



MANUAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2022

A3ES

Agência de Avaliação
e Acreditação
do Ensino Superior

Contents

I.	Focus and Goals of the Institutional Assessment	1
II.	Assessment Areas.....	3
1.	Accreditation History of Study Programmes and General Characterization of the Institution	5
2.	Strategy and Governance	6
2.1.	Educational, Scientific and Cultural Project	6
2.2.	Governance and Decision-Making Structure	7
2.3.	Quality management.....	7
3.	Education.....	9
3.1.	Educational offer	9
3.2.	Educational methodologies.....	9
3.3.	Further education and lifelong learning.....	10
3.4.	Students	10
4.	Research and Knowledge Transfer.....	11
4.1.	Research, technological development and artistic production	11
4.2.	Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship	12
5.	Internationalization and Cooperation.....	13
5.1.	Internationalization.....	13
5.2.	National cooperation with other institutions and with society	14
6.	Resources	15
6.1.	Academic and research staff	15
6.2.	Technical, administrative and management staff.....	16
6.3.	Facilities and equipment	16
6.4.	Institutional sustainability	17
7.	Theme selected by the Institution for further development.....	17
III.	Institutional Assessment Process.....	18
	Self-assessment.....	18
	External Assessment Team	19
	On-site visit of the External Assessment Team.....	20
	Institutional Assessment Report	20
	Decision and Dissemination of the Report.....	21
	Follow-up.....	21
IV.	References.....	22

I. Focus and Goals of the Institutional Assessment

Higher education institutions develop their activities according to their strategic goals, assuring their education, research, third mission and commitment to society.

The Institutional Assessment aims at being a continuous instrument for improvement of the national higher education system, encompassing the different higher education institutions (public and private, polytechnics and universities) and at integrating the different periodic assessments of the higher education system, namely the one carried out by the OECD.

According to the Legal Framework for the Assessment of Higher Education - RJIES (Portugal, 2007a), the **purpose** of the institutional assessment is the quality of higher education institutions' performance and of their organic units, since it assesses their strategy to assure the quality management of their activities, as well as the degree of accomplishment of their mission. The Institutional Assessment meets the demands of RJIES¹ (Portugal, 2007b) and relies on higher education institutions' performance indicators and their results (artº 4º, da Lei nº 38/2007²). The definition and the implementation of performance indicators in the assessment are based on the different missions of polytechnics and universities. It is also guided by international practice, namely the ESG (2015) and the principles and goals of the European Higher Education Area binding A3ES (artº 3.º, da Lei 38/2007)³.

According to the Law 38/2007 and to the ESG, the main **goals** of an institutional assessment are the following:

1. To contribute to the development of the internal quality management culture in higher education institutions (*standard 1.1*);
2. To foster the continuous improvement of the quality of each higher education institution (*standard 1.9*);
3. To provide society with relevant information about the performance and the results of each higher education institution and of the higher education system as a whole (*standard 1.8*);

¹ Law 62/2007, 10th of September.

² Law 38/2007, 16th of August, changed by Law 94/2019, 4th of September.

³ Institutional assessment processes of other European countries were also analysed, namely those from Finland (FINEEC, 2019), Sweden (UKÄ, 2020) and Flanders (NVAO, 2020).

4. To contribute to the simplification of degrees and diplomas' recognition and of European mobility (*standard 1.7*);
5. To facilitate the assessment procedures of new study programmes and of study programmes in operation of higher education institutions (*standard 1.2*);
6. To assess the evolution of higher education institutions, as well as its implication on the continuous improvement of the national higher education system (*standard 1.10*).

The Institutional assessment should give, maintain or withdraw accreditation of a higher education institution, by assessing the quality indicators and standards related to its strategy, its compromise to society, its scientific and pedagogical project, its incentives to students to perform an active role in the learning process, and its compliance with the mandatory standards for the functioning of higher education institutions and their study programmes, according to the parameters and indicators in each area of activity.

The first cycle of the institutional assessment started in 2016 and six years past, A3ES is launching a new cycle. This new cycle aims to be comprehensive, rigorous, and transparent, to foster an environment of trust, transparency, and institutional responsibility and to contribute, with its results, to new assessment and accreditation procedures by the A3ES. It also aims to contribute to simplifying the upcoming assessment and accreditation cycles of study programmes and, particularly, to define, by organic unit, **new simplified assessment procedures of study programmes in operation**. The institutional assessment will enable the characterization of higher education institutions by analysing a set of information annually and mandatorily published by the institution. This information is also the basis for the follow-up procedures related to the accreditation activities.

The institutional assessment covers the period between the last institutional assessment (2016) until now and assesses the dynamics and the results of the areas mentioned below.

II. Assessment Areas

The manual for institutional assessment is divided into 6 major areas which are subdivided into different subareas:

Assessment Areas

- Accreditation History of Study Programmes and General Characterization of the Institution
- Strategy and Governance
 - Educational, Scientific and Cultural Project
 - Governance and Decision-making Structure
 - Quality Management
- Education
 - Educational Offer
 - Educational Methodologies
 - Further Education and Life-long Learning
 - Students
- Research and Knowledge Transfer
 - Research, Technological Development and Artistic Production
 - Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship
- Internationalization and Cooperation
 - Internationalization
 - National Cooperation with other Institutions and with Society
- Resources
 - Academic and Research Staff
 - **Technical, Administrative and Management Staff**
 - Facilities and Equipment
 - Institutional Sustainability
- Theme for Development selected by the Institution

Each area presents an introduction which includes the definition of a set of prescriptive quality management practices, which should be implemented in higher education institutions. Each subarea presents a set of guidelines describing in detail what will be assessed, as well as a set of information and standards for a successful implementation of the practices in each assessment area. This successful implementation should translate into evidence (documents, organizational structures, study programmes, actions) presented by the institutions to demonstrate their performance.

It should be noted that a set of information will be autonomously collected through A3ES and DGEEC databases.

This institutional assessment covers the period between the last institutional assessment and the present (2017-2022). Institutions should reflect on the different aspects of their performance and characterise, in each area, their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats.

The last assessment area covers a theme selected by the institution which is understood as key for the institutional strategy and which the institution aims to develop in the future in order to enrich its performance.

1. Accreditation History of Study Programmes and General Characterization of the Institution

This first section includes a set of information which enables a general characterization of the institution, as well as the accreditation history of the institutional assessment, of study programmes in operation, of new study cycles and of internal quality management systems (for institutions which submitted their internal quality management systems to the A3ES certification).

The fields of this area will be automatically filled in by the digital platform of A3ES and, consequently, should not be filled in by the institution.

Characterization of the Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Higher Education Institution (designation)- Founding body (designation, if private entity)- Institution's nature (according to RJIES)
Accreditation History
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Institutional Assessment (2016):<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Accreditation without conditions, accreditation with conditions* Conditions of conditional accreditation- Internal Quality Management Systems:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Without certification* Submitted to certification (certification without conditions, certification with conditions, no certification)- Assessment of new study programmes, by year, organic unit and institution, in bachelors, masters and PhDs (when applicable):<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Accreditation without conditions, accreditation with conditions and no accreditation

2. Strategy and Governance

The institution has a policy and a broad and effective quality management system, which supports an educational, scientific and cultural project fitting the institution's mission and nature, an effective and participative decision-making process, as well as mechanisms to guarantee continuous improvement.

2.1. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Project

The institution should describe its strategic plan, as well as its educational, scientific and cultural project, demonstrating that these components are articulated with its mission and nature. It should also describe how the institution meet its strategic goals, balancing the defined strategic goals and the executed strategic goals.

The institution should demonstrate how the setting-up of new study programmes (2017-2021) has been integrated in the strategic plan.

The institution should indicate how the implementation of its strategic plan has contributed for the 2030 Agenda, describing the action lines for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Regarding sustainability, the institution should show how its institutional strategy contributes to the economic, environmental and social sustainability and how sustainability is integrated in the different activities and areas in the institution: education, research and cooperation with society.

It should also describe how it promotes: on the one hand, gender equality in the institution, describing the planned, developed and implemented initiatives to promote gender equality; on the other hand, the integration of minority and/or disadvantaged social groups, describing the planned, developed and implemented initiatives to promote social equity.

The institution should also demonstrate how it combats and prevents harassment, by the setting-up of a code of conduct for preventing and combating moral and sexual harassment. It should also demonstrate how it develops and implements strategies and policies to promote academic integrity.

Finally, the institution should demonstrate the presence and transparency of institutional procedures and a plan to manage risk of corruption and other infractions, showing that it regularly publishes objective information targeted to the academic community, to the external partners and to society, about its strategy, its activities, its study programmes, its research and the relation with society.

Evidence

- Strategic plan
- Plan and /or structures for sustainability (economic, social and environmental)
- Gender equality plan and the evolution registered in the field
- Corruption and risk management plan
- Code of conduct for preventing and combating moral and sexual harassment
- Ethics conduct

2.2. Governance and Decision-Making Structure

The institution should synthetically explain its functioning, describing the different decision-making levels and its articulation, so as to enable the pedagogic and scientific autonomy of its organs. The institution should demonstrate how it assures the effective participation of the members of the academic community, as well as of the external members involved in the governance of the institution and its organic units. The institution should also describe the concrete mechanisms promoting the integration of the academic and research staff, of the technical, administrative and management staff, and of the students in the decision-making processes at the different levels (of the institution and of the organic units).

The institution should also demonstrate, if necessary and applicable, how it assures the articulation between the different organic units, and how it aligns the related strategies with the institutional strategy.

Evidence

- Statutes
- Institutional regulations
- Organic structure diagram of the institution, including the organic units (if applicable)

2.3. Quality management

The institution should reflect on the evolution on the quality policy and on the internal quality management systems (IQMS), certified by A3ES or not, in their different dimensions.

The institution should demonstrate, on the one hand, how the institutional goals and strategy are supported by the IQMS and, on the other hand, how the results and conclusions produced

by the IQMS are systemically used in the strategic management and governance of the institution and in all the decision-making processes, assuring continuous improvement. Therefore, the institution should describe how the IQMS supports the implementation of the institutional strategy, the fulfilment of the goals of the educational, scientific and cultural project and also how it helps to identify areas for improvement.

The institution should also explain if the quality management policy and procedures and, namely, the IQMS, are centralised or decentralised, describing and justifying such policies, procedures and systems. In the case there is a IQMS per organic unit, the institution should demonstrate how the different systems are articulated and integrated in a comprehensive and broader IQMS. The institution should also present clear evidence that the institutional IQM is functional and effective, thus enabling the institution to plan, implement, monitor, and improve the activities in the different areas.

The institution should also demonstrate how the IQMS equally integrates the different components of its mission, and identify the mechanisms contributing to effectively improve education, research, cooperation with society and all the different support services of the institution.

The institution should also describe the systematic mechanisms encouraging the participation of the academic and research staff, of the technical, administrative and management staff and of the students in the IQMS. It should also describe how the implementation of these mechanisms have (or not) led to an effective participation of the different stakeholders in the IQMS.

Finally, the institution should demonstrate that the information system is robust and enables the information produced by the IQMS to be published and appropriately communicated to the academic community.

Evidence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Manual and other related documents • Monitoring report of the quality system 	

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

3. Education

The institution develops an institutional strategy and policies ensuring an appropriate educational offer, including lifelong learning, in accordance to its mission, as well as the social support, integration, inclusion and well-being of a diversified student profile.

3.1. Educational offer

The institution should demonstrate that the educational offer is developed according to the institutional strategy, to student demand, to the social and professional needs of society, to future expectations for societal evolution, and to the need of the consolidation of soft skills.

The institution should also describe the type(s) of organization of training programmes, the achieved and projected level of multidisciplinary, the achieved and projected level of implementation of distance education, and joint study programmes with national and international institutions. This description should include an explanation of how these different choices are integrated in the mission, goals, and dynamics of the organic units.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of the educational offer adopted by the organic units.

3.2. Educational methodologies

The institution should demonstrate how the educational methodologies used by the academic staff fit the educational offer, promote an active learning and academic success, and meet the defined learning goals.

The institution should also indicate how it uses mechanisms to encourage students to perform an active role in the learning process, and to facilitate student autonomy and their employability.

The institution should also define how it develops the curriculum of study programmes and the educational methodologies which translate a student-centred learning.

The institution should also describe the main educational methodologies used by the academic staff in their curricular units, taking into account the following typology: lecturing; blended learning; flipped classroom; peer review; learning based on projects, challenges or problems; team learning; or other. It should also demonstrate how the methodologies fit the institutional strategy.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of the educational methodologies adopted by the organic units.

Evidence

- Document related to the institutional pedagogic policy
- Strategy or policy to promote and frame distance learning, according to the Decree-Law 133/2019 (Portugal, 2019)
- Pedagogic reports and satisfaction surveys

3.3. Further education and lifelong learning

The institution should describe how it develops an institutional strategy and policies promoting lifelong learning. Particularly, it should explain how it develops a training offer aimed at a diverse population, in a flexible and creative learning environment, covering the different types of target audiences.

It should identify the training offer developed within the scope of lifelong learning with an aim to attract non-traditional students and adults. Finally, the institution should identify the mechanisms for recognizing and giving academic credit to non-formal and informal learning. The institution should also demonstrate that it develops complementary training and promotes internships, national and international mobility and the acquisition of soft skills.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of further and lifelong training organized by the organic units.

Evidence

- Services and structures aimed at advising and guiding different targets
- Programs and partnerships for life-long learning

3.4. Students

The institution should describe the institutional strategy and policies developed to attract new students, both for degree-granting study programmes and for CTesP (if the nature of the institution allows it), including students over the age of 23, non-traditional students, young people with a differentiated sociocultural background, students with special educational needs and international students.

The institution should describe the institutional strategy and policies for promoting students' academic success and how it monitors and analyses the teaching results in terms of academic success and the development and implementation of new institutional strategies for improving results and academic success.

The institution should also describe the institutional strategy and policies, mechanisms, initiatives and activities to support the integration, inclusion and socio-professional insertion of graduates and their results.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity at the level of the student body, eventually differentiating the organic units.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

4. Research and Knowledge Transfer

The institution has a policy to foster scientific research, technological development, artistic activity, the economic and social valorisation of knowledge, and technology and knowledge transfer.

4.1. Research, technological development and artistic production

The institution should describe the institutional strategy and policies to promote scientific, technological and artistic activity, as well as its main results.

The institution should indicate concrete measures (scholarships, awards, projects, events, internships) to encourage student participation in scientific research, technological development and artistic production, as a means of enhancing learning.

The institution should also describe the systematic procedures in place to ensure research integrity and to value open science.

Finally, the institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of scientific, technological and artistic activity of the organic units.

Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships, awards, R&D projects with competitive funding, mentioning the respective sources • ERC and Marie Curie Fellowships • Research awards for students • Digital tools for plagiarism detection • Code of conduct

4.2. Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship

The institution should describe its strategy and policies for transferring knowledge and technology, in the different scientific areas, as well as the main results of their implementation, in particular the economic and social valorisation of knowledge.

The institution should also describe its strategy and policies for promoting business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship (in the public sector and the third sector) and self-employment for its students, namely through the development of appropriate skills and the integration of these subjects in the educational and formative offer.

It should also point out cooperation and interface structures with the external community (business, public and social) and local, regional and national networks and partnerships.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of the knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship of the organic units.

Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts for the provision of services and respective results • Knowledge transfer licensing agreements and respective results • Participation in collaborative laboratories and respective results • Spin-off companies and start-ups • Incubation and acceleration structures

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

5. Internationalization and Cooperation

The institution develops and implements integrated and systematic institutional strategy and policies fostering internationalization and cooperation with society, which contributes to the internationalization of education and research and to local, regional and national development.

5.1. Internationalization

The institution should describe the internationalization strategy and policies and demonstrate how the institutional strategy and policies are part of a broader institutional management and governance context, which shows to what extent internationalization is approached in a systemic and comprehensive way. The institution should also explain how the internationalization strategy covers the different institutional missions/areas (education, research, cooperation with society) and which are the main instruments of internationalization (at home and abroad) developed and implemented in the different missions/areas. Based on the following tables, the institution should explain how these instruments integrate the institutional strategy, giving concrete examples.

Table 1. Instruments of internationalization abroad

Teaching-Learning	Research	Cooperation with society	Other services /activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student, academic staff, technical, administrative and management staff exchange programs - Study programme in collaboration - Development of international alumni networks - Opportunities for volunteering and international employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International research partnerships and collaborations - Participation in international research projects - Publication with international partners - Scientific cooperation missions - Co-organization of events abroad with international partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnerships with international companies - Creation of international companies - International consulting - Strategic alliances and partnerships with international institutions and organizations - Development of new institutions in cooperation with local partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of branches abroad - Development of campus abroad - Development of regional offices (with a view to establishing the Institution abroad)

Table 2. Instruments of internationalization at home

Teaching-Learning	Research	Cooperation with society	Other services /activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attraction of international students - Opportunity for study visits by international students - Development of attractive study programmes for international students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attraction of international researchers and professors - Organization of international conferences and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for the cooperation of international students with the local and regional external community - Cooperation in international partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouragement of the acquisition of foreign language skills - Support to international students, including mentorship and integration mechanisms

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English language teaching - Curricular units in partnership with foreign institutions - Sharing study programmes and learning materials with foreign institutions with recognized credit - Distance study programmes and e-learning - Integration of different pedagogical cultures to ensure that teaching is sensitive to the educational contexts of international students - Teacher training programs on interculturality and internationalization - Mechanisms to promote internal internationalization - Virtual mobility experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation in international research projects and activities with international researchers and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - and networks with external partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of accommodation facilities for international students - Incentives to international students to participate in the social and cultural life of the institution - Compliance with the European and the international legislation - Commitment with equality and diversity - Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention
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* Adapted from Middlehurst, R. (2008), "Developing institutional internationalization policies and strategies: An overview of key issues", in M. Gaebel et al. (eds.), *Internationalization of European Higher Education: An EUA/ACA Handbook*, RAABE, Berlin, pp.1-24.

The institution should describe the specific incentives given to internationalization and demonstrate how they have fostered internationalization. Finally, the institution should describe who are the main (internal and external) stakeholders promoting and implementing its internationalization strategy.

The institution should also explain how the participation in European and international consortia, such as European Universities, contributes to achieving the institutional strategy for internationalization.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of internationalization of the organic units.

Evidence

- Internationalization plan
- Participation in International consortia
- Participation in European Universities

5.2. National cooperation with other institutions and with society

The institution should describe the institutional policies for the cooperation with society, in the different areas. In particular, it should demonstrate its cooperation policies with other

national institutions in education, its cooperation policies in research activities and projects; and its cooperation policies with business, social and artistic partners at different levels which contribute to local, regional, and national development.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of national cooperation of the organic units.

Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures, actions and projects for the (formal and informal) cooperation with society Structures to promote the cooperation with society Study programmes in cooperation with other higher education institutions

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

6. Resources

The institution has physical, financial and human resources, namely academic, research, technical, administrative and management staff, as well as facilities and equipment, technological and digital resources which are adequate to the activities it develops.

6.1. Academic and research staff

The institution should demonstrate that the academic and research staff is qualified, stable and adjusted to its educational offer and its strategy for scientific research. The institution should demonstrate that it offers the right conditions for its academic and research staff to perform well. The institution should also describe the structures and activities to support academic and research staff in their functions, with regard to education and pedagogic innovation, research, cooperation with society, and national and international mobility. The institution should demonstrate how the academic and research staff use such structures and activities, and how they have been contributing to effectively improve the staff's activities in the different areas. Finally, the institution should describe the institutional strategy and policies for the promotion of the academic and research staff, being compliant with the legal ratios for existing professional categories.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of research and academic staff of the organic units.

Evidence

- Pedagogical training actions for the academic and research staff, and participation rate
- Mechanisms and results of performance assessment of academic and research staff
- Career progression plan for the academic and research staff

6.2. Technical, administrative and management staff

The institution should demonstrate that its technical, administrative and management staff have the appropriate training to perform their tasks. In particular, the institution should indicate the mechanisms, structures, and activities made available in terms of training and national and international mobility. It should also demonstrate the good use of such mechanisms, structures and activities by the technical, administrative and management staff, and their contribution to effectively improving the activities of the staff in the different areas.

The institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of the technical, administrative and management staff of the organic units.

Evidence

- Specialised training and participation rate
- Institutional health and well-being policy

6.3. Facilities and equipment

The institution should demonstrate that the facilities and equipment (class rooms, academic and research staff and services offices, libraries, IT rooms, laboratories, leisure and food areas, etc) are adequate to its activities and to the different segments of the population it serves (students and staff), and attest to their good state of repair. The institution should demonstrate that it periodically assesses the adequacy of its facilities and equipment and that it promotes their continuous improvement.

6.4. Institutional sustainability

The institution should describe the level of development of the digital transformation in the institution, mentioning the main initiatives undertaken in the areas of management, organization, communication, information and external relations.

The institution should describe the institutional strategy and policies for fundraising sources, namely student fees and other revenues.

The institution should describe the institutional strategy, policies, and mechanisms to promote environmental sustainability (namely water and energy reduction, gas emissions, recycling, among others) and to raise awareness towards environmental sustainability and SDG among the academic community.

Finally, the institution should highlight, if necessary and applicable, any specificity in terms of the institutional sustainability of the organic units.

Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data protection regulation• Cybersecurity infrastructures• Sustainability report

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

7. Theme selected by the Institution for further development

The institution should identify a theme for development (on-going or to be started) which is understood as key to the institutional strategy, which the institution aims to develop in the future, and which is related to any dimension of the institutional mission. The institution should describe the theme, its goals, its institutional development and implementation, its related activities, its integration in the institutional strategy and reflect on its impact and expected results.

III. Institutional Assessment Process

According to the ESG (2015), agencies are required to adopt a consistent follow-up process of the institutional assessments.

The institutional assessment has the same four stages of external quality assurance processes:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report by the institution;
- On-site visits by the External Assessment Team (EAT);
- Preparation of a preliminary report on the institutional assessment by the External Assessment Team, presentation of a response by the institution and preparation of the final report by the External Assessment Team;
- Decision by the A3ES Management Board and dissemination of the report.

Project coordinators who support the External Assessment Team assure all contacts between the External Assessment Team and the Institution throughout the different stages of the assessment process.

The main procedures developed in each stage are explained below.

Self-assessment

The self-assessment report should be filled in and virtually submitted in the digital platform of A3ES. The information and analysis are focused on the institution as a whole. The institutions should develop the self-assessment report based on the 'Guidelines for the development of the institutional self-assessment report' (A3ES, 2022).

The Guidelines aim at guiding the assessment of the institution's characteristics and its continuous improvement. Some fields in the guidelines are filled in with data available at the A3ES and DGEEC databases. This information cannot be edited but only commented by the institution.

The self-assessment report should reflect the ability of the institution and its community to self-reflect and critically assess its policies and activities. This reflexion should be based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.

In addition to the information required by the Guidelines, the institution may provide the External Assessment Team, through online access, with all relevant information for the assessment. Furthermore, the External Assessment Team can ask for further information before or during the on-site visit.

The Guidelines include a set of guidelines and information aiming at clarifying the information required in each assessment area and subarea, to help institutions fill in the report.

External Assessment Team

The composition of the External Assessment Team who will follow the institutional assessment process will be adequate to the dimension and to the number of organic units of the institution being assessed. The members of the team will have the following profile:

- President, international or national expert, with top-level leadership experience in at a higher education institution;
- International expert, with experience in strategic management and assessment;
- National expert, with experience in strategic management and assessment;
- National expert with experience in the assessment of internal quality management systems;
- Student.

A3ES will inform the institution of the composition of the External Assessment Team. The institution can comment on the composition of the EAT, via its representatives, before the on-site visit and even refuse the inclusion of some of its members, in case of any incompatibility. If so, A3ES will analyse the reasons for the opposition of the institution and if they are found reasonable, it will replace the member(s).

The national members will participate in a (minimum of a one-day) training activity. The international experts can also be part of this activity, but if they are not available, A3ES will provide all the adequate information and will prepare a preliminary meeting before the on-site visit.

The members of the External Assessment Team will proceed according to the information of the Assessment Manual (A3ES, 2013a) about the roles being performed by each of the

members of the team and the rules concerning conflict of interests, confidentiality, impartiality, objectivity, and personal conduct (A3ES, 2013b).

On-site visit of the External Assessment Team

The duration of the on-site visit (of at least one day) will be adequate to the dimension of the institution and to the number of organic units and it will follow a programme between the External Assessment Team and the institution. This will be prepared according to a model programme adaptable to the specificities of the institution.

The visit aims at verifying and complementing the conclusions of the External Assessment Team based on the self-assessment report; verifying in loco the functioning of the institution and its organic units; and contacting with relevant actors in order to obtain their perceptions and to assess their involvement in the strategic and operational as well as internal quality management system. The visit also aims at promoting an interaction able to contribute to an internal analysis and strategic reflection and to the internal improvement of the institution and its results.

The visit's planning and execution will follow the standards for external assessment developed in the Assessment Handbook (A3ES, 2013a) and the standards for the External Assessment Team (A3ES, 2021), with the necessary adaptations to the specificities of the institutional assessment.

The visit ends with the presentation of an oral report to the academic leaders and other invited stakeholders, in which the preliminary conclusions will be exposed. These will lead to the external assessment report.

Institutional Assessment Report

The assessment report focuses on the institution as a whole. The preliminary version of the report, based on the conclusion of the oral report and on the notes of the External Assessment Team, is formally approved by the members of the Team. The final report should follow the rules explained in the Assessment Handbook (A3ES, 2013, 2018).

The report is sent to the institution for feedback and a potential response. The response must be presented within fifteen working days. The External Assessment Team assesses the response of the institution, can revise the preliminary report (if necessary) and approves the final version of the report.

Decision and Dissemination of the Report

The Management Board of A3ES analyses the final report and decides for an ‘accreditation’ or ‘non-accreditation’ of the institution being assessed, which translates the ‘compliance’ or ‘non-compliance’ with the legal requirements and with the required quality patterns. However, the Management Board can decide for an ‘accreditation with conditions’, either with regard to the institution, or to one or more of its organic units, describing the conditions which should be met as well as the deadlines for that.

According to RJIES (Portugal, 2007a), in the institutional assessment, each of the assessment parameters can also have a complementing qualitative classification. The final report (including the response of the institution, if there is one) and the decision of the Management Board will be published in the A3ES website.

Follow-up

The institutional accreditation can last up to six years. During that period, A3ES will promote a follow-up process of the evolution of the institution in the different assessment areas, which can include surveys, periodic reports, or visits. The publication of updated information is mandatory. In the case of a conditional decision, the institution should develop a follow-up within the established deadlines, which should include a self-reflection on the stage of development of each of the areas with conditions to be met.