A comprehensive Internal Quality Assurance System at University of Minho

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Abstract

Purpose
The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) adopted at the Bergen Ministerial Meeting in 2005 in the scope of the Bologna Process call upon higher education institutions to take up a systematic approach to internal quality assurance. Standard 1.1 of the ESG establishes that institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards.

University of Minho (UMinho) has a longstanding experience on innovative methods for the coordination and management of the teaching and learning processes, including, since 1991, systematic mechanisms for the evaluation of teaching. However, to fulfil the new demands raised by the ESG UMinho felt the need to define a formal institutional quality policy, building upon the existing procedures and mechanisms in order to set up a comprehensive internal quality assurance system (SIGAQ-UM) fully compatible with the ESG.

The article presents the distinctive features of SIGAQ-UM, the procedures involved in its certification by A3ES, as well as on the perceived impact on the University's activities, including some comments on the difficulties to develop and consolidate a quality culture embedded in all the academic community.
Approach
Case study approach.
Findings
SIGAQ-UM is a fully operational comprehensive internal QA system certified by the Portuguese Agency A3ES in January 2013, with considerable impact on the University's operation.
Value
Disclosure of best practices on QA in higher education.

Keywords: Quality assurance in higher education, internal quality assurance systems, quality culture.