



AAUAv
Associação Académica
da Universidade de Aveiro

Dear Rector of the University of Aveiro

Prof. Dr. Paulo Jorge Ferreira

As you are certainly aware, on January 27th, AAUAv Management sent you a statement. In it, we shared our main concerns and suggestions for a better functioning of the evaluation activities (exam season) that began last Monday (February 8th).

For the past two weeks, AAUAv had the opportunity to listen to the student community in UA, in an attempt to build a more comprehensive perception of the students' feelings regarding the assessment models imposed.

The reality we found is worrying and unhealthy for our students. Our community presents wide-ranging concerns, showing high levels of pressure and distress, in the various reports they have sent us.

In the previous statement, we highlighted a key concern, which was the urgent need to create a regulatory framework to regulate distance learning assessment practices and this concern remains. There is an urgent need for a response to this question. Even more so when several teachers, from different Curricular Units, refer to the Rectory norms, justifying the demands in the exams. If these norms exist, they are not public, nor known by any student at the University, which is perhaps even more concerning.

On the other hand, in the same statement, we highlighted some more specific concerns, from which we would like to highlight the structure of the exams, surveillance and the software used.

In the monitoring carried out, and through several e-mails received from dozens of students and AAUAv Nuclei, we came across a series of different demands at various levels. Not only related to the preparation of the space where the student would take the exam, but also demands regarding internet access, recording of the workspace, videoconference, among others. Many of these indications were advised against by our previous statement. In the same sense, we found several examples where many of the demands are not easily met by the students, increasing the level of stress in our community, in a context of assessment which, in itself, already raises stress levels. Even more concerning is the constant climate of threat, in the case of non-compliance with any required demand, under penalty of additional moments of assessment, annulment of the exam or loss of the assessment opportunity. This data is yet another demonstration of the pertinence of a strong



regulation of assessment practices and eventual alternatives. If there are reasons which justify the annulment of the exams, as we well know, these should be well defined and framed so that the annulment is based on facts and not suspicions.

As for the structure of the exam, this is one of the most frequently mentioned issues, and the one which differs most from the reality of in-person exams. Among the several factors that raise concern, we highlight the abnormally demanding levels presented in the exams, as well as the very short answer time.

Even more, and as main factors of fear for the students, is the structure of the exam, often unknown, and with random organisation, without the possibility of returning to previous questions. If on the one hand we understand the random organisation, we call for it to be conditioned. This factor, to a large extent, affects time management during the exam. We appeal to the fact that, in the cases of exams that present questions of various types, between open answers, true or false and multiple choices, that these be organised by groups, with a previously established order, and that the randomisation be within each group.

We would also like to bring up the issue of surveillance once again, in which teachers often require the use of two cameras: the computer one for the exam and a smartphone camera for the surveillance videoconference. We highlight the indications defended by the National Committee for Data Protection (CNPD), in a hearing in the Portuguese Parliament, which recognises the usefulness of videoconferencing for the identification of the student who is taking the exam and does not advise the use of this resource for surveillance purposes; they also recommend the use of only one camera, due to the lack of a well-defined framework. We reinforce that videoconferences must never be recorded, also for data protection reasons, something that continues to happen.

In relation to the last statement, we would also like to highlight the advice against the use of intrusive software, namely Safe Exam Browser. Its use was, once again, highly advised against by the CNPD, at the same hearing, raising questions of data protection, and lack of regulation. On the other hand, in several tests made by students in preparation for exams, and even recognized by teachers at the University, several constraints in its use and harmful consequences for students' computers were reported, with malfunctioning of other programs and loss/blocking of functions, even when not using the software.

We also appeal that in the failure of any requirement or for remote assessment, alternatives which do not penalise the student or lead to the loss of assessment opportunities must be provided.



AAUAv
Associação Académica
da Universidade de Aveiro

Finally, and once again, we would like to appeal the Rector to the creation of norms that regulate the evaluation practices, respecting the guidelines of the CNPD, avoiding, at all costs, the penalisation of our Student Community.

We are aware that the times we are going through are not easy and are marked by profound contexts of unpredictability; however, we will always be available to collaborate in the search for solutions to the problems and concerns of our Community.

Documents Subscribed by AAUAv Nuclei:

NAE-ESTGA, NAE-ESAN, NAE-ESSUA, NEB, NEEC, NEEA, NEBEC, NEECT, NEEMec, NEEQu, NEM, NEQ, NEG, NEAP, NECiB, NEP, NED, NEEB, NEI, NEMat, NEEF, NEEET, NEGPT, NEMOG, NEBG, NECM, NELRE, NEMu, NELLC, NEGeo, NDM, NX, NY, NBicla, GrETUA, Marnotuna, NCF, TFAAUAv, TUA e NCPLP.