

Center for Global Studies (CEG)

Appeal on the FCT Evaluation

In the preliminary hearing phase of this process, we wish to submit the following arguments to the evaluation panel to request a revision of the assessment proposed, as we consider that it does not fairly reflect the work carried out by CEG, which is well documented in our application and was transparently shown to the panel in the virtual and presential visits.

A careful reading of the evaluation report – we acknowledge some of its contents – reveals a laudatory highlighting of the pioneering nature of CEG, its considerable activity and production, as well as its significant efforts at internationalization. This praise contrasts with the conclusion which, in practice, means the liquidation of a newborn center.

The panel recognizes the role of CEG in developing an emerging interdisciplinary scientific area, that of Global Studies (GS), considered strategic for the scientific fabric of our country and the lusophone countries (*“The role of CEG-Uab is to provide a decisive contribution in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries to the scientific field of “Global Studies”, which is still an emerging field of research.”*).

Although the panel's report stresses the importance of bolstering CEG through FCT funding, we find contradictory assessments, confusions and errors throughout the report. Some of its considerations are not consistent with the FCT directives contained in the Evaluation Guide. We will proceed to identify those points.

Overall: CEG's operational logic, activity and the results obtained to date do not appear to be objectively and comprehensively considered. I) The groups, areas and lines of research were not evaluated (*“it is (...) difficult to evaluate the pertinence of each of them in detail”*); ii) the quality of the research, publications and the way researchers work were not assessed (*“The quality of the research is difficult to assess as is the level of collaboration”, “there is no possibility to evaluate the impact of the publications presented”*); iii) the financed projects were not evaluated on the grounds that there were too many (*“but the sheer quantity of the projects makes the center’s quality difficult to assess”*). We underline that, regarding the application, the panel had the opportunity to question the CEG coordinators in two distinct moments: during the online interviews and during the visit to the center. All questions posed during those moments were answered and the panel stated that they had been entirely enlightened.

Criterion A: The panel recognizes CEG's five main contributions, while clearly describing CEG's organizational structure. The panel also acknowledges that the limitations of the application form do not allow for the description of projects by groups in the fields relating to the period under evaluation (*“The structure of the report only allows in the third section (labelled Work programs 2025-2029) to see the projects realized in the different research groups.”*). Nevertheless, aspects related to these points receive negative comments:

- a) The panel recognizes the potential of the ideas and projects presented but indicates that “few of them seem to have been realized”. We wish to highlight

the activities mentioned in section **5.2** of the application and which do not appear to have been duly considered. We would also refer to section **5.4**, which clearly describes activities already carried out and in progress.

- b) The panel report states that *"the quality of the research is difficult to assess, as is the level of collaboration"*. We do not agree. In addition to identifying the researchers responsible for different activities (cf. **5.2** and **5.4**), we wish to stress that some results presented arose from projects funded in research competitions, which attests to the competitiveness and scientific quality of a nascent research center, e.g. : i) "REC-SEL: Selective waste collection in Portugal: " (1st edition of Science4Policy); ii) "Dignipedia Global: Systematizing, Deepening and Defending Human Rights in the Context of Globalization" (EEA Grants - Active Citizens Fund); iii) "Mnemonic Reality: Investigating Laws of Memory" (Volkswagen Foundation); Furthermore, in **5.4** various forms of participation in a range of scientific events are identified. We also wish to highlight the contributions in **5.3**, many of them referring to publications with scientific refereeing and a high impact factor.
- c) The panel seems to disregard CEG's commitment to advanced training, contrary to what is indicated in the FCT Evaluation Guide (pp. 7-8). Of the five points initially recognized by the panel, two relate to advanced training, so that the following statement seems reductive: *"a second point of difference is that, although defined as an R&D unit, the activities reported are actually a range of seemingly very good teaching enhancement and pedagogical research rather than more conventional academic social science, natural/exact science or humanities research"*.
- d) The panel indicates the number of PhD students associated with the center is 40 and states that "the number of PhD students is small"; however, the number of students indicated in table **8.1** of the application is 54. Since PhD students must be supervised by integrated researchers, this number represents a ratio of one PhD student for every two integrated researchers. This does not strike us as a small number, especially for a recently founded center.
- e) The panel states that "the number of integrated staff is not included", ignoring that was not requested in the form. Integrated researchers are duly identified in the unit's file.
- f) As the CEG management and reception structure was addressed in the online interview, to the panel's satisfaction, the omission of this evaluation moment in the report seems strange to us. And in field c), the panel states that "The [word missing?] is quite detailed and clear, including a helpful component on organisation".

Criterion B:

- a) According to the Evaluation Guide, this field assesses the scientific and technological merit of the research team, especially integrated researchers and nuclear CVs, as well as its suitability for the execution of the proposed program. The team's merit is clearly recognized in the report (*"Their intellectual expertise is beyond any doubt"; "The individual researchers produce rich and relevant research"*). But their joint work is questioned without precise justification (*"The main issue, once again (see Criterion A), is the challenge of managing and mastering a collective work in such a diverse framework"*). This seems to ignore the recent founding of the center. A newly

established center has not yet had time to demonstrate the development of its work. As in similar cases, the panel should recognize the consistency and quality of previous work, that documented in the core CVs.

- b) The reference to ORCID in this context is questionable, since the only platform required by FCT for demonstrating CVs is CIENCIAVITAE.
- c) The superficial evaluation of nuclear CVs contradicts the indications in the Evaluation Guide (*"Please note that the evaluation of Criterion B applies only to researchers with a 'Nuclear CV' and respective Narrative CV. The activities or merit of Collaborator Researchers are not to be considered in this evaluation"*, p. 8). The panel mentions 1050 publications, highlighting their diversity and subjection to blind scientific refereeing, which demonstrates the quality of the team's production, but the quantitative weighting of this criterion seems to overlook this. Also, the panel report states that *"[t]he publications are however not in high-tier journals or outlets more generally, and there is no possibility to evaluate the impact of the publications presented."* However, CEG has more than 100 articles published in journals listed in the Scopus and Web of Science, as can be confirmed in the CIENCIAVITAE CVs. Furthermore, in the narrative CV researchers qualitatively assessed the impact of their research outputs (cf. field 9). As stressed in the FCT evaluation guide: *"When applying the evaluation criteria, the panel should give primacy to assessing quality, merit, and relevance over (a mere quantification of contributions. As part of FCT's commitment to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment as set out by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), evaluation panels are therefore advised not to use metrics as a surrogate measure of quality,"* p. 7). CEG's host institution, Uab, is committed to COARA, having signed the agreement.
- d) The panel states: *"The bulk of work in the extensive list of nuclear CVs was done elsewhere and before the Centres establishment."* But the center is new: senior researchers coming from other centers and institutions brought their proved experiences and research skills and decided to invest in an innovative and interdisciplinary center.
- e) The panel offers positive recognition of CEG's effort in developing research careers (*"Furthermore, the application states that the Centre still lacks regular basic or programmatic funding but has nevertheless made positive strides to develop a strategy for advancing scientific careers"*), but paradoxically heavily penalizes the Center on this point in the final evaluation.
- f) Finally, the report contains several statements that indicate a lack of articulation: e.g.: what does *"polytechnics of Coimbra"* mean when referring to a field of study?; the sentence *"The nine members (from twelve countries) of the future External Advisory Council"* is incomplete; *"four thematic lines"* are mentioned when the application expressly presents five (cf. field 13 of the application).

Criterion C:

The panel recognizes the importance of funding for the affirmation of CEG and its program for 2025-2029. Regarding this we must highlight the following:

- a) The recommendation to narrow the field of study to history is not consistent with the profile of the Center or with the previous recognition by the panel of the importance that CEG has for the interdisciplinary development of Global Studies in Portugal. A global perspective implies the analysis of different

cultures as producers of knowledge in articulation with several areas of knowledge. This is what enables us to construct critical analyses of the processes of centralization and marginalization and to render visible worldviews that are not linked to homogenizing movements. The underlying argument here is that current processes of knowledge production value interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, allowing for the development of convergence elements as well as enriching the topics under discussion. We recall that in the application we selected a multidisciplinary evaluation, and we listed in 1.4 of the application four main scientific areas of activity.

- b) We detected other contradictory statements in the report (*"The research groups are structured in various ways and have extremely different objectives, which the five thematic lines should be able to link. However, the analysis of this section of the report does not allow us to understand this specific aspect: the five thematic lines are not clearly visible but disappear in the wealth of information. The [word missing?] is quite detailed and clear, including a helpful component on organisation"*). The lines are clearly described in 13.1, as is their interaction with the groups. Once again, doubts on the structure of the center were addressed in the online interview, something that is omitted throughout the report.
- c) All groups focus on fundamental and/or applied research (cf. 12), with advanced training being a consequence of this work and a way of affirming the Center, thus representing a strategic objective. In this sense, the panel seems to devalue some objectives to the detriment of others. When it says *"it is evident that some groups aim to do more conventional research than others, which are mainly or partly focused on education and training"*, it is not clear which groups are being referred to. Furthermore, the panel seems to disregard the importance of the PhD and master's programs, a point expressly mentioned in the FCT Evaluation Guide (pp. 8-9).
- d) In addition to the description of the groups, we wish to underscore the strategy defined by CEG in 11.1 for 2025-2029, presented as eight essential points, of which the panel makes no mention (1. *"Consolidation of the epistemological field of Global Studies"*; 2. *"Development of scientific research of recognized quality"*; 3. *"Increase in training and retention programs for researchers"*; 4. *"Internationalization"*; 5. *"Open access and open science policies"*; 6. *"Development of initiatives within society"*; 7. *"Development of actions aimed at digital innovation"*; 8. *"Development of scientific careers"*). As CEG's structure allows for this scientific strategy to be implemented, the statement *"This could work well but one dimension that the panel did not find to be explained is how/why much of this is located in a Centre of Global Studies rather than a Centre of Education or suchlike"* is not sustainable. Education is a theme that cuts across all areas of knowledge; discussions of education necessarily entail learning, teaching, access to knowledge, training and critical reasoning. Furthermore, processes involving knowledge and learning assume a central role in the production and sharing of knowledge, in all areas.

Programmatic Funding:

The assessment contained in this field is contradictory: while acknowledging that "The support by FCT could be presented to the Center for Global Studies as a leverage to get more money from other sources", the panel ends up assigning a

weak rating that makes financing unfeasible. Additionally, the need to obtain funding from sources other than the FCT is mentioned by CEG in several places (e.g. field **10**), so the panel's recommendation reproduces an orientation we expressly follow. The lack of regular or programmatic funding (regardless of the funding already achieved) seriously compromises the development of CEG's work, which the panel nonetheless praises in all sections of its report. We recall that, according to the FCT Evaluation Guide, a «weak» unit is defined in the following terms: “it is expected that a Weak R&D Unit has few Integrated PhD Researchers having performed R&D of national and international quality and merit, and the other researchers having performed R&D of limited quality and merit in one or more areas of activity, and/or with serious flaws regarding objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization for 2025-2029” (pp. 10-11), a characterization simply not consistent with the descriptive evaluation of the Center.

Given all the above, including the various positive considerations that the panel presents and the existence of inconsistencies, lapses and oversights, we request that the evaluation be reviewed for a fair assessment. We note that in accordance to FCT Regulation n.º 1251-A/2023, Art. 21, n.º 3, confirmation of the existence of gross errors or negligent acts that resulted in harm to those evaluated constitutes grounds for reversing the decision of the evaluation panel. With due respect for the panel, in accordance with the FCT Evaluation Guide (p. 10), we believe that an assessment of less than «very good» does not do justice to our work.