

1. IN BRIEF



From strategy to implementation, by João Sàágua

A3ES is at a particularly important stage in its institutional development. It is redefining the strategic directions that will frame its work in the coming years while ensuring that, as early as 2026, implemented.

This is a time for implementation and innovation. We continue to perform our core assessment and accreditation activities with rigour and independence. At the same time, we are developing new instruments and approaches to address the challenges posed by a rapidly changing higher education sector.

Throughout this year, the Agency has been developing initiatives across areas as diverse as internal quality management systems, institutional assessment, doctoral education, Higher Education Professional Courses (CTeSP), and the growing impact of artificial intelligence on teaching, learning and institutional governance. Although distinct, these issues are connected by a common concern: ensuring that quality remains central to public trust in higher education.

None of this work takes place in isolation. It is built through an ongoing and increasingly close dialogue with higher education institutions, students, experts, sector representative bodies, public authorities and our international partners. Participation in European networks, cooperation with peer agencies, and seminars and meetings for reflection have been essential to enriching the debate and sharing experience.

Radar A3ES was created precisely in this context. It aims to be more than a channel for publicising activities. It seeks to monitor developments in the sector, share knowledge and bring together all those who contribute to the quality of higher education in Portugal.

A strategy only gains meaning when it is put into practice. Quality enhancement is always a collective endeavour, grounded in collaboration, evidence and a shared vision for the future.

2. IN FOCUS



Internal Quality Management Systems, institutional assessment and public trust, by João Queiroz

During the first half of 2026, Internal Quality Management Systems (IQMS) were a central theme for A3ES. The seminar on the “Guiding Principles for the Development and Enhancement of Internal Quality Management Systems in Higher Education Institutions” provided an opportunity for broad dialogue among institutions, students, sector representatives and experts.

The principles are aligned with international quality assurance guidance and requirements, particularly the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). They reflect the evolving European understanding of quality as an integrated process focused on continuous enhancement, societal relevance and mutual trust among institutions, quality assurance agencies and society.

Reflection on IQMS is directly linked to preparations for the 2028 Institutional Assessment. A3ES intends to value IQMS merely as formal instruments for responding to external procedures, but as effective mechanisms for institutional governance, evidence generation, participation, self-regulation and continuous enhancement.

The key question is not only whether institutions have IQMS, but how those systems support decision-making, monitor the student experience, enhance the quality of educational provision and contribute to public trust in higher education.

The upcoming months will therefore focus on consolidating the guiding principles for IQMS and preparing the instruments that will support the new institutional assessment cycle.

3. IN NUMBERS

Activities carried out between January and June 2026



246

NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES SUBMITTED

939

ASSESSMENT/ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES COMPLETED



363

NEW EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT EXPERTS

496

TOTAL EXPERTS IN ACTIVE PROCEDURES



2

INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR HEIs

1

EVENT ORGANISED BY A3ES



15

PARTICIPATIONS IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND EVENTS

Source: SIA3ES



4. IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Doctoral education: Dialogue with institutions and European networks

For the first time, A3ES took part in a meeting of the National Network of Doctoral Schools, strengthening dialogue with institutional structures directly involved in doctoral education. The Agency also attended the EUA-CDE Annual Meeting in Galway, following European debates on the development of doctoral education and gathering relevant input for the work under way in this area.

A3ES in the European and Portuguese-speaking quality assurance space

During the first half of the year, A3ES remained actively involved in international quality assurance networks and initiatives. Highlights included the ENQA/NOKUT workshop on strategic communication in quality assurance agencies, the Quality Audit Network meeting on generative artificial intelligence and quality assurance, the 35th AULP Meeting in Macao, and cooperation initiatives with Portuguese-speaking countries.

Students and quality assurance

Student participation in quality assurance procedures remains essential to A3ES. During this semester, the Agency participated in the Quality Assurance Leadership Training session held as part of the General Assembly of FAIRE and the European Students' Union, reinforcing the importance of active student involvement in the assessment, accreditation and continuous enhancement of higher education.

New Board of Trustees

In June 2026, three new members were appointed to the A3ES Board of Trustees. The current members of the Board are Sebastião Feye de Azevedo, António Fontainhas Fernandes, Luísa Canto e Castro Loura, Maria José da Silva Fernandes and Maria Leonor Beleza.

5. ON THE HORIZON



Preparing the 2028 Institutional Assessment

The new institutional assessment cycle is being prepared, with particular attention to lessons learned from the previous cycle, the role of IQMS and the alignment with European quality assurance frameworks.

Reflection on doctoral programmes

A3ES has launched dedicated work on the quality of doctoral programmes, seeking input from institutions and reflecting on guiding principles that respect the diversity of doctoral education contexts and models.

Preparing the assessment of CTeSP

We are defining the procedures, guidelines and assessment criteria for the assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Professional Courses (CTeSP), which will become the responsibility of A3ES in the near future.

Future initiatives

Planned initiatives include workshops to consolidate the guiding principles for IQMS and the A3ES International Conference, to be held on 11 November 2026 under the theme “Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes & Cross-Border Collaboration: Practical Pathways for HEIs”.