

"Percurso e estudantes: o caso da Universidade de Lisboa"

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ISEG, OP, 25.03.08

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OPEST – the mission

- ✓ A. Nóvoa candidature Programme, May 2006
- ✓ to observe...(to question, to describe and to explain): constructing a social portrait
 - ↳ Students trajectories (the newcomers, the insiders and the leavers). As a whole vs. internal diversity
 - ↳ Priorities: 1st cycle, school success/failure and drop-out; the leavers and the labour market
 - ↳ Existing data/indicators collection vs. extensive surveys vs. qualitative approaches
 - ↳ A national research network

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OPEST – the research team

- ✓ Maria Manuel Vieira, ICS
- ✓ Isabel Margarida André, Geography Dept, FAH
- ✓ Natália Alves, FPES
 - ↳ Alexandra Raimundo (doctorat student)
 - ↳ Joana Machado (Rectorat, UL)

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Today: objectives

- ✓ To discuss indicators constructing "school failure" as a problem in higher education systems
- ✓ To make a social characterization of the universe of the freshmen (all 1st cycle newcomers) at the entrance of the UL
- ✓ To relate findings with school failure indicators in the UL

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Methodology

- ✓ An extensive survey (2006/7): (1st cycle) newcomers at the formal moment of their registration in the UL. A data basis constructed (#2463) and a statistical treatment of the information undertaken
- ✓ A postal survey (2004/2005): UL students withdrawing their school at the end of 1st year (30% of respondents = #190)

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Results

- ✓ To sketch a social portrait of new UL students in 2006/7, as a whole and in their internal diversity
- ✓ To illustrate links between social trajectories and high school success/failure indicators

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School "failure"?

- ✓ University of Lisbon:
 - ↳ 19 000 students in 2006
 - ↳ 8 faculties
 - ↳ a generalist university; courses in all subject areas, except Engineer and Economy/Business Studies

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School "failure" - a major problem in Portuguese higher education

(Table 1) Success and failure rates in Public Higher Education (%) - Lisbon Metropolitan Region/ Portugal, 2004-5

Institution	Success rate	Failure rate
University of Lisbon	63.6	36.4
Fac. Medicine	102.5	-2.5
Fac. Psychology and Educational Sciences	77.9	22.1
Fac. Science	71.6	28.4
Fac. Dentistry	69.2	30.8
Fac. Pharmacy	68.4	31.6
Fac. Laws	60.2	39.8
Fac. Fine Arts	55.2	44.8
Fac. Arts and Humanities	48.3	51.7
Technical University of Lisbon	70.5	29.5
I.S.C.T.E - Higher Education Institute of Management	67.4	32.6
Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon	64.5	35.5
New University of Lisbon	61.2	38.8
TOTAL (PORTUGAL)	67.1	32.9

Source: OCES (2007), *Successo Escolar no Ensino Superior. Diplomados 2004-5*. Lisboa: Observatório da Ciência e Ensino Superior

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School "failure"?

- ✓ UL: the unit of analysis matters...

- › **FAH (52%)**: Linguistics (86%), Philo (76%) vs. Anglo-German studies (33%), Portuguese Language Studies (33%)
- › **FS (28%)**: Maths (64%), Physics (62%), Computer Science (64%) vs. Biology (-26%), Bio-chemistry (0%)
- › **FPES (32%)**: Psych (26%) vs. ES (8%)
- › **FFA (45%)**: Sculpture (67%)/Equipment Design (61%) vs. Painting /Communication Design (27%)

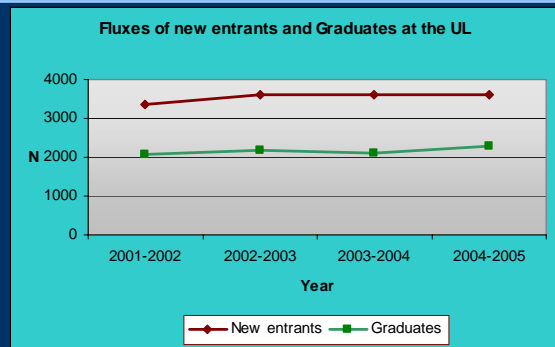
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UL Entrance and Graduation Fluxes (cf. ISCTE/FLUP research programme)



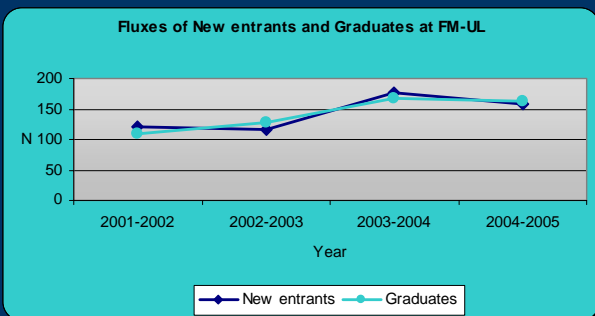
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FM Entrance and Graduation Fluxes



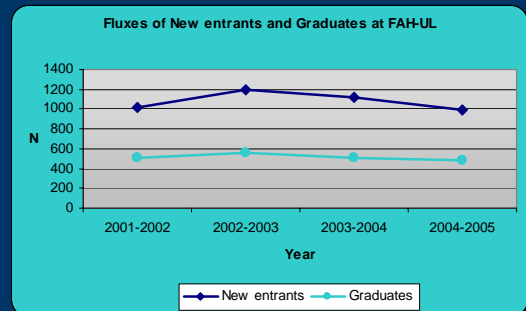
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FAH Entrance and Graduation Fluxes



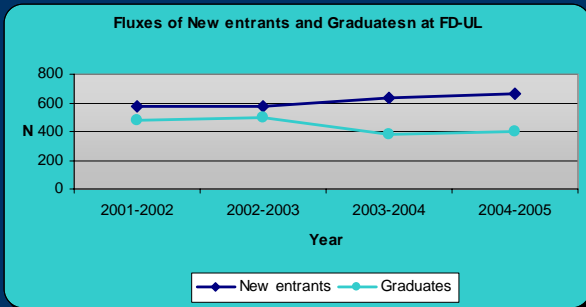
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FL Entrance and Graduation Fluxes



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School "failure"?

✓ Institutional definition (OCDE "success rate"):

↳ the ratio of the number of students who are awarded an initial degree to the number of new entrants to the level n years before, n being the number of years of full-time study required to complete the degree.

BUT...

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✓ Different situations under the general umbrella of "failure" rate:

- ↳ failure in its most strict, technical sense vs. drop out, withdrawal, desistance and (intra and inter) transferences occurring during the first years;
- ↳ the lengthening of studies for students with a professional occupation, or another parallel activity (treats indifferently part-time from full-time students)
- ↳ internal norms regulating academic year transitions differ from faculty to faculty

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School "failure"?

✓ The perception of "failure" from the institutional perspective:

↳ negatively understood: a lack of academic competencies, a deficit

✓ The perception of "failure" from the individual perspective:

↳ eventually understood as a stage on an experimental step by step entrance into adulthood, as a constructive piece of a "do-it-yourself biography"

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A RESEARCH PROGRAM

ex ante : a puzzle
of inspiring questions/data....

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

✓ The UL is a **metropolitan institution**: the large majority of its students (63%) is recruited in the capital region (continuity of residential status)

✓ About 70% of the students entered their **1st option** degree

✓ The profusion of "**good**" and "**very good**" pupils is remarkable (average: 15/20, standard deviation 21.9).

↳ Homogeneity: FPh,FM vs. heterog: FSc,FL,FPES,FAH

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

- ✓ **Dominant and privileged classes**, in what concerns **social origins**, are over-represented in the UL newcomers' universe
 - ↳ Mother's educational level (%): HE (35); SEC (27); PRIM (38)
 - ↳ Father's occupational category (%): CNP2 (23); CNP1 (18); CNP3 (16)

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

- ✓ The best candidature grades of the students at the UL entrance are closely associated to the best parents' educational levels
 - ↳ Over representation of HE (mothers,%): FM (54); FFA (47); FPh (42);
 - ↳ Over representation of PRIM1 (up to Y4, mothers,%): FAH (28%); FPES (21%); FL (19%)
- ✓ School achievement is thus not just an individual capacity, but a family affair...

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

(Table 2) Candidature grades (national concourse), UL (%), 2006-7

Faculty	Very Good (166-200)	Good (135-165)	Fair (100-135)
Medicine	93.6	6.4	0
Dentistry	50.9	39.8	9.3
Pharmacy	79.0	20.4	0.5
Fine Arts	46.3	52.3	1.4
Psychology and Educational Sciences	7.6	58.7	33.7
Science	12.6	43.2	44.2
Law	8.4	54.5	37.1
Arts and Humanities	5.7	39.8	54.8
TOTAL	31.5	39.8	28.7

Source: OPEST/2008

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

(Table 3) "Failure" components in the UL

FACULTY	Candidature grades "Very Good" (%)	1 st option NO (%)	Failure rate (%) 04-05
Medicine	93.4	22.0	-2.5
Dentistry	50.9	77.0	30.8
Pharmacy	93.6	50.9	31.6
Fine Arts	46.3	37.2	44.8
Psychology and Educational Sciences	7.6	29.8	22.1
Science	12.6	30.1	28.4
Law	8.4	11.3	39.8
Arts and Humanities	5.7	31.7	51.7

Sources: OPEST/2008, A Universidade de Lisboa em Números (Lisboa: RUL: 2007)

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

✓ Take a look:

4 interesting cases...

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

CASE 1

Law, Arts and Humanities:

the classic pattern...predominance of fluxes of "low grade" students (Ex.: 46% FAH students failed a year in primary/secondary education)

BUT...

- ↳ a **work experience**: ¼ have a full time job
- ↳ another **age profile**: older students (24 or +): FAH (1/3), FL (22%),
- ↳ Highest rate of **men** in the UL (39%, max Science: 54%): FAH (43%); FL (40%)
- ↳ Highest rates living in **procreation family** arrangements

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

CASE 2

Dentistry, Fine Arts : very good students + high failure rates:

- Dentistry is not the 1st option for the large majority of its students: the forced exclusion from Medicine (the initial target); the partial conversion of the trajectory
- Fine Arts is a first option for almost 2/3 of the students but the failure rate is still one of the highest in the UL: the academic, organizational, life experience of the institution is probably far from the expected one

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

CASE 3

Medicine and Pharmacy

- Fluxes apparently similar (irrelevant failure rate in pre-tertiary education 2-3%, VG candidature grades, privileged social origins)...
- opposite failure rates: to be or not to be in the the 1st option is the question...

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

The Portuguese normative frame...

Despite their good previous academic trajectories, restrictions imposed by the *numerus clausus* mechanism could risk to exclude high standard students from their vocations and frustrate their expectations

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

CASE 4

Psych and Educ Sciences

- modest candidature grades
- high rates of failure (35%) in previous school levels

But...

One of the lowest failure rates in the UL (a 1st option choice for +60%)

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

(another "enigma"..)

Girls have success rates higher than boys:

- "Very good" candidature grades, at the entrance, are over-represented in their case.
- Nevertheless... girls are over-represented in the "drop out" contingents of pupils: almost 70% of those abandoning the UL are female (61% at the entrance)

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The University of Lisbon students at a glance

The students' own perspectives: drop out causes ...

3 patterns ...

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- ✓ 1/3 were “not motivated”
 - ... that degree was not their first option
 - ... disorganization, programs dispersion and dimension, overburden of classes, lack of teachers' collaboration and orientation in their Faculty
- ✓ 14% had “financial problems”
 - ... scholarships insufficient
 - ... the necessity to work vs. the full-time oriented academic organization
- ✓ “other reasons” (39%)
 - ... changed to another degree in the same Faculty or in the UL,
 - ... transferred to another University, to another degree and another University (sometimes in the private sector or in a different country)

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Conclusions

- ✓ The multidimensional type of situations hidden behind the institutional indicator of “school failure” ...
 - ↳ “school failure”:
 - not only linked to academic handicaps
 - linked to high standard students' persistent search for an adequate placement of their vocations, to their experimental and day by day construction of identity and aspiration of self-fulfillment
 - ↳ “drop out”:
 - current university system produces a considerable mobility of students intra or inter-institutions of higher education – which the failure rate certainly doesn't account for
- ✓ Extensive counting and description combined with intensive, qualitative, in-depth and longitudinal approaches - a plural but more consistent school failure portrait is drawn

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