

**Paulo Peixoto | Joana Gomes de Almeida |**

**The dilemma of international students at UC  
in a pandemic context**

**Paul Herfs**

**What can universities do to prevent PhD students  
from dropping out?**

**ENOHE  
(European Network of Ombuds  
in Higher Education)**

**Occasional Paper Nr. 17**

**ENOHE**

European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education

## Content

**Paulo Peixoto<sup>a</sup> and Joana Almeida<sup>b</sup>**

<b>The dilemma of international students at UC in a pandemic context.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction .....	3
Methodology .....	7
Results .....	8
Expectations .....	8
Motivations.....	8
Difficulties.....	9
Sources of support.....	11
SWOT analysis.....	12
The role of the Student Ombudsman.....	14
Concluding remarks .....	14
References .....	16

**Paul Herfs**

<b>What universities can do to prevent PhD students from dropping out? .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Introduction .....	17
PhD trajectories in the Netherlands .....	17
International experiences of ombuds with PhD students .....	18
The most common problems of PhD students in my practice .....	19
Conclusions .....	21
Note of thanks .....	23
<b>European Charter for Researchers.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Curriculae Vitae .....</b>	<b>55</b>

## Imprint

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## The dilemma of international students at the University of Coimbra UC in a pandemic context

### Introduction

The internationalization of Portuguese universities is a priority for the national government and for Portuguese higher education institutions (HEIs). The University of Coimbra (UC) has made a strong bet on attracting international students, being, to date, among the Portuguese HEIs that attract more international students. The reinforcement of the level of internationalization, in articulation with research and development (R&D) agendas, has been reflected in the reformulation of public policies that aim to facilitate and simplify the recruitment of International Students (IS). Nevertheless, the attraction of foreign students has brought additional challenges to universities, to the extent that, subject to an increase in internal diversity and heterogeneity, they face difficulties in integrating IS. Sporadically, there are students who complain of being victims of xenophobia, episodes of stereotyping by teachers and students of the host country and report the occurrence of incidents that accentuate the propensity towards cultural ghettoisation.

Through an analysis carried out in 2019/20, the IS represented approximately 5% of the total number of UC students enrolled in degree conferring courses. A statistical analysis of this universe revealed that 30 nationalities were represented, with Brazil representing the overwhelming majority with 75%, becoming the main source of IS in University of Coimbra. It is followed by Angolan and Chinese nationality, which together reach 10% (Figure 1).

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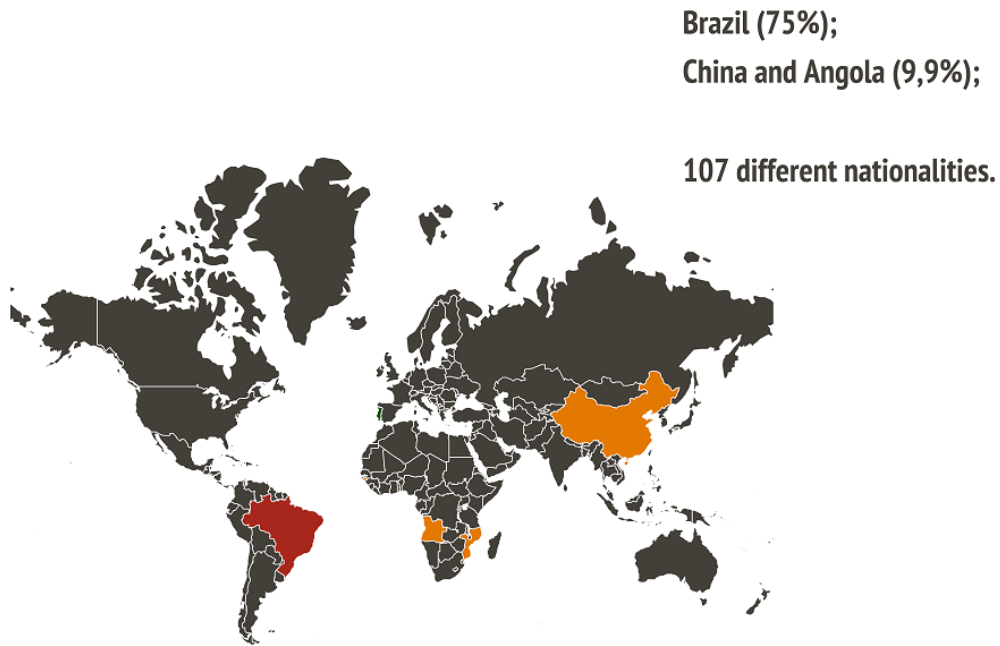


Figure 1 - Countries of origin of the IS of the University of Coimbra

According to Oliveira *et al.* (2015), between the academic years 2005/6 and 2012/13, considering the first enrolments, it is possible to verify a clear trend: in the period, IS increase from around 700 to just over 4 thousand. Data from the Directorate-General for Higher Education (DGES) show that in recent years the annual growth rates of international students in Portuguese HEIs have been high (Figure 2). In 2019-2020, 52% of international students enrolled that year in Portuguese HEIs were of Brazilian nationality. At the University of Coimbra 80% of the international students enrolled in 2019-2020 were Brazilians, giving the UC the status of the largest "Brazilian" university outside Brazil.

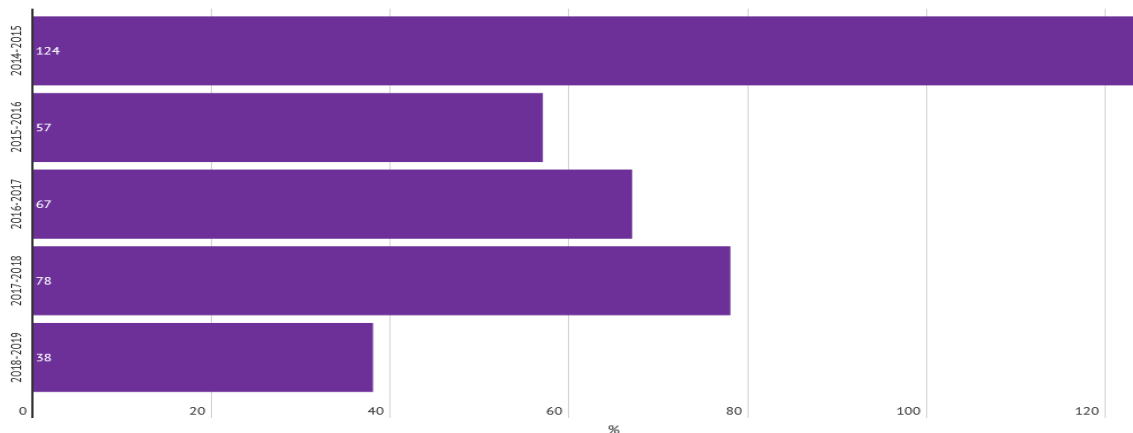


Figure 2- Annual growth rate of international students in Portuguese HEIs

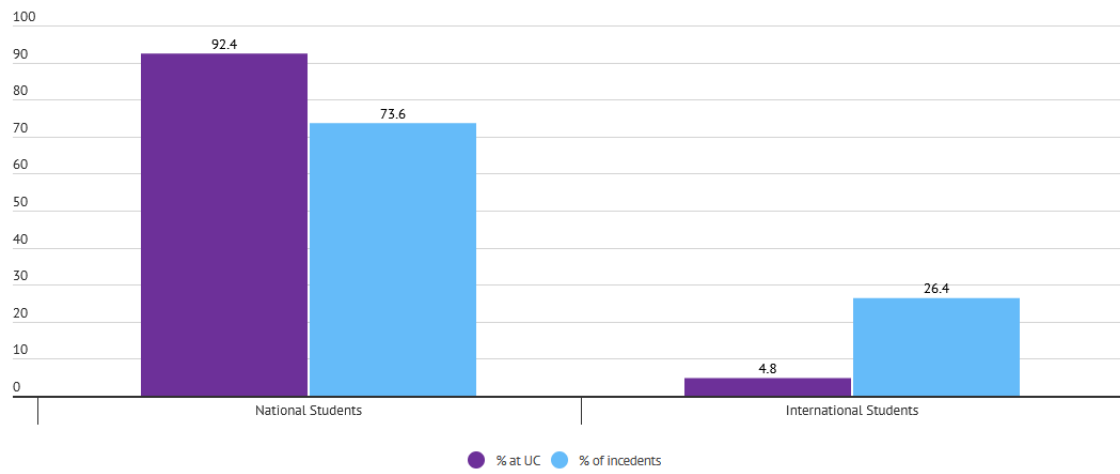


Figure 3 - % of students by type of student vs % of total incidents referred to the Student Ombudsman in 2020

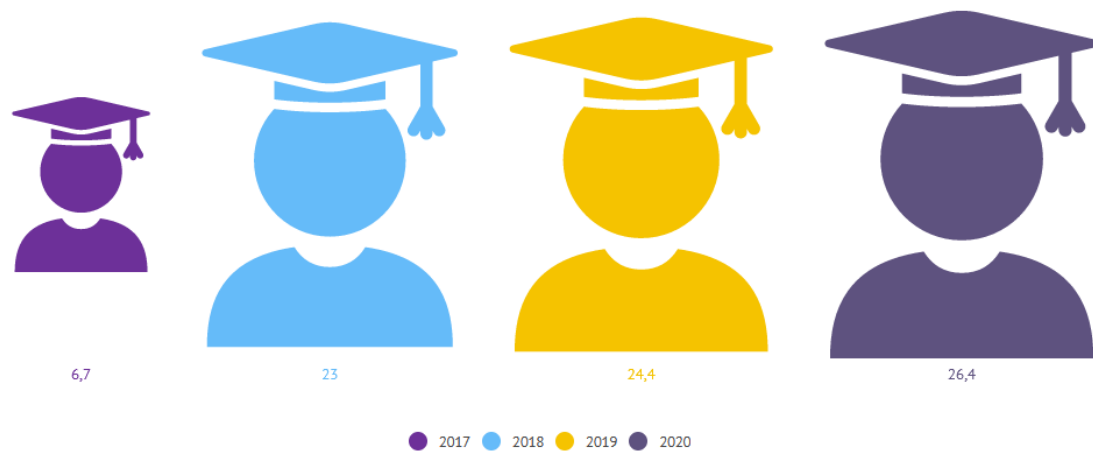


Figure 4 - % of total incidents referred by international students to Student Ombudsman (2017-2020)

As can be seen in Figure 3, there is a disproportionality between the weight of international students at UC (5% of the total) and the % of incidents reported by these students (26% of the total). In the last three years (2018-2020), IS has assumed a significant weight in the incidents reported to the Student Ombudsman Office at the University of Coimbra.

Incidents reported by national students are naturally predominant, however, it should be noted that IS represents 26,4% of the incidents. Since IS are only about 4,8% of the total number of students of the UC, this means that their weight in the incidents reported to the Ombudsman's Office is 5,5 times greater than their weight in the universe of students. If we add incidents reported by foreign students equivalent to national students<sup>1</sup>, namely those from Portuguese-speaking African countries, we face a scenario in which the nationality variable and the resulting integration problems constitute an unavoidable factor in the analysis of the problems with which the Student Ombudsman's Office has to deal.

UC has 107 nationalities represented in its student body. This reveals a multicultural institution, however, this is not the same as saying that it is intercultural. While multiculturalism refers to the presence of cultural diversity, interculturalism implies a true cultural interaction, as the prefix *inter* indicates, which involves collaboration, participation, and communication in a logic of reciprocity. An intercultural campus is not something that arises spontaneously, so HEIs have to foster and make a commitment to diversity and alterity, otherwise, universities become mere spaces of shared coexistence, where the Other is tolerated, but their difference is not seen as a value that enriches the whole academic community. As we will see, despite the long history of international student mobility at the UC, there is still a way to go in terms of the social and academic integration of these students.

Considering this reality, the Student Ombudsman's Office in UC conducted a study, combining literature review, desk research, and focus groups with the institution's IS. Collected data were used to problematize the major difficulties faced by IS and listen to proposals that can promote a more intercultural and welcoming campus.

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<sup>1</sup> International Students are those students who access higher education under the Special Statute for International Students (SSIS). That is, students who do not have Portuguese or European Union nationality, or who do not enter the HEIs as equivalent to Portuguese students.

The status of equivalent student covers a wide range of situations, namely:

- i. Nationals of a member state of the European Union;
- ii. Foreign citizens who have been legally residing in Portugal for more than two years, continuously, on 31 August of the year in which they wish to enter higher education, as well as their children who are legally residing with them. The time of residence with a study visa does not count for this purpose;
- iii. International mobility students, under an exchange agreement for that purpose;
- iv. Foreign citizens who enter Portuguese higher education under the special access regimes, within the scope of the National Access Competition:
  - a. Citizens from African Portuguese speaking countries;
  - b. Naturals and children of naturals of East-Timor;
  - c. Foreign employees of diplomatic missions accredited in Portugal and their family members residing here, under a reciprocal regime.

### Methodology

As we said, we combined literature review, desk research, and focus groups. The desk research arose from the annual reports that the university's quality division produces from surveys that UC sends to IS to assess their satisfaction with the institution. In total, we analysed four reports: from 2014 to 2019. After this analysis, we conducted three focus groups.

The focus groups intended to collect the perceptions of IS on various topics relevant to their integration in UC and promote discussion around solutions to mitigate the identified difficulties. The focus groups gathered a total of sixteen participants from six nationalities: Brazil, China, Guatemala, Cape Verde, Angola, and Panama.

The groups were not organised by nationality, but by gender and study cycle (bachelor, master and doctorate) representativeness - according to the respective weight in each faculty of the UC (in all faculties the number of IS enrolled in each study cycle was calculated).

The focus groups aimed to bring into discussion different points of view in a group reflective stance on topics that were identified in the annual reports and the literature on academic and social integration of foreign students in HEIs. An inductive posture was adopted in the data analysis. This means that the students' experiential dimension was privileged, knowing in advance that each individual's experience is permeated by personal, structural and institutional factors that are impossible to distinguish in this type of method. Although focus groups do not allow generalizations, this method allows exploring a problem from a collective perspective, since it creates a space for exchanging experiences and opinions between people who have something in common, generating an interactive and problematizing dynamic of experiences (Backes et al., 2011), which is in line with the defined objectives.

#### METHODOLOGY

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The annual reports are the result of surveys that UC sends to International Students to assess their satisfaction with the institution. In total, we analyzed four reports: from 2014 to 2019.

After analyzing these reports, we conducted three focus groups.

The focus groups intended to understand the motivations, expectations, and difficulties of IS in the institution.

In addition, collect their perceptions on various topics relevant to their integration in the UC and promote discussion around solutions to mitigate the identified difficulties.

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Although focus groups do not allow generalizations, this method allows the exploration of a problem from a collective perspective, since it creates a space for the exchange of experiences and opinions among people who have something in common, generating an interactive and problematizing dynamic of experiences, which meets the defined objectives.

Figure 5 - Synopsis of the methodology

### Results

The results were very rich, however, for the sake of parsimony, we have selected some that we believe to be most pertinent to give an overview of the analysis in question. The dimensions we are going to explore are: expectations for coming to UC; motivations for studying abroad; difficulties and sources of support; students' evaluation of UC services; and proposals for a more intercultural university and city.

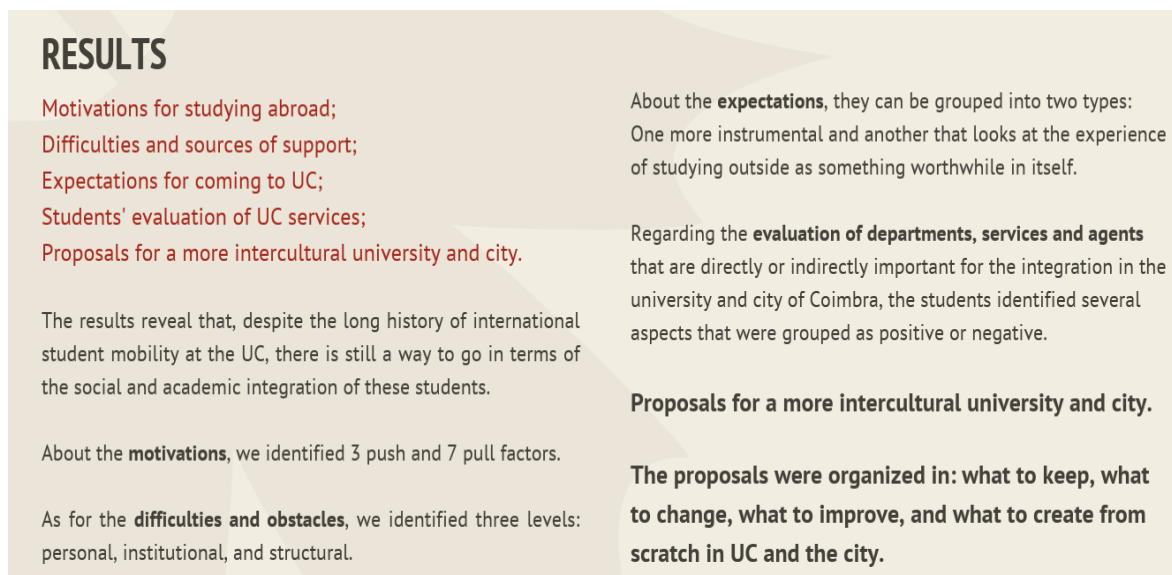


Figure 6 - Synopsis of results

### Expectations

The EI's expectations can be grouped into two types: one more instrumental and another that looks at the experience of studying abroad as something worthwhile in itself, i.e. that has intrinsic value. In the first group - instrumental - are expectations that relate directly to the possibility of finding a valued and well-paid job in the countries of origin, in Portugal, or in Europe.

The second group of expectations - intrinsic - refers to the experience of studying at a foreign HEI as something that constitutes an end in itself. In this case, reference is made to the opportunity for personal development, as it allows students to get to know another culture(s) and develop intercultural competencies. This expectation is not unrelated to the students' socio-economic conditions of origin, since the costs associated with studying abroad are high.

### Motivations

According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002: 84), the choice of destination HEI is based on a wide variety of factors, where the opinion of family, friends, and teachers plays a major role in the final decision, helping students to navigate the wide range of information available. Push factors are located at the level of the student's home country and concern negative circumstances that “push” individuals to study abroad, such as poor freedom of expression.



Pull factors emerge as factors associated with the destination countries that “attract” students to continue their studies in a particular country and HEI. These factors act simultaneously.

Using the Push and Pull theory of Mazzarol e Soutar (2002), we identified three push factors and seven pull factors. As push factors (that concern the home country): 1) the feeling of insecurity, violence, and limited freedom of speech; 2) political intolerance; 3) and absence of the desired course in the area of residence. As pull factors: 1) the international reputation of UC and the weight of the UC diploma in the international labour market; 2) the connection of teachers from all over the world with UC, or the renowned Alumni who graduated in the institution and took the name of the UC to the four corners of the world; 3) the fact that Portugal is located in Europe – to study in Europe is seen as prestigious; 4) classes being taught in Portuguese – especially important for students from Portuguese-speaking countries; 5) the formative offer and the progressive curricular plan of UC courses; 6) the cooperation agreements or partnerships between universities; 7) and cost of living in the city of Coimbra.

### Difficulties

Studying abroad can be both an exciting and a frightening experience (Elliot, Reid, & Baumfield, 2015). The difficulties reported by IS in the focus groups can be divided into three levels: personal, institutional, and structural. It was found that, at the personal level, especially among the first cycle students, the difficulties are associated with the autonomisation process that necessarily occurs in this transition. Leaving one's parent's home to go live alone for the first time in a foreign country implies dealing with the distance from the family. If this difficulty is something that is faced by most national students in the 1st cycle since they come from various national locations, it becomes more difficult to manage in the case of IS, since the latter do not have the possibility to go home on weekends. Going home at weekends to their parent's house has the function of regulating the difficulties felt by the students, something that IS do not have. In this way, the process of autonomy, inherent to entry into a university, is more abrupt in the case of foreign students in the 1st cycle.

Economic difficulties are another difficulty that is often mentioned, especially among students on scholarships. For many students (scholarship holders or not), the solution is to work part-time, either through Social Support Programme for Students through Part-time Activities (PASEP)<sup>2</sup>, or on the labour market - frequently illegally.

Another difficulty reported by the students is language. Students mention struggles at oral expression and written level, which poses difficulties communicating with teachers and writing master's dissertations and works. This challenge was reported by most of IS and, contrary to what could be expected, Brazilian students also feel these difficulties. However, in the case of the Brazilians, the difficulties assume a more serious form, as they are related to the undervaluation/discrimination of Brazilian-Portuguese by some teachers.

If difficulties in orality and writing is somehow understandable and expectable, what is not acceptable is the acculturation attitude of some teachers towards the Brazilian Portuguese tongue. In the focus groups and the reports, Brazilian students mentioned the undervaluation of Brazilian Portuguese by some teachers. In these cases, the students' writing in Brazilian Portuguese is seen as inferior and it is used as a justification for lower marks or failures when they ask to revise the test.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a program that consists in offering part-time activities in UC, in return for social and economic benefits.

Episodes like these are unacceptable since ENEM (the Brazilian national exam to access higher education), with the approval of the SSIS, is an accepted exam for entering the UC. In the words of a students: "some teachers say that I should write/speak the right Portuguese (I am Brazilian)"; "[...] Although I was not discriminated, many Portuguese do not consider Brazilian Portuguese as a valid Portuguese [...]". This situation is mentioned in all reports and equally in the focus groups and is a practice contrary to the principles of cultural pluralism that advocates diversity as an asset to be valued and capitalized in the academic field (Costa, 2019: 13).

Some difficulties identified in the focus groups occur even before the students arrive in Portugal. In the search for information about UC, an essential aspect for the decision to choose the HEI of destination, the students mentioned that the information available online, necessary to prepare the coming to the UC, is not sufficient. In addition, communication with the UC services to receive information is, from the students' perspective, extremely difficult.

Given the absence of reliable and opportune information from the official services of the UC, many students, especially the Brazilian ones, resort to WhatsApp groups; however, the amount of contradictory information in these groups generates even more anxiety in the students' preparation in coming to the university.

This lack of information, together with the lack/late response of UC services makes the whole process of entering the UC difficult. In addition, the delay in accessing the official student platform when they are already in the UC, stops them from register in the curricular units, which makes them miss even more classes since IS usually arrive after the national students. When it comes to courses with many students, such as economics, some teachers do not make it easy for students who are not registered to attend classes.

The late arrival of IS also means that they miss the festivities (freshman week and allocation of godparents) and the student welcome sessions, which are seen as important for their integration into the university.

IS reported some experiences of xenophobia and gender discrimination by Portuguese colleagues. This aspect had already been identified in all IS annual reports, so it was expected in the focus groups. Several Brazilian students reported that women of their nationality are stereotyped and harassed by their Portuguese colleagues and associated with "promiscuous behaviors". Male chauvinistic behaviour, homophobic attitudes among Portuguese colleagues are also mentioned. Unfortunately, the eroticization of Brazilian women is still deeply rooted in Portuguese and European society (Gomes, 2018). With the pandemic situation, a student of Asian descent also reports experiencing xenophobia because of Covid-19.

At a structural level, the most prominent factor is the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF). Multiple difficulties are reported, from the slowness and bureaucracy of the process, the difficulty in making an appointment, etc. In the case of non-Portuguese speaking students, such as the Chinese, SEF is something that "scares" them, perhaps out of fear of being deported, as many IS are forced to come to the UC without their visa situation regularised.

Another aspect highlighted by the students, especially by those who are enrolled in the 2nd cycle, is the integration in the non-precarious labour market. For many students, integration in the labour market, whether part-time or full-time, becomes a way to cover expenses (student from Panama), enrich their academic training (because it enables a deeper contact with Portuguese culture) (student from China) or simply because the project of studying abroad becomes (or has always been) a project of definitive emigration (student from Guatemala). In this regard, it is mentioned that Coimbra is not attractive in terms of non-precarious employment.

For this reason, many students, after graduation, go to Porto, Lisbon, and even to other European countries to find a more attractive job. The difficulty (and the lack of information about it) in obtaining a visa to work also leads to precarious jobs. Many students work illegally in bars at night for salaries well below what could be expected and fair.

Another difficulty experienced by IS is the real estate rental market in Coimbra. Students reported that landlords take advantage of their lack of information about the Portuguese rental market and high demand for accommodation to profit unduly from this group. Real estate agents specifically oriented towards the IS market try to push houses at inflated prices, with and without a rental contract and charge more than two months of deposit at the entrance. If we add to this the three months' tuition fees (2100€) that UC charges the newcomers, studying at the UC become unaffordable for many.

### Sources of support

The IS sources of support can also be divided into three levels of analysis: personal, institutional, and structural. On a personal level, colleagues of the same nationality assume a very relevant role when the information coming from the UC services is scarce and/or contradictory. Another important source of support is family. Whether in cases where students are accompanied by their spouses or when they have direct relatives already living in Portugal. This support is reflected in various aspects such as the possibility of having a place to live while they cannot find accommodation, support in university registration, access to privileged information regarding the Portuguese health system, SEF, and about the Portuguese culture in general.

Regarding cultural interaction among peers (with Portuguese and other nationalities) the focus groups showed that students tend to “close themselves” into their nationalities as a strategy of protection and social support. However, students recognize that this strategy negatively influences the very experience of being an IS, which also aims the development of intercultural competencies. This protection strategy can be observed among Brazilian and Chinese students, with Chinese students experiencing a greater cultural shock, and therefore, tending to interact less with other nationalities. The Chinese culture is more conservative, the food is very different, and the fact that most of them cannot go home during the course exacerbates this tendency to seek comfort within their own nationality. One of the Chinese students' mentions, "it's not that they [Chinese students] don't want to adapt. A lot of them can't adapt." To ease homesickness, Chinese students tend to socialize with each other and cook at home to maintain a connection to their culture and to feel more secure.

At the institutional level, students refer various support structures and services provided by UC to overcome the difficulties experienced in their integration in the university. In terms of the Portuguese language, the Training Course in Listening and Writing Practices in Portuguese as a Foreign Language is mentioned (student from Panama). Similarly, Year Zero is highlighted as essential for a more successful integration into Portuguese culture and the university.

There are two types of Year Zero: Year Zero of Science and Technology and Year Zero of Social Sciences and Humanities. The Year Zero is a preparatory course of pre-university studies, with a duration of one academic year, which allows the acquisition of the linguistic and disciplinary knowledge necessary to apply for undergraduate studies at UC. It was possible to observe that the IS who attended Year Zero had fewer integration difficulties.

Finally, on an economic level, as we mentioned before, PASEP is used as an important support to face expenses. One student complements the income or support from PASEP with part-time paid work as a night replenished in a supermarket chain.

And at a structural level, paid work also plays an important role as an opportunity to practice the Portuguese language.

### SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analysis

Finally, regarding the evaluation of UC services and agents, and ideas for a more intercultural university and city, we decided to choose the most relevant ones and built a SWOT analysis. The proposals were the result of a brainstorming in which students were challenged to present proposals organized in: what to keep, what to change, what to improve, and what to create from scratch in UC and the city. The SWOT analysis also aggregates the issues raised by IS throughout this presentation.

Since we can't explore all of them, and some we already mentioned throughout the paper, we will point the most relevant ones in each dimension.

As **strengths** we identified factors such as the cost of living, size and safety of Coimbra city; the opportunities for international mobility in UC; the diversity and quality of education offer; the international reputation of UC; the quality of the health system in Portugal (universal) and Coimbra; and the Portugal integration in the European Union - in the case of students from the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) it allows them to access higher education in Europe without the (or fewer) constraints of learning a new language. Moreover, studying in Europe is seen as a passport to success by these students.

As for **weaknesses**, students mentioned cases of discrimination on campus; the devaluation of Brazilian-Portuguese writing from professors; the lack of public transportation on weekends; the scarcity of university residences; and the payment of 3 monthly fees at registration. Meanwhile, there was an improvement with the Ombudsman's recommendation, and currently, this payment is only applied to the newcomers.

Regarding **opportunities**, social networks could be used for dissemination of UC services, activities, and clarification of doubts (through weekly videos on IS's most frequently asked questions/doubts); creations of internships using IS in strategic areas of UC; promotion of more inter-cultural activities; Office of Professional Exits - offer of part-time jobs to prevent illegal work; and Confucius Institute - a greater articulation with the China Desk to support Chinese students in Immigration Services (SEF).

Finally, **threats**: the growing speculation in the real estate market in Coimbra; the weak intercultural interaction; the late arrival and at different times of IS at UC; the student-worker visa hindered by SEF and misinformation - students are afraid of being deported; labour market mostly precarious/illegal in Coimbra for IS; lack of support by the university in finding private accommodation; and tuition fees of 7,000€ - higher than other public Portuguese universities.

- Cost of living in Coimbra;
- Dimension of the city;
- Summer University and Year Zero;
- Diversity of educational offer;
- Quality of teaching;
- International reputation of the UC;
- Portuguese language courses at FLUC;
- Inter-institutional partnerships with international HEIs;
- Alumni network;
- Health system in Portugal and in Coimbra;
- Safety in the city;
- Portugal being part of the EU;
- AAC (Students' Association);
- Teachers who capitalize on interculturality;
- Proximity student-teacher;
- International mobility between HEIs;
- House of Lusophony.

S

STRENGTHS

- Misinformation/disarticulation between UC services;
- Discrimination on campus;
- Lack of dissemination of UC activities/services;
- InforEstudante;
- Delays in responses from the UC (DRI and SGA);
- Incomplete and unreliable information on UC website;
- Absence of Chinese supermarkets;
- Devaluation of Brazilian Portuguese;
- Book requisition period;
- Scarcity of study rooms and libraries in exam season;
- Dispersion of academic volunteering activities;
- Lack of public transport at weekends;
- Shortage of residences;
- Payment of 3 monthly fees at the time of enrolment.

W

WEAKNESSES

- Internships using IS in strategic areas of the UC;
- Encouragement of intercultural activities: creation of the "IS Joint Group";
- Career Opportunities Office: part-time work and combating illegal work;
- Training for IS staff;
- GPS Programme: matching students by nationality;
- Booking of medical appointments online/via App;
- Increase in IS preparatory courses;
- Confucius Institute: greater articulation with China Desk to support Chinese IS;
- Acceptance of dissertations and theses in English;
- Provision of legal support;
- Discount on tuition fees for IS who have completed degrees at the University of Coimbra;
- Introduction of Chinese menu in the university restaurants;

O

OPPORTUNITIES

- Speculation in the house/room rental market;
- Ghettoisation of nationalities;
- Late arrival and at different times from the IS;
- Bureaucratic and unclear process at SEF;
- Student-worker visa hindered by SEF;
- Precarious/illegal work;
- Room-mate attribution process in the residences;
- Lack of staff in the university restaurants;
- Lack of support for students in finding accommodation (excessive deposits, etc.);
- Very politicised student groups;
- Distancing between students and teachers;
- Tuition fees of 7,000€: higher than other Portuguese HEIs;
- Few vacancies in PASEP;
- Weak university extension.

T

THREATS

## The role of the Student Ombudsman

The difficulties experienced arise from how the HEI is organized and/or the institution's capacity to respond quickly to the different requests from the students. Being an institution with more than 25,000 students, functionally and procedurally bureaucratic, it is expected that it has difficulty in adapting to the different circumstances of each student. The UC creates and applies regulations that are as egalitarian and equitable as possible. Nevertheless, it will necessarily let atypical situations pass through its sieve, as it is very difficult to analyse all circumstances that do not fit into the "norm".

In this context, the Student Ombudsman's Office appears as a reference body that has a very important role in the defence of students' legitimate interests. It is not by chance that IS seek the Student Ombudsman's Office more than five times more often than national students. Being a body that dialogues with all the structures of the university, it can analyse and frame the situations of the students that are "dragged" in the heavy gears of the institution, restoring some flexibility to the organization to give a response adapted to the differentiated circumstances of the students.

## Concluding remarks

The paper aimed to problematize the challenges that the growing internationalization of higher education in Portugal poses to HEIs in terms of academic and social integration and, hence, the role of the Student Ombudsman in the stimulation of a culture of alterity in academia.

Peers assume a key role in IS integration, however, in the survey conducted by Ward (2001) quality intercultural interaction among students tends to be low, and despite the benefits of such interaction for both parties, most research concluded that autochthonous students have no interest in initiating contact with their international peers, unlike internationals, who desire greater interaction with national peers in the destination country.

The focus groups allowed us to realize, as already emphasized, that IS tend to close themselves in their nationalities as a strategy to deal with adaptation difficulties. It should be noted that the Brazilian community in the UC is very active and attentive, giving support to newcomers and sharing information among themselves. This is a way to overcome difficulties of various kinds, such as homesickness and adaptation to the culture of the destination country. A student from Brazil mentions that the interaction with Portuguese people and colleagues from other nationalities is very positive and important for personal and academic development and that it is part of the experience of being an IS, and it is necessary to come to the UC with this openness.

On the other hand, it is also mentioned that in general Portuguese colleagues are not very interested in interacting with internationals, not being very accessible. Students from Cape Verde and Angola also mention that it is easier to create bonds with Brazilian colleagues than with Portuguese ones. The Portuguese are characterized by IS as less open and less expansive. In this way, nationalities end up ghettoized because it is more "comfortable", and there is not much cultural interaction. As Ward (2001) states, the likelihood that intercultural interaction among students will occur spontaneously is unlikely, so HEIs must adopt strategic plans that promote quality intercultural activities.

Cultural differences aside, it can be seen that nationalities end up becoming ghettoized because it is more "comfortable" (UC, 2019b) and there ends up not being much cultural interaction in a natural way.

## Occasional Paper Nr. 17

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As Ward (2001) concludes in his study, the likelihood of intercultural interaction among students occurring spontaneously is unlikely, so HEIs must adopt strategic plans that promote quality intercultural activities among students and invest in the pedagogical training of their teachers for interculturality. The IS themselves recognize the importance of this agenda: “More activities should be done that foster interculturality. [...] Foreign students tend to close themselves in their nationalities.”

While these problems are nothing new, we anticipate that the post-covid era will further exacerbate the identified problems. In the exercise of its functions, the Student Ombudsman, in addition to responding to student complaints and advocating in situations of discrimination or unfair treatment, can stimulate a culture of alterity in academia.

Besides the annual reports, this can be achieved by conducting more studies about the questions raised by the students. The methodology should privilege methods that give voice to the students, like focus groups, instigating them to suggest the necessary changes to mitigate the difficulties experienced. The Ombudsman's Office should take a reflexive and inquisitive approach in its work to have more policy-oriented action.

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Paul Herfs<sup>3</sup>

## What can universities do to prevent PhD students from dropping out?

### Introduction

In 2015, Dutch citizens were invited to write study proposals for a scientific agenda. Each citizen, not only scientists, could propose an idea for a study. The author of this article wrote a proposal to explore why Dutch universities accept a massive loss of PhD students during their trajectories without passing their final exam.

I wrote the following proposal for the scientific agenda: “Why do Dutch universities accept a massive loss of PhD students without passing their final exam?”. I presented the following clarification. Recently a study of the Rathenau Institute<sup>4</sup> showed that at some universities only 50% of their PhD students pass their final exam. I suggested that in no other sector would a 50% loss of human capital be acceptable. Rather, severe measures would be taken in order to diminish such significant losses. These losses do not only concern university investments (material costs and supervision costs). The biggest loss for not finishing a PhD trajectory bears the PhD candidate, who after some years of hard and often isolated work leaves the university without a reward. Within universities it is not completely clear what causes PhD students to drop out. It seems however, that these high dropout rates are taken for granted by many universities as measures to diminish dropout rates are not highly prioritized. My proposal was not accepted.

This article aims at clarification of the role of an ombudsman. I am convinced that an ombuds can play an important role in diminishing PhD dropout. In what follows, I have made use of my experiences as an ombuds over 16 years. In my practice as a university ombudsman for staff and faculty during this time I spoke with over a hundred PhD students who had problems to complete their PhD research. Because of my contacts with colleagues working at Dutch and international universities I know that these experiences are not all unique for the university I worked at. On the contrary, my experiences are quite general in academia.

### PhD trajectories in the Netherlands

For a long time PhD trajectories have been under discussion in the Netherlands. Sonneveld<sup>5</sup> published an important report on this subject. He showed that the introduction of research schools led to thousands of new PhD trajectories.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Paul Herfs worked for 16 years as an ombuds for staff and faculty at Utrecht University. He has a MSc in Educational Sciences and obtained a PhD degree in 2009 at Utrecht University. His thesis was titled: “International Medical Graduates in the Netherlands”. In 2021 he retired from his work at Utrecht University.

<sup>4</sup> De Goede, M., Belder, R & De Jonge, J. (2014): *Promoveren in Nederland; motivatie en loopbaanverwachtingen van promovendi*. Rathenau Instituut. Den Haag.

<sup>5</sup> Sonneveld, H. (1997): *Promotoren, promovendi en de academische selectie; de collectivisering van het Nederlandse promotiestelsel 1984 – 1995*. Amsterdam University Press. Amsterdam.

Nevertheless, compared to other countries, the Netherlands has not a high percentage of holders of doctorates among the working population.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2018 the number of successful PhD trajectories at Dutch universities increased from 2.500 to 4.500.<sup>7</sup>

Only 6.6 out of 1,000 of the working Dutch population holds a PhD degree. Within the European Union an average of 7.5 per 1,000 holds a PhD degree. Within the Scandinavian countries the average is even 12.0. The gap between The Netherlands and other European Union countries is growing.

For a long time there have been serious concerns about the working climate at Dutch universities. The report of the Rathenau Institute labels universities as ‘PhD factories’. From the beginning of this millennium, research schools increased their efforts to attract and train PhD students. According to this study the majority of PhD students were positive about the support they received. The Rathenau researchers discovered that PhD students worked on average for five years before they finished their thesis although they had work-related appointments<sup>8</sup> for four years. It was not clear how the PhD students were able to pay for their expenses without receiving salaries. Exceeding the four year appointments was not unusual for the researchers. No remarks were made about losing salaries after four years.

In 2017 G. de Winkel, researcher at Wageningen University & Research presented his research<sup>9</sup> into dropout and study results of PhD students at Dutch universities. In his report he divided the study results on completion into three different scientific fields:

Humanities	65%
Social Sciences	75%
Sciences and medical Sciences	77%

Even in the scientific field with the best completion results there still is a dropout rate of 23% of PhD students. A Dutch Higher Education journal, Science Guide, in 2017 published an article<sup>10</sup> about the mental health of PhD students. On the basis of a Belgian study they reported a dropout rate among PhD students worldwide between 30% and 50%.

### International experiences of ombudspersons with PhD students

In 2018 the European Network of Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE) and the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) organized a joint conference in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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<sup>6</sup> Education at a Glance, OECD Indicators (2013). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.

<sup>7</sup> VSNU (2019): KUOZ/onderzoeksinzet & output.

<sup>8</sup> At Dutch universities most PhD students are appointed for 4 years as scientific personnel. They earn salaries during that time.

<sup>9</sup> [PowerPoint-presentatie \(phdcentre.eu\)](#) van G. de Winkel (2017): Uitval en vertraging bij promovendi, faal- en succesfactoren. Wageningen University & Research. Geraadpleegd op 10 jan. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Sicco de Knecht (2017): Psychische gezondheid van promovendi in gevaar. In: ScienceGuide.

I organized a working session in which four ombudspersons working at universities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean informed the audience about problematic situations of PhD students at their universities. Two of them worked as ombudspersons in North America (Canada and USA) and the other two in Europe (Germany and the Netherlands). Every ombuds described the major problems of PhD students at his or her university and the possibilities the ombudspersons had to contribute to solutions for frozen or jammed PhD trajectories. ENOHE asked the presenters to describe their experiences in an ENOHE Occasional Paper, and the resulting publication is cited in the footnote.<sup>11</sup>

A general rule for all ombuds is that they cannot play a role in the scientific evaluation of the quality of research executed by PhD students. This task is exclusively allotted to supervisors and/or daily supervisors. Most of the time the supervisor is responsible for the acquisition of a grant, the working conditions of a PhD student and the evaluation of the PhDs performance. In all four countries the decision about admittance to the dissertation defense lies in the hands of the supervisor or a promotion committee. Ombudspersons avoid scientific evaluations of individual performance.

PhD students in all four countries find themselves in very dependent positions. Expectations of supervisors towards PhD students might be ambiguous and/or contradictory. On the one hand, PhD students must show they can perform autonomously and scientifically. On the other, they must follow the directions of their supervisor(s). This can be a recipe for misunderstanding and conflict.

PhD students can visit an ombudsman with a variety of problems. They might speak about a conflict with their supervisor, depression, lack of concentration, lack of sleep, lack of progress in publication of articles, lack of finances, lack of time, concerns about visas and permission to stay in the country. Very often these cases are driven by bad chemistry between supervisor and PhD student. It is also possible that a PhD student doesn't have the scientific capacities to successfully end a PhD trajectory. This point is not addressed in this article.

As the four ombudspersons prepared their lecture for the ENOHE conference in Edinburgh they were astonished to see that there were a great deal of similarities of the problems PhD students perceived in the four countries despite the differences in the educational systems. The similarities encountered by the ombuds officers in their practices related to the inability of PhD students and their supervisors to resolve conflicts and to the abuse of power by some supervisors.

### **The most common problems of PhD students in my practice**

The most common problems of PhD students in my own practice can be categorized in the following way:

#### ***I Problematic relationship between supervisor and PhD student***

The most important reason for delay of and even quitting the PhD trajectory is a bad chemistry between supervisor and PhD student. In those situations where only one supervisor is responsible for a PhD student a bad chemistry between them can have serious consequences. Without a supervisor a dissertation cannot be written nor defended. This is not a desirable situation. Therefore my university introduced recently a so-called '4-eyes' principle.

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<sup>11</sup> Herfs PGP, Brown J, Farell N, Meiser U (2019) ENOHE paper: PhDs Students and Ombuds: How Ombuds contribute to civil, fair and productive PhD-trajectories. ENOHE Occasional Paper (nr. 12). Vienna - Austria.

Because of this '4-eyes' principle there is always a supervisor available even in situations where the cooperation between the first supervisor and the PhD student has become unworkable or in those situations where a supervisor is no longer available because of illness or even death.

Sometimes a PhD trajectory deteriorates because of bad chemistry between a daily supervisor and a PhD student. There are situations in which a daily supervisor is in fact responsible for the evaluation of a PhD's performance. Supervision has been delegated to a supervisor who is not yet a full professor. The full professor who has the leading role in the supervision of a PhD student is sometimes only sporadically involved.

Sometimes neither the daily supervisor nor the supervisor react to requests of a PhD student. For instance if a PhD student writes a draft version of an article it is necessary to learn if the supervisors agree with the content of the draft version. Sometimes PhD students have to wait for weeks or even months before getting supervisors' comments on a draft version of an article or on a chapter from their dissertation. Here, sometimes the cultural background of a PhD student can play a role in not receiving timely feedback. It is very unusual for a Chinese or Indonesian PhD student to put pressure on a full professor by asking several times for comments even if the supervisor didn't keep earlier promises.

### ***II Personal competencies of PhD students causing delay***

Personal competencies of PhD students can also cause delay in the PhD trajectory. For instance a PhD student may have no or little experience in academic writing. Poor mastery of the English language (in reading, writing and presenting) can also lead to delay in the PhD trajectory.

I learned regularly from PhD students with an international degree that there was often not a good match between their foreign studies and the research plan written by their supervisor. In those situations they had first to take additional training, for instance in lab techniques, before they could start with their PhD trajectory. Taking additional training goes at the expense of their 4 year PhD-contract.

### ***III Poor tuning between supervisors and PhD student***

Regularly PhD students mentioned that meetings between them and their supervisors didn't take place very frequently. PhD students need directions on how to pursue research and how to navigate a particular discipline. In all stages of the trajectory, regular meetings between supervisor(s) and the PhD student are important. Regular meetings are important for the PhD student in order to see if he or she is still on track. For the supervisor it is important to see if a PhD student sticks to the plan and is making progress.

Sometimes PhD students mentioned that a clear research plan was lacking at the beginning of a trajectory. If the research plan was not available planning was impaired. Sometimes a PhD student was summoned by his supervisor with the instruction to read some dissertations of predecessor students in order to think about his or her own research plan.

What happens quite often is that PhD students concentrate on data gathering for quite a long time. Gathering of data can lead to postponement of writing reports and articles. By doing this, it can lead to exceeding the 4-year contract. Therefore it is very important that PhD students start in timely fashion with reporting and writing articles for their dissertation as well as data gathering.

Sometimes PhD students are requested to combine their research with educational tasks. That may also lead to exceeding the 4-year contract if these educational tasks are not compensated. This is especially the case in those situations where a PhD student is afraid to refuse additional educational tasks for his department. As a result, the primary task, doing PhD research, is in danger of being compromised.

### *IV Publication pressure*

Delay can also be caused by the handling of articles by scientific journals. Sometimes the editor of these journals takes months before they decide to accept articles. Dissertations in the beta-medical sciences and in the social sciences are more and more based on articles published in scientific journals. This phenomenon leads to an enormous amount of articles offered at (reliable) scientific journals (not only) by PhD students. High impact journals are in the position to refuse many of these articles. This abundance of articles has led to the rise of so-called “predatory journals”.<sup>12</sup> PhD students are very dependent on placement of their articles by scientific journals, preferably with high impact scores. If they don’t succeed in placement of their articles in high quality journals, they might fall in the trap of these “predatory journals”. Public funds then flow into the coffers of obscure organizations.

### *V The consequences of delay for PhD students*

It is obvious that where there are delays, time is ticking to the disadvantage of the PhD students. This certainly applies for PhD students from countries outside the European Economic Area. Their visas to stay in the Netherlands are based on their appointment as PhD students. If PhD students foresee that they will exceed the 4 year term of appointment, psychological problems can arise. After receiving many signals about PhD students who encountered psychological problems the Board of Utrecht University decided one year ago to appoint a PhD psychologist.

If PhD students exceed the 4 year term all kind of problems might occur:

- Financial problems because of the fact that they will no longer obtain salaries;
- Visa problems if the PhD student does not have a passport from one of countries of the European Economic Area;
- Psychological problems and stress related problems like depression or burn out;
- No admittance to university laboratory and no use of (expensive) research materials.

## Conclusions

Within academia PhD students have the weakest position. They are staff or faculty members who nearly always have temporary contracts, and they are exceptionally dependent on their supervisors. They often work in solitary fashion and within four years they must deliver a significant performance. This position of dependency and the high demands placed on them means that PhD students often have to work under great stress.

In case of problems, it is desirable that PhD students should be able to rely on the support of an independent and impartial ombudsman. The ombudsman may mediate in improving working conditions, in helping to extend the PhD programmes, and in resolving disputes between promoter and PhD student and achieving solutions that are timely, fair and humane.

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<sup>12</sup> “Predatory journals” publish articles on the basis of paid fees without executing a quality check nor making use of a reliable peer review process. These journals are mainly aimed at generating revenue without any significant contribution. The so-called Bealls’ List now contains the names of thousands “predatory journals”.

The Central Labor Agreement of Dutch universities offers the possibility to extend the appointment if a PhD student has been delayed due to long-term illness. However, it happens that unwell PhD students do not report their ill-health, because they assume that an extension of the appointment will not be given after all. Indeed, it often happens that an extension of appointment is not given on the grounds that there are no means of extending the appointment.

There are also still professors who advise to complete the thesis after the end of the 4-year term using a welfare benefit from the Dutch government. This can be incitement to fraud, because someone who applies for benefits must in principle be available for the labor market. A PhD student who has to complete his thesis is not available for the labor market.

In the conversations I had with PhD students, it regularly appeared that they were very reluctant to discuss their problems with a PhD mentor or PhD confidant from their own faculty or even from their own department. They suspect that the report will be discussed with the supervisor immediately after their departure. It is advisable to invest the advice of PhD students with the ombudsman personnel, who works at a central level of the university, is independent and works under official secrecy.

In the months that lie behind us, I spoke to delegations of PhD students. They often did not know about the existence of a confidential counsellor/ombudsperson staff, despite the reports about this person in university newsletters. The information they received about his role, his independence and the fact that he works under an oath of official secrecy, etc. reassured them very much.

The role of the Ombudsman for Staff and Faculty has been underexposed in most studies. Recent research by Bergmans and Van der Weijden on PhD students who provide informal care<sup>13</sup> concludes that supervisors are not informed about the caregiving tasks of the PhD students. The researchers see an important role for the Department of Human Resources in supporting PhD students. All Dutch universities will have to have an ombudsman for staff since mid-2021 on the basis of recent collective labor agreements.

It is much more sensible to engage an ombudsman in mediation about the precarious position of PhD students than to leave this to the Human Resources department. It is clear that Human Resources has increasingly entered the role of management support in the past decades.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Human Resources can be involved in the implementation of extensions, and the information to professors about the incorrect use of social benefits by PhD students who do not have their thesis ready within four years, etc. For a vulnerable PhD student, an HR advisor is not the most adequate source of answers to questions.

At Utrecht University, the Graduate Committee (a committee of all vice-deans research of all faculties) is commissioned by the Rector Magnificus to develop university-wide plans to improve the (legal) position of PhD students. Awareness that more attention should be paid to the most vulnerable group in academia is growing. That is a positive development.

Delay causes major problems among PhD students. Consideration should be given to how the consequences of delay can be addressed, for example by setting up a fund from which extension of appointments can be arranged. Timely decisions on extension reduces stress.

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<sup>13</sup> Eva Baaren (2021): PhD students who provide informal care are more likely to have mental health problems, but they do not ring the bell. In: ScienceGuide.

<sup>14</sup> S. Stevenson & D. van den Berg (2020): Evaluation of university ombuds function. Social Fund Knowledge Sector: Sofokles. The Hague.

## Occasional Paper Nr. 17

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Furthermore, it would be good if a PhD tracking system were developed. Not all PhD students are known to the Graduate Schools. This has to do with the different forms of appointment of PhD students. PhD students with university appointments are easily found in personnel files.

But PhD students with, for instance, grants from the Chinese or Iranian government are not always easily traceable in central university administrations. The same goes for PhD students without contracts. This has to change. Of all PhD students, it should be transparent how many are on track, how many have been delayed, the reason for the delay and how many PhD students have dropped out (and after how many years). And in the event of the premature departure of PhD students, exit interviews should be organized, so that the understanding of imperfections increases and is documented.

On the basis of the proposals described above, it should be possible to substantially prevent the drop-out among PhD students. A target drop-out percentage of no more than 10 per cent may well be entirely feasible.

### Note of thanks

I wish to express my great appreciation to Claartje van Sijl and Rob Behrens for their valuable comments on the draft version of this article.

### **The European Charter for Researchers / The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**

On the following pages you can find **The European Charter for Researchers** published by the Directorate-General for Research in 2005. This document includes explicit recommendations for several topics on the relationship between researchers and their institutions. It contains a special clause on “complaints/ appeals”.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Charter  
for Researchers


The Code of Conduct  
for the Recruitment  
of Researchers

2005

Directorate-General for Research  
Human resources and mobility (Marie Curie Actions)

EUR 21620





## Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

### The Commission of the European Communities

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 165 thereof

Whereas

- (1) The Commission considered it necessary in January 2000<sup>1</sup> to establish the European Research Area as the linchpin of the Community's future action in this field with a view to consolidating and giving structure to a European research policy.
- (2) The Lisbon European Council set the Community the objective of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy in the world by 2010.
- (3) The Council has addressed issues related to the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area in its Resolution of 10 November 2003<sup>2</sup> and welcomed in particular the Commission's intention to work towards the development of a European Researcher's Charter and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

<sup>1</sup> COM(2000) 6 final of 18.1.2000.

<sup>2</sup> JO C 282, p. 1-2, of 25.11.2003. Council Resolution of 10 November 2003 (2003/C 282/01 on the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area).

- (4) The identified potential shortage of researchers <sup>3</sup>, particularly in certain key disciplines, will pose a serious threat to EU's innovative strength, knowledge capacity and productivity growth in the near future and may hamper the attainment of the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives. Consequently, Europe must dramatically improve its attractiveness to researchers and strengthen the participation of women researchers by helping to create the necessary conditions for more sustainable and appealing careers for them in R&D <sup>4</sup>.
- (5) Sufficient and well-developed human resources in R&D are the cornerstone of advancement in scientific knowledge, technological progress, enhancing the quality of life, ensuring the welfare of European citizens and contributing to Europe's competitiveness.
- (6) New instruments for the career development of researchers should be introduced and implemented, thus contributing to the improvement of career prospects for researchers in Europe.
- (7) Enhanced and more visible career prospects also contribute to the building of a positive public attitude towards the researchers' profession, and thereby encourage more young people to embark on careers in research.
- (8) The ultimate political goal of this Recommendation is to contribute to the development of an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers, where the framework conditions allow for recruiting and retaining high quality researchers in environments conducive to effective performance and productivity.
- (9) Member States should endeavour to offer researchers sustainable career development systems at all career stages, regardless of their contractual situation and of the chosen R&D career path, and they

<sup>3</sup> COM (2003) 226 final and SEC(2003) 489 of 30.4.2003.

<sup>4</sup> SEC (2005) 260.



should endeavour to ensure that researchers are treated as professionals and as an integral part of the institutions in which they work.

- (10) Even though Member States have made considerable efforts to overcome administrative and legal obstacles to geographical and inter-sectoral mobility, many of these obstacles still remain.
- (11) All forms of mobility should be encouraged as part of a comprehensive human resource policy in R&D at national, regional and institutional level.
- (12) The value of all forms of mobility needs to be fully recognised in the career appraisal and career advancement systems for researchers, thus guaranteeing that such an experience is conducive to their professional development.
- (13) The development of a consistent career and mobility policy for researchers to <sup>5</sup> and from the European Union should be considered with regard to the situation in developing countries and regions within and outside Europe, so that building research capacities within the European Union does not occur at the expense of less developed countries or regions.
- (14) Funders or employers of researchers in their role as recruiters should be responsible for providing researchers with open, transparent and internationally comparable selection and recruitment procedures.
- (15) Society should appreciate more fully the responsibilities and the professionalism that researchers demonstrate in executing their work at different stages of their careers and in their multi-faceted role as knowledge workers, leaders, project coordinators, managers, supervisors, mentors, career advisors or science communicators.

<sup>5</sup> COM(2004) 178 final of 16.3.2004.

- (16) This Recommendation takes as its premise that employers or funders of researchers have an overriding obligation to ensure that they meet respective national, regional or sectoral legislation requirements.
- (17) This Recommendation provides Member States, employers, funders and researchers with a valuable instrument to undertake, on a voluntary basis, further initiatives for the improvement and consolidation of researchers' career prospects in the European Union and for the creation of an open labour market for researchers.
- (18) The general principles and requirements outlined in this Recommendation are the fruits of a public consultation process to which the members of the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility have been fully associated,

**Hereby recommends:**

1. That Member States endeavour to undertake the necessary steps to ensure that employers or funders of researchers develop and maintain a supportive research environment and working culture, where individuals and research groups are valued, encouraged and supported, and provided with the necessary material and intangible support to enable them to fulfil their objectives and tasks. Within this context, particular priority should be given to the organisation of working and training conditions in the early stage of the researchers' careers, as it contributes to the future choices and attractiveness of a career in R&D.
2. That Member States endeavour to take, wherever necessary, the crucial steps to ensure that employers or funders of researchers improve the recruitment methods and career evaluation/appraisal systems in order to create a more transparent, open, equal and internationally accepted system of recruitment and career development as a prerequisite for a genuine European labour market for researchers.

3. That Member States - as they formulate and adopt their strategies and systems for developing sustainable careers for researchers - take duly into account and are guided by the general principles and requirements, referred to as The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers outlined in the Annex.
4. That Member States endeavour to transpose these general principles and requirements within their area of responsibility into national regulatory frameworks or sectoral and/or institutional standards and guidelines (charters and/or codes for researchers). In so doing they should take into account the great diversity of the laws, regulations and practices which, in different countries and in different sectors, determine the path, organisation and working conditions of a career in R&D.
5. That Member States consider such general principles and requirements as an integral part of institutional quality assurance mechanisms by regarding them as a means for establishing funding criteria for national/regional funding schemes, as well as adopting them for the auditing, monitoring and evaluation processes of public bodies.
6. That Member States continue their efforts to overcome the persisting legal and administrative obstacles to mobility, including those related to intersectoral mobility and mobility between and within different functions, taking into account an enlarged European Union.
7. That Member States endeavour to ensure that researchers enjoy adequate social security coverage according to their legal status. Within this context, particular attention should be paid to the portability of pension rights, either statutory or supplementary, for researchers moving within the public and private sectors in the same country and also for those moving across borders within the European Union. Such regimes should guarantee that researchers who, in the course



of their lives, change jobs or interrupt their careers do not unduly suffer a loss of social security rights.

8. That Member States put in place the necessary monitoring structures to review this Recommendation regularly, as well as to measure the extent to which employers, funders and researchers have applied the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.
9. That the criteria for measuring this will be established and agreed with the Member States within the context of the work undertaken by the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility.
10. That Member States in their role as representatives in the international organisations established at intergovernmental level take due account of this Recommendation when proposing strategies and taking decisions concerning the activities of those organisations.
11. This Recommendation is addressed to the Member States but it is also intended as an instrument to encourage social dialogue, as well as dialogue among researchers, stakeholders and society at large.
12. The Member States are invited to inform the Commission, as far as possible, by 15th December 2005 and annually thereafter of any measures they have taken further to this Recommendation, and to inform it of the first results of its application as well as to provide examples of good practice.
13. This Recommendation will be reviewed periodically by the Commission in the context of the Open Method of Coordination.

Done at Brussels, 11 March 2005

For the Commission  
Janez Potočnik  
Member of the Commission



### ANNEX

#### Section 1

#### The European Charter for Researchers

The European Charter for Researchers is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers <sup>6</sup>. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that the nature of the relationship between researchers and employers or funders is conducive to successful performance in generating, transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development, and to the career development of researchers. The Charter also recognizes the value of all forms of mobility as a means for enhancing the professional development of researchers.

In this sense, the Charter constitutes a framework for researchers, employers and funders which invites them to act responsibly and as professionals within their working environment, and to recognise each other as such.

The Charter addresses all researchers in the European Union at all stages of their career and covers all fields of research in the public and private sectors, irrespective of the nature of the appointment or employment <sup>7</sup>, the legal status of their employer or the type of organisation or establishment in which the work is carried out. It takes into account the multiple roles of researchers, who are appointed not only to conduct research and/or to carry out development activities but are also involved in supervision, mentoring, management or administrative tasks.

<sup>6</sup> See definition in Section 3.

<sup>7</sup> See definition in Section 3.

This Charter takes as its premise that researchers as well as employers and/or funders of researchers have an overriding obligation to ensure that they meet the requirements of the respective national or regional legislation. Where researchers enjoy a status and rights which are, in certain respects, more favourable than those provided for in this Charter, its terms should not be invoked to diminish the status and rights already acquired.

Researchers, as well as employers and funders, who adhere to this Charter will also be respecting the fundamental rights and observe the principles recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Official Journal C 364, 18.12.2000 p. 0001-0022.



### General Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers:

#### Research Freedom

Researchers should focus their research for the good of mankind and for expanding the frontiers of scientific knowledge, while enjoying the freedom of thought and expression, and the freedom to identify methods by which problems are solved, according to recognised ethical principles and practices.

Researchers should, however, recognise the limitations to this freedom that could arise as a result of particular research circumstances (including supervision/guidance/management) or operational constraints, e.g. for budgetary or infrastructural reasons or, especially in the industrial sector, for reasons of intellectual property protection. Such limitations should not, however, contravene recognised ethical principles and practices, to which researchers have to adhere.

#### Ethical principles

Researchers should adhere to the recognised ethical practices and fundamental ethical principles appropriate to their discipline(s) as well as to ethical standards as documented in the different national, sectoral or institutional Codes of Ethics.

#### Professional responsibility

Researchers should make every effort to ensure that their research is relevant to society and does not duplicate research previously carried out elsewhere.



They must avoid plagiarism of any kind and abide by the principle of intellectual property and joint data ownership in the case of research carried out in collaboration with a supervisor(s) and/or other researchers. The need to validate new observations by showing that experiments are reproducible should not be interpreted as plagiarism, provided that the data to be confirmed are explicitly quoted.

Researchers should ensure, if any aspect of their work is delegated, that the person to whom it is delegated has the competence to carry it out.

### **Professional attitude**

Researchers should be familiar with the strategic goals governing their research environment and funding mechanisms, and should seek all necessary approvals before starting their research or accessing the resources provided.

They should inform their employers, funders or supervisor when their research project is delayed, redefined or completed, or give notice if it is to be terminated earlier or suspended for whatever reason.

### **Contractual and legal obligations**

Researchers at all levels must be familiar with the national, sectoral or institutional regulations governing training and/or working conditions. This includes Intellectual Property Rights regulations, and the requirements and conditions of any sponsor or funders, independently of the nature of their contract. Researchers should adhere to such regulations by delivering the required results (e.g. thesis, publications, patents, reports, new products development, etc) as set out in the terms and conditions of the contract or equivalent document.



### **Accountability**

Researchers need to be aware that they are accountable towards their employers, funders or other related public or private bodies as well as, on more ethical grounds, towards society as a whole. In particular, researchers funded by public funds are also accountable for the efficient use of taxpayers' money. Consequently, they should adhere to the principles of sound, transparent and efficient financial management and cooperate with any authorised audits of their research, whether undertaken by their employers/funders or by ethics committees.

Methods of collection and analysis, the outputs and, where applicable, details of the data should be open to internal and external scrutiny, whenever necessary and as requested by the appropriate authorities.

### **Good practice in research**

Researchers should at all times adopt safe working practices, in line with national legislation, including taking the necessary precautions for health and safety and for recovery from information technology disasters, e.g. by preparing proper back-up strategies. They should also be familiar with the current national legal requirements regarding data protection and confidentiality protection requirements, and undertake the necessary steps to fulfil them at all times.

### **Dissemination, exploitation of results**

All researchers should ensure, in compliance with their contractual arrangements, that the results of their research are disseminated and exploited, e.g. communicated, transferred into other research settings or, if appropriate, commercialised. Senior researchers, in particular, are expected to take a lead in ensuring that research is fruitful and that results

are either exploited commercially or made accessible to the public (or both) whenever the opportunity arises.

### **Public engagement**

Researchers should ensure that their research activities are made known to society at large in such a way that they can be understood by non-specialists, thereby improving the public's understanding of science. Direct engagement with the public will help researchers to better understand public interest in priorities for science and technology and also the public's concerns.

### **Relation with supervisors**

Researchers in their training phase should establish a structured and regular relationship with their supervisor(s) and faculty/departmental representative(s) so as to take full advantage of their relationship with them.

This includes keeping records of all work progress and research findings, obtaining feedback by means of reports and seminars, applying such feedback and working in accordance with agreed schedules, milestones, deliverables and/or research outputs.

### **Supervision and managerial duties**

Senior researchers should devote particular attention to their multi-faceted role as supervisors, mentors, career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers or science communicators. They should perform these tasks to the highest professional standards. With regard to their role as supervisors or mentors of researchers, senior researchers should build up a constructive and positive relationship with the early-stage researchers, in order to set the conditions for efficient transfer of knowledge and for the further successful development of the researchers' careers.



### Continuing Professional Development

Researchers at all career stages should seek to continually improve themselves by regularly updating and expanding their skills and competencies. This may be achieved by a variety of means including, but not restricted to, formal training, workshops, conferences and e-learning.

### General Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders:

#### Recognition of the profession

All researchers engaged in a research career should be recognised as professionals and be treated accordingly. This should commence at the beginning of their careers, namely at postgraduate level, and should include all levels, regardless of their classification at national level (e.g. employee, postgraduate student, doctoral candidate, postdoctoral fellow, civil servants).

#### Non-discrimination

Employers and/or funders of researchers will not discriminate against researchers in any way on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic condition.

#### Research environment

Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that the most stimulating research or research training environment is created which offers appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities, including for remote collaboration over research networks, and that the national or sectoral regulations concerning health and safety in research are observed. Funders should ensure that adequate resources are provided in support of the agreed work programme.

### Working conditions

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the working conditions for researchers, including for disabled researchers, provide where appropriate the flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective-bargaining agreements. They should aim to provide working conditions which allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career <sup>9</sup>. Particular attention should be paid, *inter alia*, to flexible working hours, part-time working, tele-working and sabbatical leave, as well as to the necessary financial and administrative provisions governing such arrangements.

### Stability and permanence of employment

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the performance of researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts, and should therefore commit themselves as far as possible to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers, thus implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the *EU Directive on Fixed-Term Work* <sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See SEC (2005) 260, Women and Science: Excellence and Innovation – Gender Equality in Science.

<sup>10</sup> Which aims to prevent fixed-term employees from being treated less favourably than similar permanent employees, to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive fixed-term contracts, to improve access to training for fixed-term employees and to ensure that fixed-term employees are informed about available permanent jobs. Council Directive 1999/70/EC concerning the “Framework Agreement on fixed-term work” concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP, adopted on 28 June 1999.

### Funding and salaries

Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that researchers enjoy fair and attractive conditions of funding and/or salaries with adequate and equitable social security provisions (including sickness and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits) in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective bargaining agreements. This must include researchers at all career stages including early-stage researchers, commensurate with their legal status, performance and level of qualifications and/or responsibilities.

### Gender balance <sup>11</sup>

Employers and/or funders should aim for a representative gender balance at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level. This should be achieved on the basis of an equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at the subsequent career stages without, however, taking precedence over quality and competence criteria. To ensure equal treatment, selection and evaluation committees should have an adequate gender balance.

### Career development

Employers and/or funders of researchers should draw up, preferably within the framework of their human resources management, a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, including for researchers on fixed-term contracts. It should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers, thus motivating them and contributing to reducing any

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<sup>11</sup> See SEC (2005) 260, *Women and Science: Excellence and Innovation – Gender Equality in Science*.



insecurity in their professional future. All researchers should be made familiar with such provisions and arrangements.

### **Value of mobility**

Employers and/or funders must recognise the value of geographical, inter-sectoral, inter- and trans-disciplinary and virtual<sup>12</sup> mobility as well as mobility between the public and private sector as an important means of enhancing scientific knowledge and professional development at any stage of a researcher's career. Consequently, they should build such options into the specific career development strategy and fully value and acknowledge any mobility experience within their career progression/appraisal system.

This also requires that the necessary administrative instruments be put in place to allow the portability of both grants and social security provisions, in accordance with national legislation.

### **Access to research training and continuous development**

Employers and/or funders should ensure that all researchers at any stage of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, are given the opportunity for professional development and for improving their employability through access to measures for the continuing development of skills and competencies.

Such measures should be regularly assessed for their accessibility, take-up and effectiveness in improving competencies, skills and employability.

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<sup>12</sup> i.e. remote collaboration over electronic networks.

### Access to career advice

Employers and/or funders should ensure that career advice and job placement assistance, either in the institutions concerned, or through collaboration with other structures, is offered to researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of their contractual situation.

### Intellectual Property Rights

Employers and/or funders should ensure that researchers at all career stages reap the benefits of the exploitation (if any) of their R&D results through legal protection and, in particular, through appropriate protection of Intellectual Property Rights, including copyrights.

Policies and practices should specify what rights belong to researchers and/or, where applicable, to their employers or other parties, including external commercial or industrial organisations, as possibly provided for under specific collaboration agreements or other types of agreement.

### Co-authorship

Co-authorship should be viewed positively by institutions when evaluating staff, as evidence of a constructive approach to the conduct of research. Employers and/or funders should therefore develop strategies, practices and procedures to provide researchers, including those at the beginning of their research careers, with the necessary framework conditions so that they can enjoy the right to be recognised and listed and/or quoted, in the context of their actual contributions, as co-authors of papers, patents, etc, or to publish their own research results independently from their supervisor(s).



### Supervision

Employers and/or funders should ensure that a person is clearly identified to whom early-stage researchers can refer for the performance of their professional duties, and should inform the researchers accordingly.

Such arrangements should clearly define that the proposed supervisors are sufficiently expert in supervising research, have the time, knowledge, experience, expertise and commitment to be able to offer the research trainee appropriate support and provide for the necessary progress and review procedures, as well as the necessary feedback mechanisms.

### Teaching

Teaching is an essential means for the structuring and dissemination of knowledge and should therefore be considered a valuable option within the researchers' career paths. However, teaching responsibilities should not be excessive and should not prevent researchers, particularly at the beginning of their careers, from carrying out their research activities.

Employers and/or funders should ensure that teaching duties are adequately remunerated and taken into account in the evaluation/appraisal systems, and that time devoted by senior members of staff to the training of early stage researchers should be counted as part of their teaching commitment. Suitable training should be provided for teaching and coaching activities as part of the professional development of researchers.

### Evaluation/appraisal systems

Employers and/or funders should introduce for all researchers, including senior researchers, evaluation/appraisal systems for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner by an independent (and, in the case of senior researchers, preferably international) committee.

Such evaluation and appraisal procedures should take due account of their overall research creativity and research results, e.g. publications, patents, management of research, teaching/lecturing, supervision, mentoring, national or international collaboration, administrative duties, public awareness activities and mobility, and should be taken into consideration in the context of career progression.

### Complaints/appeals

Employers and/or funders of researchers should establish, in compliance with national rules and regulations, appropriate procedures, possibly in the form of an impartial (ombudsman-type) person to deal with complaints/appeals of researchers, including those concerning conflicts between supervisor(s) and early-stage researchers. Such procedures should provide all research staff with confidential and informal assistance in resolving work-related conflicts, disputes and grievances, with the aim of promoting fair and equitable treatment within the institution and improving the overall quality of the working environment.

### Participation in decision-making bodies

Employers and/or funders of researchers should recognise it as wholly legitimate, and indeed desirable, that researchers be represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the institutions for which they work, so as to protect and promote their individual and collective interests as professionals and to actively contribute to the workings of the institution <sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> In this context see also EU Directive 2002/14/EC.

### Recruitment

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the entry and admission standards for researchers, particularly at the beginning of their careers, are clearly specified and should also facilitate access for disadvantaged groups or for researchers returning to a research career, including teachers (of any level) returning to a research career.

Employers and/or funders of researchers should adhere to the principles set out in the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers when appointing or recruiting researchers.

### Section 2

## The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

The code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers. These principles and requirements should ensure observance of values such as transparency of the recruitment process and equal treatment of all applicants, in particular with regard to the development of an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers, and are complementary to those outlined in the European Charter for Researchers. Institutions and employers adhering to the Code of Conduct will openly demonstrate their commitment to act in a responsible and respectable way and to provide fair framework conditions to researchers, with a clear intention to contribute to the advancement of the European Research Area.

### General Principles and Requirements for the Code of Conduct

#### Recruitment

Employers and/or funders should establish recruitment procedures which are open <sup>14</sup>, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable, as well as tailored to the type of positions advertised.

<sup>14</sup> All available instruments should be used, in particular international or globally accessible web-based resources such as the pan-European Researcher's Mobility Portal: <http://europa.eu.int/eracareers>.

Advertisements should give a broad description of knowledge and competencies required, and should not be so specialised as to discourage suitable applicants. Employers should include a description of the working conditions and entitlements, including career development prospects. Moreover, the time allowed between the advertisement of the vacancy or the call for applications and the deadline for reply should be realistic.

### Selection

Selection committees should bring together diverse expertise and competences and should have an adequate gender balance and, where appropriate and feasible, include members from different sectors (public and private) and disciplines, including from other countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidate. Whenever possible, a wide range of selection practices should be used, such as external expert assessment and face-to-face interviews. Members of selection panels should be adequately trained.

### Transparency

Candidates should be informed, prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the career development prospects. They should also be informed after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.

### Judging merit

The selection process should take into consideration the whole range of experience<sup>15</sup> of the candidates. While focusing on their overall potential as researchers, their creativity and level of independence should also be considered.

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<sup>15</sup> See also The European Charter for Researchers: Evaluation/Appraisal systems in Section 1 of this document.

This means that merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on outstanding results within a diversified career path and not only on the number of publications. Consequently, the importance of bibliometric indices should be properly balanced within a wider range of evaluation criteria, such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management of research and innovation and public awareness activities. For candidates from an industrial background, particular attention should be paid to any contributions to patents, development or inventions.

### **Variations in the chronological order of CVs**

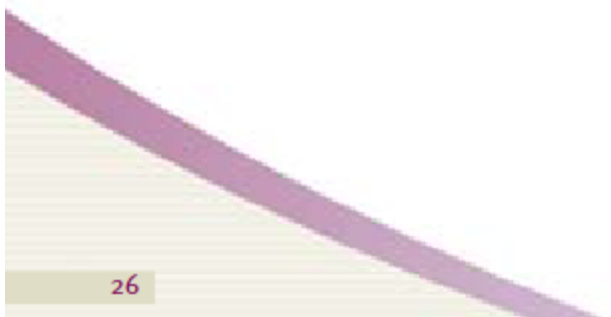
Career breaks or variations in the chronological order of CVs should not be penalised, but regarded as an evolution of a career, and consequently, as a potentially valuable contribution to the professional development of researchers towards a multidimensional career track. Candidates should therefore be allowed to submit evidence-based CVs, reflecting a representative array of achievements and qualifications appropriate to the post for which application is being made.

### **Recognition of mobility experience**

Any mobility experience, e.g. a stay in another country/region or in another research setting (public or private) or a change from one discipline or sector to another, whether as part of the initial research training or at a later stage of the research career, or virtual mobility experience, should be considered as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher.

### **Recognition of qualifications**

Employers and/or funders should provide for appropriate assessment and evaluation of the academic and professional qualifications, including non-formal qualifications, of all researchers, in particular within the context of





international and professional mobility. They should inform themselves and gain a full understanding of rules, procedures and standards governing the recognition of such qualifications and, consequently, explore existing national law, conventions and specific rules on the recognition of these qualifications through all available channels<sup>16</sup>.

### Seniority

The levels of qualifications required should be in line with the needs of the position and not be set as a barrier to entry. Recognition and evaluation of qualifications should focus on judging the achievements of the person rather than his/her circumstances or the reputation of the institution where the qualifications were gained. As professional qualifications may be gained at an early stage of a long career, the pattern of lifelong professional development should also be recognised.

### Postdoctoral appointments

Clear rules and explicit guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers, including the maximum duration and the objectives of such appointments, should be established by the institutions appointing postdoctoral researchers. Such guidelines should take into account time spent in prior postdoctoral appointments at other institutions and take into consideration that the postdoctoral status should be transitional, with the primary purpose of providing additional professional development opportunities for a research career in the context of long-term career prospects.

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<sup>16</sup> Look at <http://www.enic-naric.net/> to find more detailed information about the NARIC Network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) and the ENIC Network (European Network of Information Centres).

### Section 3 Definitions

#### Researchers

For the purpose of this Recommendation the internationally recognised Frascati definition of research<sup>17</sup> will be used. Consequently, researchers are described as

*“Professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned.”*

More specifically, this Recommendation relates to all persons professionally engaged in R&D at any career stage<sup>18</sup>, regardless of their classification. This includes any activities related to “basic research”, “strategic research”, “applied research”, experimental development and “transfer of knowledge” including innovation and advisory, supervisory and teaching capacities, the management of knowledge and intellectual property rights, the exploitation of research results or scientific journalism.

A distinction is made between Early-Stage Researcher and Experienced Researchers:

- The term Early-Stage Researcher<sup>19</sup> refers to researchers in the first four years (full-time equivalent) of their research activity, including the period of research training.

<sup>17</sup> In: Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys on Research and Experimental Development, Frascati Manual, OECD, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> COM (2003) 436 of 18.7. 2003: Researchers in the ERA: One profession, multiple careers.

<sup>19</sup> See Work Programme Structuring the European Research Area Human Resources and Mobility Marie Curie Actions, edition September 2004, page 41.

- Experienced Researchers <sup>20</sup> are defined as researchers having at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) since gaining a university diploma giving them access to doctoral studies, in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained or researchers already in possession of a doctoral degree, regardless of the time taken to acquire it.

### Employers

In the context of this Recommendation “employers” refers to all those public or private institutions which employ researchers on a contractual basis or which host them under other types of contracts or arrangements, including those without a direct financial relationship. The latter refers particularly to institutions of higher education, faculty departments, laboratories, foundations or private bodies where researchers either undergo their research training or carry out their research activities on the basis of funding provided by a third party.

### Funders

“Funders” refers to all those bodies <sup>21</sup> which provide funding, (including stipends, awards, grants and fellowships) to public and private research institutions, including institutions for higher education. In this role they might stipulate as a key condition for providing funding that the funded institutions should have in place and apply effective strategies, practices and mechanisms according to the general principles and requirements presented in this Recommendation.

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<sup>20</sup> Idem, page 42.

<sup>21</sup> The Community will endeavour to apply the commitments laid down in this Recommendation to the receiver of funding in the context of the Framework Programme(s) for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities.

### Appointment or employment

This refers to any type of contract or stipend or to a fellowship, grant or awards financed by a third party including funding within the context of the Framework Programme(s) <sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The Framework Programme(s) for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities.

European Commission

**EUR 21620 — The European Charter for Researchers.  
The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment**

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2005 — 32 pp. — 14.8 x 21 cm

ISBN 92-894-9311-9

The European Commission has adopted the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. These two documents are key elements in the EU's policy to make research an attractive career, which is a vital feature of its strategy to stimulate economic and employment growth. The Charter and Code of Conduct will give individual researchers the same rights and obligations wherever they may work throughout the EU. This should help counter the fact that research careers in Europe are fragmented at local, regional, national or sectoral level, and allow Europe to make the most of its scientific potential.



## Curriculae Vitae

### Paulo Peixoto, Student Ombuds of the University of Coimbra



Paulo Peixoto is Associate Professor with Aggregation at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra (FEUC) and researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES), integrating the research group on "Cities, Culture and Architecture (CCArq)". He is member of: International Institute for Research and Action on Academic Fraud and Plagiarism (Board of directors); Research Group "Art, Culture and Power" (CNPq/UERJ), university where he was Visiting Professor in 2014; Research Group "Geography, Tourism and Cultural Heritage" (CNPq/UNICAMP). He is a collaborator of the research group on "Urban and Cultural Studies Laboratory" (CNPq/UFS) and the research group "City, Culture and Difference" (CNPq/Univille). He integrates and coordinates the Observatory of Education and Training Policies (CES/ULHT). He is the Student Ombudsman of the University of Coimbra. He is President of the Board of the Portuguese Sociological Association. He has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Coimbra (2007), a degree (in 1994, with part of the training carried out at the Catholic University of Louvain) and a Master's degree (1997) in Sociology from the University of Coimbra. He currently runs research projects on heritage and tourism and on higher education. Paulo develops extension activities, coordinating the evaluation of social intervention projects and public policies. He has held various management positions at the Centre for Social Studies, the Faculty of Economics at the University of Coimbra and at SNESup. Current research interests focus on the fields of cities and urban cultures, heritage, tourism, mobility, higher education and science and education policies.

### Joana Gomes de Almeida, Researcher in Student Ombuds Office in University of Coimbra



Joana Gomes de Almeida, Degree in Social Work, Master in Social Intervention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and PhD in Sociology from the University of Coimbra. Works in the areas of Social Sciences, with an emphasis on Social Work and Sociology. She has been working in several areas, relating them to social exclusion: unemployment, self-employment and entrepreneurship. More recently she has developed work in the area of social enterprises. Currently develops research in the area of Higher Education at the Student Ombudsman of the University of Coimbra.

### Paul Herfs, Ombudsman for Staff at University of the Arts Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands



Dr. Paul Herfs has been the ombudsman for staff and faculty at Utrecht University in the Netherlands from 2005 until 2021. This position was created in 1977 on request of the University Council of Utrecht University. So this position has already existed for nearly 45 years. In 2021 he retired at Utrecht University, but after some months he was appointed as ombudsman again at the University of the Arts Utrecht. At the ENOHE conference in Leon-Spain he was elected as Board member of ENOHE. Recently he was also elected as Board member of the Dutch association of ombuds in higher education (abbreviation in Dutch: VOHO). Since 2005 Paul Herfs has been a member of ENOHE and VOHO (Vereniging Ombudsmannen in het Hoger Onderwijs).

### ENOHE Occasional Papers

The ENOHE Occasional Papers are a series of publications intended to inform its readers about current trends, recent developments, and scenarios for the future in the development of academic ombudsmen within European and international higher education.

**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 1:** Kristl Holtrop/Josef Leidenfrost (eds.)

Student – Institutional Relationships in Times of New University Management:  
Academic Ombudsmen in European Higher Education

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Change Management and New Governance in European Higher Education:  
Ombudsing as a Contribution to Quality Assurance

**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 3:** Hans M. Eppenberger/Markus Kägi/Josef Leidenfrost/Eugen Teuwsen (eds.)

Complications Arising from Interpersonal Dependency - The Ombudsman's Role in Avoiding and Solving  
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**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 4:** Patrick Cras/Josef Leidenfrost (eds.)

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Lost in Transition? Defining the Role of Ombudsmen in the Developing Bologna World

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Common Objectives, Different Pathways: Embedding Ombudsman Principles and Practices into Higher Education  
Institutions

**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 8:** Gerlinde Sponholz/Josef Leidenfrost (eds.)

Curriculum “Good Scientific Practice“

**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 9:** Ewa Gmurzyńska

Benefits of Dispute Resolution Systems in Organizations; The Example of the University of Warsaw Conflict  
Resolution System

**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 10:** Maria De Pellegrin/Ian Eisteter/Josef Leidenfrost (eds.)

(In-House) Mediation as a Tool in Higher Education Conflict Management: A Study from Austria

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The Austrian Student Ombudsman, “student rights” and “student obligations” in the Austrian Higher Education  
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Paul Herfs

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**ENOHE Occasional Paper Nr. 14:** Carolyn Brendon / Csaba Dégi L. / Panagiotis Kavouras / Felicity Mitchell

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**ENOHE Ocasional Paper Nr. 15:** Tom Kosakowski / Helga Nolte / Tamta Demetradze / Brent Epperson

Webinar: How to set up an Ombuds office

**ENOHE Ocasional Paper Nr. 16:** Josef Leidenfrost / Anna-Katharina Rothwangl

-Conflict Management through Ombudsman Offices at Universities in Austria: Status and Outlook

-Gestión de conflictos a través de las defensorions de los estudiantes en las universidades de Austria:

Situación y perspectivas