainability of networked distance learning in Portugal and specifically the model adopted by the UAb, the Strategic Plan defends as a priority the regulation of the distance learning regime and the integration of UAb in the public higher education financing system. It is imperative to resolve these two issues soon, given the progressive adoption of distance learning practices of other public and private Institutions of higher education.



As is public knowledge it was formally requested in 2012 of the Minister for Education and Science the regulation of networked distance learning.

In reply to my request, in 2014, the Minister for Education and Sciences created a working group, coordinated by the president of A3ES and constituted by representatives of CRUP, the university and polytechnic institutions of higher education both public and private and by the Rector of Universidade Aberta, with the mission to prepare a proposal for a decree-law. The proposal was presented to the government with important contributions from UAb. But, when it was expected that the proposal for a decree-law would be approved, it was not.

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Notwithstanding constraints of a regulatory and financial nature, the activity and the virtual pedagogical model of the UAb are still references in the Portuguese higher education system. The recognition of UAb extends beyond frontiers due to the fact of having at present, in motion an intense training program for *online* higher education teaching in Brazil and Cape Verde.

The holding of advanced programs of education and training of an international scope – with particular focus on programs aimed at Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique – has contributed to balance the budget execution of UAb.

However, the constraints arising from the current system of funding of UAb are reflected negatively in all sectors of academical life, mainly being noticeable in the limits imposed to the payroll, that constitute serious obstacles to the renewal and progression of teaching faculty and administrative staff as would be desirable, namely in areas

of strategic development for the institution. In addition to the promotion of sustainable strategies of scientific and pedagogical innovation, it is necessary to give continuity to the effort of opening the university to new publics in Portuguese speaking countries, valuing initial training and lifelong learning as a means for the qualification, inclusion and digital citizenship in globalisation.

Sustainability is a central issue not only at the administrative and financial level but also at the pedagogical level.

Usually, pedagogical sustainability is not talked about, however, it is of the greatest importance.

Pedagogical sustainability depends on the capacity of innovation and active intervention of the institution in the knowledge society, namely its capacity to have a competitive educational proposal. In order to make this happen a rigorous planning process, financial stability and the capacity for economic growth through the substantial

broadening of training proposals in emerging areas are required.

Nevertheless, let it be clear that for UAb a business model is unsuitable given its incompatibility with the institutional commitment of social, cultural and scientific development for the creation of knowledge in society.

boost the partnership UAb and UC

It is equally imperative to give continuity to the project of creation of scale that UAb has been defining and that was accomplished in July 2015, with the establishment of a partnership between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade of Coimbra, whose strategic objective was to lead networked distance learning in Portuguese speaking countries.

In addition to what it represents for internationalisation and the active participation of both universities the partnership presents the biggest change operated until now in the Portuguese higher education system, seeking the development and enhancement of an education proposal in an attractive network and at an international scale.

Its impact on the Portuguese economy is still to be determined, but it is estimated to be significant.

The partnership has not only constituted a decisive step in the path that has been outlined for the statement of leadership at UAb in thought and educational practices of distance learning in Portugal and at an international level but also a visible sign of the shift of thought and conception of the university for the digital society.



linhas de ação

Lines of action

consolidate the leadership
in research and networked
distance education

The growth in research carried out by UAb faculty and researchers, both in quantity and in quality is strategically central for the next four years. I have on this matter an attitude of openness and firmness to the goal of strongly supporting research, development and innovation activities in particular in the area of networked distance learning.

Without research, UAb cannot fulfil its mission. It is from research, in networked distance learning that the specialisation of the university is stated.

Because of the work of researchers, the indicators of scientific production have shown a significant improvement in the last years.

Despite this improvement there still is a long way to go to achieve excellence. Due to the strategic importance of this area for the sustainability of UAb this matter requires the upmost attention and support over the next four years.

In the scope of the partnership between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade of

Coimbra it is intended to develop the collaboration

between faculty and researchers of both institutions promoting the establishment of networks and joint research projects as well as their internationalisation.

The initiatives and measures developed until now at UAb in the field of institutional and technical support to research project management require continuity and consolidation.

It is fundamental that UAb is able to obtain a volume of

external financing which is necessary for the investment in the area thus seeking to obtain a growing professionalism in existing support structures.

An incentive policy to entrepreneurship will be established in all its aspects, given its increased social value. The university community must function as a body to promote and support the development of entrepreneurial projects that either result from students' initiatives or from faculty or students' initiatives.

specific action proposals

- To promote the leadership of UAb in faculty training in networked distance learning;
- To promote the definition of a fundamental and applied research agenda in networked distance learning;
- To stimulate and support the activity of the centres and research poles of the centres based at UAb;
- To promote the involvement of faculty and researchers of UAb in fundamental and applied research projects in areas that are considered strategic;
- To increase the number of research projects submitted of an international scope, as well as the respective success rate;
- To boost the search for funds for individual research scholarships arising from financing of public institutions and private companies in the form of research contracts;
- To promote, as a consequence of the research carried out, the increase of innovation processes and pedagogical change for networked distance learning;
- To develop in a continued manner, the open resources program;
- To approach the research activity and transfer of knowledge to the Local Learning Centers;
- To establish an active, innovative and competitive policy at a global scale in editorial matter.

promote UAb's internationalisation

The challenge of internationalisation is crucial to the future of UAb. Due to the accumulated past experience and the nature of the means employed nowadays, UAb is well positioned to consolidate its position as a relevant institution in networked distance training in the world, particularly in Portuguese speaking countries.

In the next four years UAb must strengthen its international dimension.

Internationalisation is an excellent opportunity for UAb to grow the number of students and rationalize its action. This rationalization is very important because it will imply the profound transformation of the institution, starting from its educational offer, which will depend on people's needs. Naturally, an international student will only seek UAb if its educational offer is of the highest quality and lives up to expectations.

On the other hand, that will force us as an institution to respond to the real needs of people in a context of strong competition.

The starting vocation of UAb is particularly manifested in the internationalisation strategy, that must be seen across the board in terms of its action and not only as another function of the university. Internationalisation requires an active policy of change of institutional culture to build the thinking within the university in globalisation.

In this sense, UAb has developed through the creation of Local Learning Centres (CLA), its own articulated network to support students and disseminate knowledge. This project is strategic, so that it should not only consolidate within the existing network but also promote its internationalisation. It is necessary to ensure the continuity of services that the CLA currently provide to students that make use of them both in presential, semi-presential or virtually and improve the quality of the service provided.

In order for this to occur, it is necessary to enhance the organisational model of the CLA, namely the coordination and allocation of resources tasks. In addition, it is also necessary to provide the CLA with logistical conditions that ensure their functioning in a network to improve


the services provided to students.

It is noteworthy the technological development work promoted until now with the CLA such as for example in terms of the materialisation of presential tests.

It is desirable to boost the holding of academical events and university outreach in the CLA, so that they can, in articulation with local bodies develop their own programming.

Simultaneously, the development of the CLA network abroad is of strategic relevance to the institution as a means of support to internationalisation.





In this area it is necessary to review the current configuration of the UAb external centres with the aim to undertake the mission of support to students within the framework of internationalisation.

specific action proposals

- To promote a policy strongly directed to the international supply of services, namely to Portuguese speaking territories and countries;
- To clearly invest in the partnership established with the Universidade of Coimbra as a way to lead the educational offer in networked distance learning in all areas of knowledge of the Portuguese language;
- To actively promote a policy of recognition of academical degrees externally, considering the specificity of each local context;
- To promote in the scope of the partnership with the Universidade of Coimbra, the collaboration with foreign universities, with a view to supply training programs in a scheme of double or multiple degrees awards that are strongly competitive;
- To develop interchange programs of faculty and researchers with reference universities all over the world, namely with distance learning universities;
- To consolidate the participation of UAb in international networks of research and development and associate their results to the teaching activities;
- To promote the holding of internships of technical staff in international reference institutions in the area of distance learning;
- To create and develop an international model of local learning centres externally;
- To design an economic model which is able to ensure the feasibility of the CLA, in accordance to the interests of UAb and taking into account the recruitment framework in the current scheme of Public Administration;

- To further develop the CLA network so that there is national and international coverage, duly sustained from the point of view of costs, and so that each CLA has the physical and technological infrastructures that enable the provision of the necessary services;
- To boost the participation in governance bodies of UAb of personalities from the Portuguese speaking countries and of students living outside the national territory;
- To contribute to the creation of a Portuguese language community in the world, regardless of nationality or place of residence of its members, as a way to contribute to the external visibility of the Portuguese language and the support of cultural projects and of investment;
- To adjust the regulations of UAb to the objectives of internationalisation;

- To establish a guided cooperation policy to support the institutions of Portuguese speaking states and territories that aspire to develop distance learning models;
- To promote the cooperation and internationalisation with the aim to adjust and strengthen the partnerships and the management of distance learning projects and in a network;
- To promote the continuity of virtual mobility programs of students;
- To establish rules so that the CLA can carry out their own educational supply of activities of a university outreach;
- To develop the CLA *sites*, with coordination criteria and the strengthening of the institutional presence.

foster the creation of scale

UAb has an academical potential that enables it to provide a response to the training needs and the knowledge update of people in the greater part of areas of expertise. The existing graduation and post-graduation programs, as well as lifelong learning may be expanded namely as professional development programs.

In this area, the partnership allows to create the necessary scale to respond to the effective needs of education and training.

The training needs aroused by the rapid evolution of the professional and working world set new challenges to higher education institutions. A set of opportunities are opened in this field which UAb should exploit and value, increasing its scale of intervention in the scope of the partnership.

The progressive acceptance that learning is made throughout life via various means and multiple activities, led to the appearance of the need to validate and accreditate the training acquired by people that seek the attainment of higher or more specialized qualifications. The specific condition of UAb, as a university for the Digital Society in which we live to provide services in a flexible manner and without limitation of space and time, makes it especially adept at providing an effective response in the field of higher education, that, I have no doubts will substantially grow in the next few years.



foster the creation of scale

- To strengthen the current offer of studies and training courses with the objective to adjust it to the needs of potential students from all over the world;
- To boost the current Lifelong Learning Program, increasing the offer of professional training and university outreach combined with the issue of certificates of accreditation of skills and qualifications in order to prepare and favour the continuation of studies;

- To develop the creation and implementation of professional or academical modular programs with several bodies, companies or the public administration, both from Portugal and of other countries;

- Study the feasibility so that UAb participates in validation and accreditation processes of the experience acquired by non-formal means through professional and working contexts.

strengthen the teaching quality

I. TEACHING QUALITY

The **recognition** of the quality of teaching at UAb by A3ES, in the scope of its Integrated System of Quality Management (SIGQ), will be an effective response in the field of higher education that will certainly grow substantially in the next few years. As such, UAb must carry on its effort of creation of internal mechanisms to

guarantee the quality that is necessary for the presentation of its application to its SIGQ. The recognition of the quality of the educational and pedagogical practices and consequently of the pedagogical model of UAb will be an added value for the promotion of the pedagogical offer of the institution in highly competitive markets, in a globalised and networked society.

In this respect, it is noteworthy the activity of the Observatory of Quality of Distance Education and eLearning, that, should fulfil, in the sequence of studies that it has been carrying out, a proposal for benchmarks for quality and sustainability of distance teaching practices, and, in this way, contribute to the specialization of UAb in the development of intentional innovation in distance learning.

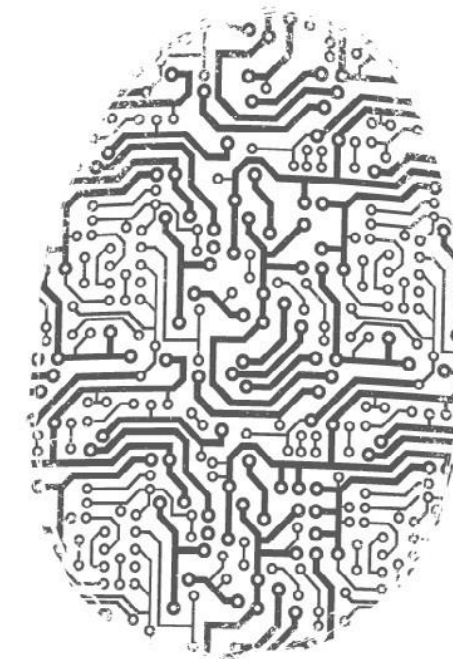
The participation of UAb in national and transnational research networks should be fostered as a means to strengthen its scientific capacity and knowledge production simultaneously facilitating its participation in centres of decision. The scientific articles, publications and communications should reflect a concern on behalf of the faculty in revealing a scientific output in the area of networked distance learning that contributes in a significant manner to the evaluation and assessment of UAb.

Quality should be implicit in all fields of actions of UAb.

CONNECTION
ANALYSIS
DATA
SEARCHING
VERIFICATION
CODING

specific action proposals

- To evaluate, adjust and standardise the existing quality indicators at UAb, in its educational offer, in its pedagogical process, in the provision of services, achieving an organized and accessible information system, avoiding the excess of bureaucracy and achieving system performances that can be understood as real processes of improvement;
- To establish clear indicators on how to measure the “*corpus*” what is considered to be quality, how to proceed and with what resources, with a planned schedule and with the greatest stability possible;
- To foster a greater involvement of UAb in the bodies and national projects of evaluation of quality programs;
- Improve the means of accreditation, evaluation and management of educational courses: A3ES, DGES, IEFP, ANQEP (National Catalogue of Qualifications);
- To promote the quality of faculty and the satisfaction of students, through the increase of the success rate, the innovation of methodology and the pedagogical process and the introduction of innovative methods of assessment;
- Consolidate the activity of the Observatory of Quality in Distance Education and *eLearning*.



SEGURANÇA
DA INFORMAÇÃO

SAFETY OF INFORMATION

strengthen the teaching quality

II. VIRTUAL CAMPUS

The digital nature of the networked distance learning processes involves a strategic vision of the quality of the services and technological infrastructures of UAb in order to enable the development and the regular activity of the students' community, faculty and non-faculty in the virtual campus.

The Virtual Campus of a digital university must be global and ubiquitous, this is, it has to be accessible anytime and anywhere. The Virtual Campus establishes the primary link of the student with the university in all its aspects: administrative, pedagogical, social and cultural.

It is fundamental that UAb develops and adapts, in an efficient manner, the technological innovations to the demands that the teaching-learning process requires, as well as the activities of university outreach

and its connection to society.

The development of IT applications to evaluate at a distance and in a presential class shall be promoted with the goal to create specific and adequate technologies, but also as a way of being in the front line of innovation in this area.

This line of action shall be boosted so that students have a wide range of support tools to aid their learning process so that the university is equipped in order to attract high potential students from all over the world.

campus
virtual

specific action proposals

- To complete the application process of dematerialisation of presential tests, evaluating its possibilities and limitations and providing support to all parties involved in the process – faculty, exam logistics, CLA – in order to avoid costs and to make an unequivocal contribution in the speed of the evaluation process of student learning;
- Review IT applications and innovate the digital tools that are used to manage information at UAb;
- Develop centralized IT infrastructure to support the learning and teaching process, to the production of study materials, to the research and the groups that develop projects;
- Review and improve the UAb website management, completing the development of the Student Academic Website and establishing simple and standardized procedures to manage the pages of Departments and Services;
- Improve the broadcasting systems of academic offer of UAb to facilitate knowledge, increase the presence and provide precise information to potential students;
- Exploit the possibility of financing that is available within the scope of European funding, as well as of other public or private community projects destined for technological innovation.



develop sustainability

In the current context of reduction, on the one hand, of public financing of the higher education system and on the other the growing demand in the improvement of performance of UAb, circumstances that are not easy to reconcile, it is necessary to adopt measures to ensure the future financial stability of UAb and increase its efficiency in the use of the resources available.

The financial sustainability of UAb depends on a set of facts both external and internal. For that reason, the Strategic Plan includes a double line of performance. In the internal plan it is imperative to improve the rationalization of the economic execution and on the external plan the diversification of financing sources, promoting the rigorous control of expenditure and increasing the income.

Fundamentally, it is necessary to achieve a stable financing plan, on a long-term basis. Given that public financing should continue to constitute in accordance to international guidelines a fundamental part of the global financing of the UAb, it is inevitable to maintain a permanent negotiation with government and with the public financing institutions of science, innovation and social development, with a view to fulfil two objectives: avoid the reduction of level of public financing; and obtain the necessary financing to be able to plan and develop strategic medium to long term actions.

It will also be necessary to promote new sources of financing, fundamentally private with the aim to develop new action programs and make the existing ones sustainable.

However, it would not be realistic to state that it is a simple and easy task to obtain that financing, without improving the ability of UAb to boost and establish programs susceptible to obtain the necessary financing for its development.

The external financing programs are more and more demanding and with very low success rates. To obtain financing, it is necessary to work in a network with reference institutions from all over the world.

To carry out this task it should count on, firstly, with the university community, constituted by people with training and experience and that can provide very valuable contributions to the fulfilment of new projects of high added value.

It is imperative to also take advantage of the important experience that UAb has managed to accumulate throughout its history in various fields, such as the integration of IT in the practices of higher education, the pedagogical innovation for distance training of large sized populations, the preparation and distribution in innovative formats of study materials of various types,

the modularisation of faculty of support services and other similar. This vast experience has an enormous potential to generate additional resources that are necessary to the financial sustainability of the institution.



The policies of financial restriction have had up to now a considerably negative effect in the balance of the budget of UAb, which leads to a rigorous control of the financial management and a permanent attention to the development of each expenditure heading.

With the aim of an efficient use of the resources available it is important to establish investment/ cost priorities, with the objective to strategically answer what

is a priority as are the inherent and indispensable costs to ensure innovation, the stability of staff maps and the stimulation of essential activities of the institution? UAb should continue with the careful management of the resources continued until now and adopt a set of measures oriented to the rationalization of costs.



specific action proposals

- To set up, within the framework of the Management Council and of the GPAQ, a commission dedicated to the simplification of administrative procedures that are carried out at UAb and with the mission of, within a period of six months, deliver a study that indicates concrete measures with the objective to rationalize costs;
- To create the conditions for the implementation of a system of cost accounting that functions as a means of budgetary control and permits the establishment of priorities and the rationalisation of expenditure;
- To further the development of management information system in terms of dematerialisation and to further the electronic administration within UAb, favouring its connection with other external initiatives and specially with the initiatives undertaken by public administrations;
- To foster the development and broadcasting of best management practices in all performance areas of UAb;
- To carry out an efficient management of areas of UAb, and to promote the resolution of existing serious problems in terms of the lack of infrastructure as a result of the financial availability;



boost the partnership UAb and UC

The partnership celebrated between Universidade Aberta and the Universidade of Coimbra, on the 23rd of July 2015, constitutes a moment of the greatest importance for UAb.

Concretely, the partnership constitutes:

i) the recognition on behalf of the oldest and one of the most prestigious Portuguese public universities, of

the strategic value of a close cooperation with UAb, given its specificity;

ii) the recognition on behalf of the government of the relevance of UAb in the scope of public higher education. In effect, all the process aimed at celebrating the partnership was accompanied by the government and deserved its agreement and support as was proven by the presence of the Minister of Education and Science and by the

Secretary of State of Higher Education in the act of signature of the partnership in Coimbra;

- iii) the possibility of UAb gaining scale and significantly increasing its number of students in the world;
- iv) a factor of rationalization of the action of UAb, in all fields, through the participation of its members in competitive international networks.

For all that was referred to previously, the partnership represents a starting moment for the profound transformation of UAb, as well as the thinking about education and the network of higher education in Portugal.

By its vocation and mission UAb is, like Universidade of Coimbra, a global university.

Due to its characteristics and teaching methodologies that it uses UAb will provide within the scope of the partnership an answer to the training needs of people at present but at a much greater scale than what happens today. Given its nature and reach the partnership is in conditions to continue in an unprecedented manner with the active participation of UAb, in the defence of Portugal's interests in the world, in the performance of an effective task of sovereignty, as

is intended by education in the 21st Century.

specific action proposals

- To consolidate the leadership position of UAb in the supply of networked distance learning in Portugal and in the Portuguese speaking countries;
- To promote a substantial increase of the UAb training offer in Portuguese;
- To attract high potential students from all over the world, specially from Portuguese language countries and territories;
- To carry out the integration of policies with the Universidade of Coimbra in essential areas for the future of the partnership, as in cases of editorial activities and technological development;
- To promote joint activities of scientific research and dissemination of knowledge in all areas;
- To establish a common policy in matters of distance learning and in a network;
- To promote the holding of joint activities of both universities with reference institutions in the world;
- To develop an innovative policy in the area of open educational resources;
- To contribute, in the scientific and cultural levels, toward the challenge of the creation of a community of Portuguese language in the world.

final note

Universidade Aberta has in its mission and action project, intervention on a global scale because networked distance learning states itself in accessibility without the constraints of time and space.

This is the strategic vision for the development of thinking of innovation and change necessary to build the university in the Portuguese speaking world and in globalisation.

The set of strategic objectives and lines of action implemented in the specific proposals shown in the Strategic Plan for the four years constitute the statement of specialisation of UAb and the consolidation of the identity of the university in the Portuguese network of higher education.

A university to build knowledge in the Portuguese speaking world and in globalisation, a university that has the knowledge to carry out distance learning and, in a network, but also knows how to share to assert its quality with its peers.

This is a strategic plan that has as its main axis of achievement, the leadership in research in networked distance learning, as a means of promoting pedagogical innovation and quality in the education offer as well as the creation of scale for internationalisation, namely with the partnership between UAb and the UC.

It is a strategic plan that bases the construction of the future also in the technological modernisation.

The necessary modernisation for a competitive university in the Portuguese speaking world and, in the globalisation, of knowledge in the digital society

Paulo Maria Bastos da Silva Dias
Rector of Universidade Aberta





UAb

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