



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of Instituto Universitario de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisbon, Portugal, Master in Public Administration.

At its meeting of August 2017 in Milan, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria.

1. Accreditation Criteria

2. Applicability/Eligibility	
2.1 Domain	ISCTE-IUL's Master Programme in Public Administration presents itself with four main objectives: (1) to develop extensive skills in areas relevant to public and state administration; (2) to develop specialised skills, including the professional qualifications expected of students, so that they can contribute to the development of innovation projects in public administration; (3) to provide students with the theoretical and methodological skills that enable these individuals to develop research projects within an academic environment; (4) to provide students coming from public administration practice – and managers in particular – a space in which to acquire knowledge and update their experience, providing them with theoretical frameworks that enhance comprehension and tools that help define process improvements. It therefore falls within the domain of EAPAA accreditation.
2.2 Geography	Portugal has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1976. The geography criterion is thus fulfilled.
2.3 Programme longevity	ISCTE-IUL has been running a Master programme in PA since 1999. The programme has experienced several changes during these 18 years, with yearly adaptations to the faculty members involved in it. The Master's programme under review fulfils the longevity criterion.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	The programme is taught in ISCTE-IUL facilities in Lisbon. It has no simultaneously different formats running and no specialisations. There is no differentiation regarding target groups. The accreditation thus addresses the single variant of the MSc Programme in PA.
4 Category of accreditation	Although ISCTE-IUL applied for accreditation of its programme as a second cycle degree, it was asked during the site visit, considering the

	executive-training character of the programme, whether ISCTE-IUL would be more interested in applying for the EAPAA accreditation in the category of an executive/mid-career MA programme in Public Administration. This was not the case - ISCTE-IUL retained its original request for an accreditation in the category of a second cycle degree. To accept this, it requires certain actions on the part of the programme (see below).
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration	In general, core PA domain-specific components of the programme have been adequately developed. There is, however, concern regarding the balance between the academic and practical components in the curriculum.
5.2 Mission of the programme	The mission statement is clear and focuses on issues of modernisation, and the development of skills aimed at innovation, improvement of PA malfunctions and change. The programme's overall approach to developing relevant skills is basically sound and effective. However, currently the link between the general learning objectives in the mission statement and the more specific learning objectives of the curricular units is far from transparent.
5.3 Level	No additional comments, except to repeating the previous point regarding the embeddedness of the programme in academic research and the adequacy of the development of (practically relevant) research skills of the students (see 5.1.)
5.4 Practice and internships	The relations of the programme with the civil service in Portugal (and some of the Portugese speaking countries) are very good and most of the programme's students are working in the civil service and have considerable practical experience before they enter the programme.
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	The emphasis in the programme lies on the main state institutions and the internal organisation and management of public administration, with an emphasis on values of effectiveness and efficiency (and additional concerns for values like fairness and transparency). Somewhat less attention is given to democratic values, like the primacy of democratically elected officeholders, citizen participation, and democratic accountability and responsiveness. The common core of the curriculum is large enough to cover all main learning objectives, even for students who have not taken a PA Bachelor before. But the formulation of general and specific learning objectives does not always allow evaluating how well-balanced the programme actually is (in terms of its coverage, complementarity and avoidance of major overlaps).
5.5.1.2 Other Components	N.a.

5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme	The teaching methods correspond to the needs and specifics of the target group.
5.5.1.4 Intake	A great majority of students (2014-2016 mean 75%) are civil servants with considerable practical experience. The previous undergraduate education of students is very diverse (from different disciplines). Virtually all applicants are admitted to the programme. There are no procedures for less (or differently) qualified students for repairing the 'lacunas' in their knowledge and skills.
5.5.2 Length	The length of the programme is two years (120 ECTS) which is adequate time for achieving the programme objectives.
5.5.3 Results	The programme appears to meet the expectations of stakeholders, but did not present systematic evidence on more externally valid evidence (e.g. representative surveys of employers and alumni). However, there is concern about the <i>academic</i> quality of graduates (especially in terms of their knowledge and skills in the domain of social science research methods).
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	The programme is very active in evaluating the separate curricular units as part of its quality control system. Unfortunately there is not a similar dedication to the strategic evaluation of the curriculum as a whole.
5.6.2 Curriculum Development	See previous point.
5.6.3 External Reviews	The programme has been accredited on a regular basis by a national accreditation agency A3ES. Some points in the last review were addressed, but most still require systematic attention.
5.7 Student Assessment	The programme assesses the individual performance of its students through a combination of different evaluation tools. The student assessment practices are adequately developed.
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	Within the framework of ISCTE-IUL organisation, there is an identifiable person – a programme director – responsible for the programme, with the instruments, capacity and influence within the department and school. However, the usually appreciated autonomy of a programme is, in this case, an eventual weakness, since it exceeds the expected standards, and can be considered highly dependent on a single person – the programme director who also (co-)teaches a number of courses and supervises many of the Master's dissertations and projects. More external participation, collective responsibility for the programme, School and Department ownership and inter-departmental arrangements would certainly benefit the programme.
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus Score:	The faculty teaching the PA programme is characterised by a high degree of volatility. There is only one full-time tenured active faculty member.

	There are severe concerns whether such an approach is sustainable in the long-run and whether it enables students to get proper academic education in PA. The leadership of the ISCTE-IUL recognises this problem, however, little has been done to solve it.
5.9.2 Faculty qualifications	A great majority of faculty members are unknown in international academic community in PA, and their research has not been peer-reviewed and acknowledged by international peers. The strength of ISCTE-IUL is its recognition by Portuguese authorities which is reflected in a number of applied research and consulting projects commissioned by government institutions.
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	About a quarter of faculty members are female. At the same time, several women have leadership positions at the university hierarchy (Director of the School, Department Head). There is no information available on the representation of ethnic minorities in the faculty. There is a lack of young faculty members.
5.10 Admission of Students	The admission process does not seem to be particularly selective and is later reflected in a high dropout rate.
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities	ISCTE-IUL develops its teaching activities in one campus with several recent inter-connected buildings, well equipped with the standard working and teaching rooms' equipment. The physical conditions are, therefore, good and with enough space and rooms for faculty, lectures, seminars, and student's working rooms. Even though the infrastructure, the access, the media equipment available, and the activities being developed there reveal a very active and technically up-to-date library, the Public Administration resources were rather poor.
5.12 Student Services	Students take part in executive boards and committees of ISCTE-IUL, and there is a special student ombudsman. The programme has a well-developed system of on-line course evaluations based on assessments by students. There is no evidence on how students – particularly those who are public servants – get special advice and support during the thesis writing period. This is particularly important because dropouts usually take place during the thesis-writing period.
5.13 Public Relations	ISCTE-IUL seems to be well aware of the role of PR. It is a well known institution in the country, with a public profile of a respected higher education institution and with excellent capacity to attract students.
6 Additional Criteria	Not applicable.

2. Conclusion

Based on all the materials and especially the report of the EAPAA site visit team, the Accreditation Committee has evaluated the programme.

The programme under review has several positive features that satisfy or even exceed the respective evaluation standards. ISCTE-IUL is an important entity in Portugal, and plays a substantial role in the

development of public administration in the country. The PA programme is a well-established and highly recognised study programme within the Portuguese administration. The curriculum is multi-disciplinary and includes perspectives of a variety of disciplines into PA. The programme leadership is very enthusiastic and motivated to run the programme and sometimes does even more than usually expected from such programmes, for example, publishing the Master's projects and dissertations in edited volumes. The ISCTE-IUL leadership finds the programme valuable and an asset to ISCTE-IUL in general.

Students, employers and alumni alike are very satisfied with the PA programme. The students are eager to participate and are committed to their studies. A great asset for ISCTE-IUL is its close relations with the practice of public administration. ISCTE-IUL employs a number of adjunct faculty members from the civil service who are high-level professionals devoted to sharing their knowledge and skills with students. The faculty is well-known in Portuguese administration, and public sector employers value highly education received from ISCTE-IUL. The fact that most students are civil servants enables them to learn not only from faculty members, but also from each other. Some of the PA alumni are among the top civil servants in Portugal. The ISCTE-IUL's PA programme has a high reputation in the country and good image within the Portuguese civil service.

The facilities of ISCTE-IUL are very good. Its campus provides a very good venue for educating students. The library has excellent facilities although its sources in the field of PA need to be further developed. The ICT systems of ISCTE-IUL are up-to-date and well developed. Another positive feature in the entire Portuguese higher education system seems to be its national accreditation process which has largely reached to similar conclusions about ISCTE-IUL PA programme as our EAPAA SVT.

At the same time, EAPAA identified three problematic aspects of the programme – the insufficient core faculty, deficient research basis, little internationalisation – which need to be systematically addressed by the ISCTE leadership and programme management.

1. EAPAA is concerned about the great autonomy of programme leadership combined with very small core faculty (in fact, lack of permanent faculty in the field of PA). The ownership and responsibility of the PA programme materialises in one person – the programme director. Although he is a very capable person, such an arrangement makes the entire programme highly dependent on a single person, and entails a risk of long-term sustainability and further development of the programme. There are a few committed part-time faculty members but the core of the faculty is very thin with only one full-time tenured PA faculty member (the same programme director).
2. Research activities of ISCTE-IUL PA faculty remain insufficient. Publications are in most cases in Portuguese and published by national publishers with only a handful of articles published in international peer-reviewed journals in PA. This means that a great majority of faculty members are unknown in international academic community in PA, and their research has not been peer-reviewed and acknowledged by international peers. Research activities of the faculty tend to be overshadowed by teaching and administrative obligations. The problematic scientific basis is also reflected in the teaching process (as the academic research-based teaching and focus on robust research methods remains questionable), and in the descriptive character of Master's dissertations and projects (instead of demonstrating theoretical, analytical and methodological skills of graduates).
3. Deriving from the fact that the majority of faculty members and students are civil servants, there are problems related to the internationalisation of the PA programme. There is almost no international mobility of the staff (with the exception of a few visiting professors). As participation in international projects and conferences is rare, communication and sharing of practices with international colleagues remains very modest leading to potential lock-in

effect. There is a risk of self-referential behaviour, which, in the long run, is likely to diminish the competitiveness of ISCTE-IUL. Students also, as a rule, do not use opportunities of international mobility (e.g. through Erasmus schemes) because they are employed in Portuguese public administration and cannot take time off from work. At the same time, good English skills of students would allow for student mobility as well as invitation of foreign professors teaching in English. The focus on internationalisation is particularly important considering the increasing number of foreign students in the PA programme.

Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that the programme meets the criteria for accreditation conditionally, for three years. Of the several recommendations from the site visit report, the following must be addressed for the accreditation to be extended beyond this period:

- **Substantially strengthening the permanent full-time faculty in PA.**
- **Strengthening the research orientation of the faculty.**