



HEINNOVATE USER EXPERIENCE CASE STUDY

University of Aveiro (UAVR), Portugal

Introducing *HEInnovate* to the University of Aveiro, Portugal

Background

Since its creation in 1973, the University of Aveiro (UAVR) has established itself as a dynamic and innovative university, and has recently been ranked as one of the best universities by the Times Higher Education Young University Rankings. UAVR has over 13,000 students across 16 Departments and four Polytechnic Schools. These Departments/Schools work together in an inter-disciplinary way based on their academic and research affinities. UAVR is considered as a research-oriented university where innovative products and solutions are developed, contributing to the advancement of science and technology. UAVR constitutes a valuable partner for companies and national/international organisations.

Details - Insights on *HEInnovate* at UAVR

The first implementation of *HEInnovate* took place in 2014 within the Department of Mechanical Engineering. The target audience included members of the *Centre for Mechanical Technology and Automation* (TEMA) research centre - scholars, PhD students, post-docs, researchers and higher education teachers. Personal invitations were sent using official the email communication function of the *HEInnovate* platform. *HEInnovate's* context and value were also highlighted. All dimensions of the tool (seven at the time) were addressed in the first iteration. A response rate of 40% was achieved. The results were subsequently debated in a face-to-face meeting in March 2015. Subsequently, a second implementation of *HEInnovate* was carried out in 2016 with members of the Students' Association of Mechanical Engineering at UAVR. This time face-to-face meetings were held prior to completing the *HEInnovate* self-assessment exercise. The purpose was to understand students' vision with regard to the Department's entrepreneurial performance, and the usefulness of adopting a self-reflection tool by way of assessment. Following the face-to-face meeting, students were invited to complete all (seven) dimensions of the *HEInnovate* assessment over a period of two weeks. The response rate increased to 54%.

Results

- Effective communication between all agents within HEIs was considered crucial;
- In both implementations, the *HEInnovate* tool was contextualised as a self-reflection tool, and its usability and user-friendliness were highlighted to participants;
- The most debated dimension was 'Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning';
- Students were considered as fundamental actors for the assessment of Innovation and Entrepreneurship within a HEI;
- There was a conviction (even among the teaching staff) that 'entrepreneurship' is about creating start-ups.

Key Takeaways

The promotion of actions resulting from implementing *HEInnovate* requires a dedicated team that is engaged with and committed to entrepreneurship/innovation. Clear communication in relation to the purpose of using *HEInnovate*, together with an explanation of its characteristics (e.g. the flexibility and self-diagnostic aspects of the tool; no benchmarking or ranking) are also important. Face-face debates are needed to increase the impact of *HEInnovate* actions and subsequently change behaviours.