

Summary Document of the Meeting between the Rector and Vice-Rector for Research and Culture and the Informal Group of Researchers of UAlg

At 11 a.m. on October 30, 2023, upon the request of a broad group of researchers from the University of Algarve (UALG), they gathered in the seminar room of the Rectorate with the Rector, Dr. Paulo Águas, and the Vice-Rector for Research and Culture, Dr. Nuno Bicho.

The Rector opened the meeting and thanked the attendees for submitting their questions/guidelines. He suggested following the guidelines, adding that if other issues arise or clarifications to the guidelines are needed, he could provide this information later. He then read the agenda provided by the researchers and agreed that they should prepare the minutes/summary of the meeting, and remarked that he will follow our agenda.

[Next, the rectors presented, in order, the various questions included in the guidelines sent to the Rectorate before the meeting, as well as the responses given and the associated dialogue.]

Section 1 - Strategic Approach of UAlg

1. How many applications to the FCT Tenure program does UAlg plan to submit?

The Rector and Vice-Rector replied that there will be only one application per edition.

[The University can only make one application per edition. The number of positions is a different question - see below].

2. How many positions are planned per research center?

The Rector stated that the research centers would propose the positions they wish to have, showing their willingness to cover the expenses. He also mentioned that there are several budget allocations in the Ministry [of Science, Technology, and Higher Education, MCTES]; one budget is allocated to science and technology through the FCT [Foundation for Science and Technology] and another for teaching, which is awarded to higher education institutions. The Rector mentioned that the FCT's budget will be around 300 million euros. Isabel Duarte noted that in the State Budget, 1 billion euros are allocated for research and science in 2024, and 3 billion overall for higher education and science. The Rector emphasized that there are two channels: one for research and one for education.

The minister/Ministry stated that the centers will be funded to support the FCT tenure: in the first three years, the set of research positions will be funded 2/3 directly by the FCT and 1/3 indirectly by the FCT, with funds channeled to the financing of the centers.

The Vice-Rector acknowledged that they have not yet started discussions with the centers since the regulatory project is still a draft, and the FCT has recently given higher priority to the center evaluations, so the focus on the FCT tenure program "seems to have been forgotten." He added that, despite significant criticisms of the draft, he believes it will proceed without major changes to what is currently proposed. Isabel Duarte said there the researchers unanimously agree with the FCT tenure, since it represents the first opportunity to establish scientific employment in Portugal, also mentioning that the CRUP proposal might have some less equitable points for not considering all types of contracts. The Rector replied that this interpretation is legitimate, but it must be considered what each institution will do with the final proposal, and UALG in particular.

3. Please indicate clearly and objectively the criteria that will guide the determination of the scientific area/theme and the number of applications per research center.

The Rector stated that the centers themselves would determine these criteria and report to the rectorate, which will then validate them. There needs to be good sense on the part of the centers, but the University cannot define something that is not within its remit. He also referred to an article in the newspaper Público by the rector of the University of Porto highlighting the low funding of the institutions and said that this is also a concerted strategy so that the minister can request more funding for Higher Education Institutions (IES) from the government.

4. How will applications be distributed between research and teaching positions?

The Rector replied that research positions will be proposed by the research centers within UALg through international applications, based on their strategic lines and needs, and that the centers will evaluate the applications. Teaching positions will be proposed by the Unidades Orgânicas (UO), in consultation with the centers, according to the needs for teaching positions. These will not be paid by the centers but by UALg because it would be a tremendous pressure on the centers.

With the framework of teaching applications that UALg has planned to open in the coming years, the Rector informs that since 2018 we have had 62 applications authorized for the UOs; of these, 26 are completed, 20 are already underway, and there are 16 with announcements not yet published. These 62 applications have been defined by the UOs according to their needs, including some areas (such as Education, for example) where researchers are less likely to be candidates (that is, part of these applications will not be in areas for which we can compete, but others will).

Some of the UALg researchers were able to apply to previous applications and 3-4 were hired in this process. Isabel Duarte points out that these 62 applications were all for teaching, there were only 3 researchers placed by the PREVPAP regularization program, but no competition was opened for research careers.

The Rector informs that the allocation for the teaching function (professors also do research) covers less than 90% of UAlg's wage bill (i.e., it does not cover 90% of the costs with teaching and non-teaching staff). Since 2018, 79 teachers have left (corresponding to approx. 13 departures/year), with a further 60 departures previewed (some due to retirement and others not). The institution has to create conditions to hire an equal number of teachers.

The Rector also mentions that, according to the ministry, our University is over-funded, so the Ministry claims that we should only receive 85% of what we get (UAlg). Of the increases that MCTES will give, UAlg will only receive 70% of these increases (the other 30% are for institutions considered under-funded). UAlg is not classified as under-funded, which means that it will not be easy to hire the same number of professors who leave over the next 4 years, but any increase in the OE (Orçamento do Estado) allocation that UAlg benefits from will go to personnel expenses.

Of the 62 applications [already authorized] since 2018, 13 are institutional CEEC for teaching careers, with 50% funding by FCT for 6 years. During these 6 years, the professor can teach a maximum of 180 hours/year (6 hours a week, 30 weeks); after the 6 years (experimental regime), the professor becomes permanent and has a teaching load identical to the other teachers (up to 270 annual hours), with the UO supporting this cost. The UOs are small in size and do not have financial autonomy, so UAlg seeks the best distribution of resources – the process is dynamic. The increase in the wage bill is not the same in all UOs because not all have, for example, the same number of students. We plan to have about 60 teaching positions, initially distributed by the UOs according to their needs and not according to FCT tenure, staggered over the next 4 years. If it is possible to match with FCT tenure, there are advantages because in the first years the UO only bears 1/3, although the teacher has the maximum load of 4 hours weekly (The Rector mentions that it is not consensual because the ECDU recommends a minimum of 6 hours). In the 2nd triennium, the UO supports 2/3 (at 4 hours weekly) and after 6 years, the UO supports the entirety, already with the 9 weekly teaching hours. Researchers can choose whether or not to apply for teaching positions (or partial FCT tenure teaching, which will be opened by the UOs), or for possible FCT tenure research positions by the centers, but he emphasizes that both types will be non-precarious and with a strong research component.

The Vice-Rector informs that, according to SINEA statistics of UAlg, in the 2022/23 academic year, 53-54 contracted researchers taught classes, which resulted in 2500 hours/year, and these numbers have been stable over the years. He also commits to sending the details of these data to the group. *[This has already been sent, and the data is in the shared spreadsheet]*. Thus, he admits that researchers who have been more involved in teaching activities may opt for the FCT tenure-teaching option. Since there are individuals already teaching 50-60 hours, it means that they fulfill a real need of the UO, and should there be retirements, it seems logical that the UO would opt for FCT tenure in areas covered by these researchers (but in international applications). Nothing will be done without the knowledge of the researchers and that of their research centers.

Before moving to the 5th question, Nélia Mestre inquires about the actions to be taken regarding the research centers' proposals if they request too many positions, and what

strategy will be in place to meet their needs. The Rector states that regarding the UO (i.e., teaching positions), the needs are well understood and are associated with the number of students that the UOs are able to maintain. As for the research component, the situation is not clear. He says it would be entirely irresponsible on his part to commit to the annual funding of the centers because it is the centers that manage to secure it. There is a very small amount that is programmatic (i.e., multi-year), with the remaining funds obtained in other ways (e.g., centers acquiring from projects). The Vice-Rector suggests that at this point they would have to engage in "*futurology*," that is, they do not know the financing that the centers will manage to secure, but they must proceed with the contracts. There has to be a balance between taking a very large risk or just some risk. He says that obviously, UAlg will take some risk. Mafalda Rangel asks what risk UAlg is willing to take, meaning the number of research positions UAlg is willing to open. The Rector says that they will apply for FCT Tenure, and of course this entails risk, having no risk would mean not applying at all.

The Rector also reiterates that they will apply for the maximum number of possible positions. In the institutional CEEC, UAlg managed to secure 22 positions out of 717 in the two editions, which is equivalent to 3.3% (2.5% and 3.9% in each edition). The positions for FCT tenure will not be far from 3%, which means about 30 positions [out of a total of 1000 available]. Of these 30, they still do not know if 50% will be for professors or researchers, but the Rector mentions that to minimize risk they will try to maximize the number of teaching positions.

At this stage of the meeting, a brief discussion commenced regarding the issue that the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) is funding teaching positions when its mission is to finance science. The Rectors expressed understanding of the concern but noted that such decisions are not within their purview. The Rector added that the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP) has little impact on the ministry's decisions. Isabel Duarte remarked that CRUP's proposal reflects an inquiry into how the Rectors plan to deal with difficulties. She further commented that teaching is funded according to the number of students, but our concern pertains to research, which is vital for universities, and how we can mobilize to maximize the use of funds, in collaboration with UAlg. The Rector stated that mobilization should be through the centers. Isabel Duarte inquired about UAlg's strategy for research and the Rector reminded that elections will occur in two years, and therefore, everything could change.

Hugo Oliveira asked if there is a formula to distribute risk among the UOs, and how the distribution between UOs and even between centers would be processed, and if there are any guidelines. The Rector replied that it is currently impossible to say how many contracts will be for research and for teaching. The involvement and collaboration between researchers and UAlg will be through the centers. The Rector also expressed willingness to converse with researchers and centers, saying he would not submit an application without first discussing with researchers [*here he was responding to a subsequent question*].

Before moving on to the next question, the Rector mentioned that the FCT tenure might result in opening about 10 positions for teaching, within an expectation of 25 to 30 positions in total. If teaching reduces risk and it is possible to have 12 instead of 10, he would proceed

with 12. However, both Rectors suggested that there might be more positions/applications for researchers than for teachers.

Rita Domingues asked what would happen if the center could not ensure the researcher's position in the future. The Rector said that the job position would not be extinguished and he hopes the researcher will remain motivated and available to raise funding to pay their salary; the Vice-Rector said they would have to take a risk. After 6 years, it becomes a structural cost, typically funded by the centers (i.e., projects and multiannual). The Vice-Rector stated there are only two funding sources: either funding for teaching or funding for science. If a center ends, or doesn't have the money to pay salaries, UAlg will have to take responsibility, but it is hoped that the researcher can collaborate to raise funding in one way or another to help.

Vera Aldeias, who is part of the scientific council of the FCT, mentioned she asked the FCT if they would increase funding to the centers so they could cover their part in the FCT Tenure, and the FCT responded that they would not - no additional funds will be allocated in this evaluation. She reminded that centers are currently not paying these salaries and will have to start doing so. The Vice-Rector said that the regulations put the burden on the centers and that the CRUP proposal goes in that direction, asking for an increase in the budgetary allocation. Adriana Guerreiro asked if the Rectorate would be willing to renegotiate the overheads with the centers so that they could use some of that money to pay researchers. The Vice-Rector said that what is consumed/spent (in terms of overheads) is more or less what is brought in (payments to UAlg), and hence, such renegotiation would not change much. The Vice-Rector also suggested that overheads could be distributed differently among centers according to what each contributes and spends, but he believes that this strategy would not solve the financing problem of the centers and that it would destabilize them.

5. From the perspective of the Rector's office, which types of researcher contracts at UAlg (NT, CEEC Ind, CEEC Inst, Doctorates hired by projects, ...) are eligible for the FCT-Tenure program?

The Rector says that all researchers are eligible. He also mentions that UALG is very pleased to have us here. There are about 80 researchers at UALG; every year some leave and others join, but 80 is roughly the average. Over the years, the names have changed, but some remain. When defining the profile of the candidates, the centers will condition who can be hired. But for UALG, the priority goes to those who are finishing their contracts. There are 2 large groups from the transitional norm (NT) contracts: those signed in October 2018 and in February 2019. The individuals in these groups already have some history with the institution and since they are ending soon, the Rector's office is "naturally" more concerned with them. Someone mentions that it is unfair to give more attention to some types of contracts. The Vice-Rector says he is concerned about all the 78 researchers, but thinking about the people, he is more concerned with those whose contracts end in less than a year (signed in October 2018).

Rita asks if the centers can propose anyone they want, and the Vice-Rector says yes, with the final validation by the Rector's office. The Rector anticipates that if the centers propose an excessive number of positions, he will suggest reducing this number, giving priority to the more senior ones (those whose contracts are ending soon). He says he uses the NTs as a proxy for the researchers UALG cares more about (because there is a large group ending simultaneously – he later mentions that there are 3, excluding those from CCMAR [even those hired by UAlg under NT]).

Isabel Duarte says that we would not be against this criterion if there were continuity in the opening of contracts, but that there is no policy guaranteeing that this opening of a large number of contracts like the FCT tenure (1000+400) will continue. But she would consider it sustainable if 400 positions were opened annually or biennially as planned. The Vice-Rector gives an example: at ICArEHB they have 25 researchers, there is a set of NTs, others hired through the center's FCT funding process, others hired by other center financings, and others through various projects (3 and 5 years). He asks if it would be reasonable to request indefinite contracts for the 25; to which Rita Carrasco responds that yes, followed by a brief discussion with various participants, reinforcing that we have all been precarious researchers for too many years, and that it would be fundamentally fair for us to have access to permanent contracts.

6. What percentage of salary payments does UAlg plan to request from research centers?

The Rector mentioned that in the first three years, the university will support the centers with 50% of the 1/3 that is the institution's responsibility to pay [meaning 1/6 of the total salary]. He also stated that the following day (October 31, 2023), there will be a meeting with the directors of the centers, to whom two documents regarding the agenda were sent: the FCT tenure and a document with the teaching hours provided by their researchers at the university. The university plans to pay the centers for the classes their researchers are teaching, thereby supporting the centers in the first three-year hiring phase of the FCT tenure. This decision is due to the fact that each UO would have to hire assistant professors if they did not have researchers available to teach these classes. In some centers, the amount transferred by UAlg may exceed the 50% support (of the 1/3 that is the institution's part), as it will depend on the number of hours taught by their researchers. In round numbers, the rector mentions that we are talking about approximately 300,000 euros - the value of the classes taught by UAlg researchers -, but this does not yet include amounts for thesis supervision (although he mentions that it could be an idea to consider in the future if we suggest it).

Mafalda Rangel asks how this transfer applies to CCMAR, noting that researchers at CCMAR hired under NT are UAlg employees and contribute significantly to it with publications, projects, supervision, and classes. The Rector says that the treatment will be the same, and that therefore, the amount related to the classes taught by the researchers will come from the respective UO to the center, subject to a future agreement between CCMAR and UAlg. The Rector also says that in the applications, the research units must be identified, and as CCMAR is independent and autonomous, it will not be considered for UAlg's application to FCT-tenure in the research mode, assuming that CCMAR will also submit a separate application.

The Vice-rector says that the positions that may be opened by UAlg for CIMA may have many candidates from CCMAR (or from outside) because they are of a similar area [marine].

7. In the event of a delay in the FCT-Tenure program, is there a contingency plan for research contracts that may end in the meantime? [For example, can "terminal phase" contracts be extended (for instance, by a year) until the FCT-Tenure application? Has this suggestion ever been considered (for example, by the governing bodies of UAlg or CRUP)?]

The Rector indicates that this strategy is contingent on the application that UAlg will make and its outcomes. There is particular concern for the 3 NT researchers [in addition to those from CCMAR] whose contracts end in October 2024, so possible solutions will be studied if these potential applications are delayed. If the application does not match the profile of the people ending in October, UAlg will not act; if it does, UAlg will open that application, but until then, nothing can be done. Those who finish in the meantime may have priority to be hired, but currently, there are no guarantees of extension.

Isabel Duarte reads some statements from CRUP's proposal and expresses concern about priorities being for those under the NT, emphasizing that contracts will have to be international. The Rectors acknowledge this and affirm they will follow the legislation. The Vice-rector notes that if universities have to hire people who are not eligible for co-financing by FCT tenure, they will be in trouble. Isabel Duarte points out that anyone who has had a precarious contract (or postdoc scholarship) with FCT is eligible for co-financing. The Vice-rector rhetorically asks whether UAlg should open additional positions for researchers with precarious contracts at the institution if people not eligible for co-financing win the international contracts, and promptly answers that they should but cannot do so financially. The Rector also expresses confidence in our applications.

Section 2 - Official Figures | We cordially request the following official data

8. The total number of fixed-term research contracts, including their respective end dates.

The Vice-rector states that he will send this information via email.

[This information was sent by email to the signatories of the final email. It has been added to the shared spreadsheet in Google Drive].

9. Data on the number of teaching hours carried out by researchers, as well as the number of master's and doctoral students supervised/co-supervised by researchers.

The Rectors indicate that they will send information on the number of teaching hours, not by center (who teaches), but by recipient (UO), noting that in 2023, researchers contributed more than 2500 teaching hours to the UAlg's UOs.

10. Official data related to the number of faculty retirements anticipated over the next six years. [We propose that the number of FCT Tenure contracts should be at least equal to the

number of retiring professors, thus alleviating some of the concerns related to the financial sustainability of the program. Therefore, we suggest that UAlg consider the FCT-Tenure program as a valid and sustainable tool to partially renew the positions that will become vacant due to the expected retirement of professors (despite the limit of 4 hours/week of teaching).]

The Rector says that 60 departures are estimated in the coming years *[as mentioned before (see above)]*.

Section 3 - Position of the Rector's Office on the CRUP Proposal

11. We request that the Rectory present its perspective regarding the proposal made by CRUP, specifically concerning the reduction in the number of positions to open in 2024 (only 800 positions instead of the anticipated 1000), in a single program, followed by programs similar to the biennial opening of FCT-Tenure.

The Rector states that what matters is what the FCT tenure program stipulates, because CRUP rarely manages to have its proposals accepted. UALG intends to apply for 25-30 positions (out of the total 1000 that will open). He mentions that they may compete for more (although it is not certain yet), but they believe that they can only secure around that number of positions. The Vice-rector adds that it will depend greatly on the centers; each position depends on the candidate's profile and to win the co-financing from FCT, the position has to be strong.

The Vice-rector informs that UALG is formally responsible for the ERC dispatch, stating that if a UALG researcher wins an ERC, they must be hired by UALG, and suggests that we apply for the ERC. The Rector mentions that [in the document from FCT consulting the entities], UALG indicated that it would open 12 positions just to have an approximate estimate of the value, but intends to apply for more positions. The Vice-rector notes that if UALG has to cut some positions, it will take into account the number of contracts ending. The final decision will be up to the rectoral team.

Adriana Guerreiro suggests to the rectoral team to create a guiding document for the application to assist the centers with their proposals.

Custódia Gago from MED (University of Évora) asks if the management units (polos at UALG) will receive the same treatment as the other centers at UALG. The Rector believes that there should be no inequality between management units. The Vice-rector points out that some management units bring very limited overheads, and therefore, will be considered differently from the UALG centers.

12. Does UAlg agree with this two-phase proposal? If so, what would be the selection criteria within UAlg for these 800 positions, and how many applications would fall to UAlg?

[The question was not read nor answered. Probably answered previously – see previous response]

Before moving on to the following questions, Isabel Duarte asks: on a scale of 0 to 100, how important are researchers for UAlg? The Rectors say that everyone is important, and that research is very important and central to UAlg, that the limitation is only financial, and that there is 100% recognition by UAlg of the importance of researchers, as one cannot do without research. The Vice-Rector says that not even one researcher can be dispensed, but the Rector replies that the Vice-Rector is not really being realistic, since a researcher to stay must have quality.

Rita asks what would happen to UAlg if researchers stopped supervising theses (went on strike from teaching), to which the Rector replies that this would have some impact (in some areas large), but that it would not paralyze the university.

Section 4 – Engagement and Collaboration

13. As researchers at UAlg, and stakeholders in the good progress of this process, how can we actively participate in the decision-making that will lead to the application for the FCT-Tenure?

[The question was not read nor answered. Probably answered previously – see responses above]

14. What opportunities are there to collaborate and contribute to the equitable expansion and execution of the FCT-Tenure program at UAlg?

[The question was not read nor answered. Probably answered previously – see responses above]

Section 5 - Investment in Facilities and Scientific Capacity

15. We request more information about UAlg's strategy for the next 5 to 10 years regarding investment in research facilities and strengthening of installed capacity.

The Rector says that the area available for research at UAlg is about 1000 m², which is 25% of the total area of UAlg. The [PO2030] program does not fund research facilities. The construction of a building next to the Pedagogical Complex (CP) is planned, which will be the

digital building (building 4 b). A part of building 1 and the IT department might move to this new building, thus allocating more space to research in their original buildings.

In about 10 years, there may be a central hospital in Algarve and the medical department may prefer to move there. In the long term, there may be more space for research based on this reorganization, but in the short term and without funding, there will be no new construction.

Around 1 p.m., Mafalda Rangel says goodbye, thanking everyone and stating that we are available to collaborate and help, as we hope the Rectorate will be. The Rectors reinforce their availability and also say their goodbyes.