UNIVERSIDADE ABERTA'S PEDAGOGICAL MODEL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

A UNIVERSITY FOR THE FUTURE

Project team:
Alda Pereira
António Quintas Mendes
Lina Morgado
Lúcia Amante
José Bidarra

Foreword

Since I started my Rectorate, in May 2006, it was my concern to elaborate and propose the Senate a strategic plan which, having been approved unanimously, has been perceived as a collective and properly legitimated will of making Universidade Aberta a modern and innovative distance education institution. And not by chance, the first of the 25 actions stated in that strategic plan is the "building" of a pedagogical model adjusted to the present circumstances and the predominant guidelines in distance education, namely with resort to electronic instruments and the possibility of a wide networked communication.

The Pedagogical Model presented in this publication is a milestone in the life of Universidade Aberta. In authorial terms, it results from the competent and committed work of a group of Professors who designed and developed it. Alda Pereira, António Quintas Mendes, Lina Morgado, Lúcia Amante and José Bidarra worked in close articulation with the Pro-Rector for Innovation, António Teixeira; and they did so in the framework of Universidade Aberta's Innovation Program in Distance Education, developed according to the strategic guidelines of this University for 2006-2010.

It is important to add that this Pedagogical Model should not be read as an immutable and closed document. It is a well known fact that the application of the information and communication technologies in education (and particularly in distance education) happens in a fast-changing scenario, at the fast pace of technological acceleration, allowing for the formulation of new pedagogical challenges which are both bold and deeply creative. However, it is also known that our response to those challenges demands imagination and the capacity to adapt to innovation, without endangering critical reflection and the necessary human dimension that all teaching should comprise. For that matter the implementation of this pedagogical model in the current school year implied (and is still implying) training courses for our teachers, as well as familiarization procedures for our students. This is our approach to e-Learning ("aprendizagem electrónica", as we say in Portuguese), serious and responsible, not as a magic formula for the circumstantial capture of new audiences, as if all of a sudden what was looked upon suspiciously before had transformed itself in the magical solution for various crisis.

What we present here is what we want to do and are doing in an honest and committed way. The future will tell about the results: I trust in it, as I trust in what is here.

Carlos Reis
Rector

A NEW IDEA FOR THE UNIVERSITY

The publication of Universidade Aberta's Pedagogical Model is not only the symbol of a fundamental turning point in the life of the pioneering institution of distance education in Portugal; it constitutes also a deeply innovating moment in the history of Portuguese universities. In effect, following the objectives proposed in Universidade Aberta's Strategic Plan (2006/2010), implemented in the Innovation Program in Distance Education, a Portuguese university has decided, for the first time, to disseminate a fully virtual teaching and learning methodology.

As a matter of fact, this Pedagogical Model inaugurates a different understanding of higher education, strongly dominated by the valuing of students' social and communal integration, the personalized monitoring of their learning and the respect for the particular life experience of each student. All this making use of a new dimension that marks human existence today, born of the implantation of the new information and communication technologies: the network phenomenon.

Moreover, this Model also opens a new way for Universities to rethink themselves as institutions. The University we are building is not only a center for the production, conservation and dissemination of knowledge. A university on the network cannot be entangled around itself. On the contrary, it must be permanently connected not only to the people of its time and place, but to the world, the whole of it. In short, it should be a driving force, a crossroads of information where everyone can find and find themselves in the construction of knowledge. A university for the future does not merely provide its students with information; it opens up to an active construction of knowledge by its students, sharing their worlds.

Universidade Aberta does not forget that a full citizenship is not just everyone's right, but also everyone's duty. It's for that reason, and because the future has already begun today, that the Pedagogical Model presented itself, right from the start, as an active instrument for the digital inclusion of the academic community. Hence the special attention given by Universidade Aberta to the preparation of both its students and its teachers for the digital challenge. In fact, with the purpose of ensuring the highest quality in this process, Universidade Aberta designed and implemented a complex and intensive program for continuous teacher training, of an immersive nature, following the most rigorous and demanding international standards known.

The Model turns out to be, thus, a demonstration of the new idea of university that is palpable in our words. In effect, it has resulted from an excellent reflection carried out by a multidisciplinary team of teachers and researchers at Universidade Aberta, who mobilized all their experience and know-how accumulated in more than half a decade of successful teaching in formal online courses. That work was later subject to an international evaluation performed by Universidade Aberta's International Consulting Board, chaired by Tony Bates and including some of the greatest and most experienced world experts in the field of virtual education: Linda Harasim, Robin Mason, Ulrich Bernath and Albert Sangrà Morer.

Naturally, Universidade Aberta's Pedagogical Model is not a document closed upon itself. Quite the opposite, the modernity of this instruments derives from the fact that it has been conceived as dynamic and inter-active. It is, therefore, in constant evolution, through the monitoring exercised by Universidade Aberta's Distance Education Laboratory of its application, based on a systematic collection and analysis of several indicators. Consequently, the team that designed the Model regularly updates and adjusts it, and these changes are later validated by the aforementioned International Consulting Board.

Universidade Aberta's Pedagogical Model is thus an innovative instrument permanently open to ... the Future.

António Moreira Teixeira
Pro-Rector for Innovation in Distance Education

table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Taking the definition of pedagogical model as a construction that seeks to represent the educational situations, there is a clear need to design a framework for pedagogical intervention that is coherent with the new developments in distance education, considering the strategic development of the institution and the reaffirmation of its identity. This document presents a pedagogical model that aims at being both prescriptive and organizing of the teaching and learning practices at Universidade Aberta.

The current reorientation of the educational and training activities at Universidade Aberta implies the migration from an industrial distance education model, built around the delivery of a learning package to the student (interaction between the student and the materials), to a model focused on the development of competencies, resorting fully to the information and communication tools. This transition is required not only by present technological development, but also by the construction of a european higher education space.

The advances in technology have been driving distance education to find new teaching and learning methodologies, rethinking the technological mediation characteristic of distance education programs in terms of new forms of interaction, particularly the interaction among students, absent in the industrial models. In fact, new possibilities have emerged that multiply the means of communication much beyond those of the traditional models: telephone and mail. The first, being a synchronous form of communication, limits students' interaction with the teacher, since it depends on schedules that might not fit their life style or that can be difficult to implement due to geographic dispersion. The latter, being slow, is also little attractive to students, due to the time it takes to get a response. The new means of communication through the web allow us to set up new virtual learning contexts, where both bidirectional (teacher-student) and multidirectional (student-teacher and student-student) communication is possible (one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication). We can, therefore, create virtual classes where students and teachers interact at any time and from anywhere.

The construction of the european space currently underway demands that students take greater responsibility for their own learning. It also calls for new ways of teaching and learning, because the emphasis in not on the recollection and processing of information by the students, but on the acquisition and development of competencies. If the first of these premises is, to a certain extent, already embedded in industrial models of distance education, the second gives a new meaning to the very notion of distance education. This approach, going beyond instructional methods and tasks, requires the adoption of pedagogical strategies that engage students as active participants, leading them to develop metacognitive skills (learning to learn) and take a constructive attitude regarding their capacity of self-realization towards lifelong learning, becoming more and more autonomous and being able to interact responsibly in a group.

This framework of circumstances justifies the urgency for a new pedagogical model for Universidade Aberta, a plural model for distance education, based on a set of pedagogical grounding principles and embodied in specific variants according to the diversity of existing or future courses within the educational mission of Universidade Aberta.

It is important to clarify that because it is a rupture with industrial models, demanding a radical change in the pedagogical methods used, the model presented here also describes the necessary adaptations from a functional point of view. Therefore, for each variant there's a description of the defining elements, the virtual class modality and the organizational aspects required for its application within the expected improvement in the quality of the education provided.

Based on the principles adopted, this model is implemented according to three variants to be applied in distinct situations:

1. a variant for 1st study cycle, fully virtual;
2. a variant for 2nd study cycle, with two different types of classes:
   a) virtual class
   b) blended class
3. a variant for short term programs.

It is possible that the 3rd study cycle programs, when they are created, will follow the variant defined for the 2nd cycle.

The adoption of a new pedagogical model that moves away from the current situation calls for phased measures, imposes new technological requirements and raises the need for applied research that may provide specific solutions for particular situations related to some domains of knowledge.

This model results from research developed by some members of this project team on models of online education combined with relevant bibliography in the field of distance education published in the recent years.

2. THE CORNERSTONES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT UNIVERSIDADE ABERTA

The model of Universidade Aberta is based on four cornerstones: **student-centered learning**, **flexibility**, **interaction** and **digital inclusion**. These principles guide the organization of instruction, planning, the design and manage-

ment of activities for the students, the type of materials to develop and the nature of the assessment of competencies.

2.1. Student-centered learning

At the heart of the model is the student as an active individual, builder of his own knowledge, engaged in and committed to his learning process within a learning community.

According to this premise, instructional situations are designed in function of the student and of a learning process that should lead to the acquisition and development of transversal competencies needed for the Knowledge Society, as well as to the acquisition of specific competencies relative to the knowledge area chosen by the student. Thus, the design of teaching and learning activities distances itself from a model based on instructional objectives to constitute a detailed planning, within each curricular unit, of the expected development of competencies.

To that end, learning happens both through self-learning or independent learning strategies and through dialogue and interaction with peers, resorting to cooperative and collaborative learning strategies. Independent learning is achieved through autonomous learning on the part of the student based on activities, materials, bibliography and guidance provided by the teacher. Collaborative learning results from working together with other students, sharing experiences and perspectives, common goals and working processes negotiated in the group. The creation and organization of groups of students provides a social context for learning, according to the perspective that learning has a strong social dimension, and prevents the appearance of feelings of isolation and demotivation, characteristic of traditional models of distance education. Furthermore, team work prepares the students to function in modern organizations, where tasks are more and more interdependent and the sharing of information and knowledge has become a key factor, together with a concerted professional action.

The student has an active role in managing the pace and time of realization of the activities, in monitoring the learning outcomes, in establishing work goals and in building learning communities modeled by the students themselves.

These learning modes enable students to develop their autonomy and creativity, to acquire the capacity to monitor their outcomes and to plan their education, preparing them for lifelong learning.

This leads, logically, to the emergence of a specific pedagogy – online pedagogy – that deeply alters the teacher's role. Instead of favoring the transmission of knowledge and the assessment of the quantity of information the student was able to retain, the teacher has to act as a facilitator of the learning process, helping the student develop metacognitive skills, organizing collaboration and stimulating interaction in the learning community. The teacher is expected to be creative in the design of learning activities, permanently reflecting upon and researching his practice, demanding but, at the same time, aware of the needs and difficulties expressed by the students. Along with the fundamental importance of interaction in the learning process, the teacher is required to master knowledge management and team work skills, to make available and facilitate varied learning resources and to organize enriching activities that promote reflection and sharing within the group.

2.2. Flexibility

The second principle supporting the educational activities at Universidade Aberta is flexibility, seen as a variable that interprets the original matrix of distance education (students can learn where and when they see fit, regardless of distance and time constraints) and the profile of Universidade Aberta's potential students: adults with professional, familiar and civic responsibilities, active citizens in society.

One of the advantages of distance education lies in the possibility the students have of accessing contents and learning activities, or performing the desired tasks, in a flexible way, free of temporal or spatial imperatives (non-coincidence in time / non-coincidence in space). An essentially asynchronous model enhances flexibility, since communication and interaction happen when it is convenient for students, giving them time to read, process information, reflect and then engage in dialogue or interact (respond).

Although modern technologies provide means for synchronous communication, the model presented here is based predominantly on asynchronous technologies, aimed at promoting reflection, knowledge sharing and higher order thinking (typical of higher education). The present emphasis in on discussion forums, but in the near future other asynchronous tools emerging with Web 2.0 shall be adopted.

In this perspective, the teaching and learning process is continuous (during the period in which the course, unit or module take place) and independent from the time and space in which teachers and students are. This means that both the first and the latter can participate in the courses and the units from wherever they are, anytime of day or night, without the need to meet online at the same time. This should be seen as a fundamental aspect of flexibility (both for students and for teachers), as it allows students to learn at a distance and juggle their professional and familiar life with the participation in the course.

The emphasis on asynchronous technologies makes it easier for students to

manage online access time, individual research, study and exploration of subjects and/or interaction with the teacher and the other students. The possibility of taking part in discussions and debates without a fixed timetable greatly increases flexibility concerning time management. On the other hand, asynchronous tools democratize discourse by allowing everyone to contribute to the discussion, avoiding situations in which it might be narrowed to a minority of participants. This multiplies the points of view available, increases exchange and sharing and contributes, consequently, to diminish intellectual and affective isolation, leading to higher levels of reflection.

To increase flexibility, a semester regimen is recommended for all curricular units that are part of formal instruction programs in all study cycles. Both online learning and the shared assumptions in the construction of a European space of higher education have requirements that are more demanding than those in present face-to-face education, making it difficult for students to meet them for very long periods of time. A semester regimen allows for a greater flexibility in the management of the workload required from students and, at the same time, makes it possible to adopt and maintain a feasible level of participation.

The existence of a virtual library that the students can access through the University's portal will also contribute to flexibilize and facilitate the access to relevant works, hypermedia materials and study documents. This library should be organized by themes and, within these, by topics with information descriptors, and should include searching facilities. To this end, it is important to implement the use of creative common licenses and organize the access to existing digital networks in libraries.

2.3. Interaction

Interaction is an underlying principle in the process of teaching and learning in this model. But unlike what happened in the earlier generations of distance education, where it was basically construed as student-contents and student-teacher interaction, in this model it expands to include student-student interaction, through the creation of discussion groups within each virtual class. This implies a careful planning (instructional design) of the interaction and the use of learning activation strategies, so as to stimulate students' initiative and involvement, ensure their engagement and guide the nature of their work.

It is also important to emphasize the value of written interaction which, combined with an asynchronous mode of communication, enables students to develop their critical reflection skills while sharing resources, activities and knowledge with their peers.

In face of the different formal instruction levels and taking into account the possible number of students in each group-class, the relative proportion of teacher-student and student-student interaction is likely to vary in each of the study cycles. However, the suggested model assumes the importance of teacher visibility in the learning environment of the virtual class, translated in the public messages/interactions present in the collective areas of the virtual class. Its efficacy depends on three aspects: the type of messages posted by the teacher, the modeling it produces in the interaction context and the degree to which it reduces students' isolation. It thus constitutes a core element in the individual's and in the group's perception of teacher presence.

In fact, student-teacher interaction has been pointed out as a critical variable in distance learning. In previous generations of distance education, this interaction was frequently reduced to teacher's feedback following formative activities. Today, providing individualized feedback is made much easier by the use of software applications that offer automatic feedback. But to restrict the teacher's role to elaborating this kind of formative assessment instruments might result very frustrating for students, causing insecurity and eventually contributing to increase the feeling of isolation. That is why this model advocates the existence of predefined moments where direct student-teacher interaction takes place in the virtual class, providing students with an adequate level of support but, at the same time, avoiding the tendency of overly dependent students (or those new to distance learning) to seek immediate help from teachers at the first sign of difficulty.

It is therefore necessary that the moments of interaction with the teacher are clearly defined. In the virtual model discussed here, these moments correspond to the group discussions scheduled for the class and moderated by the teacher. At postgraduate level, there can be a certain amount of time assigned to individual tutoring, so as to provide individualized guidance concerning research work.

2.4. Digital inclusion

The fourth cornerstone of pedagogical practice at Universidade Aberta is digital inclusion, perceived as making access available to adults who want to frequent a program in a higher education institution but have not yet developed skills in the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

With the recent technological advances, social relationships, the world of work, trade exchanges and access to services and goods which are essential to daily life are more and more dependant on virtual networks and on the access to computer-mediated communication systems. In the present circumstances, info-exclusion

is a synonym for social exclusion and marginality, and this is a fact that educational institutions cannot afford to ignore if they want to preserve their social value. However, technology has developed so fast that it has been hard for many educational systems to solve the problem of info-exclusion in adults. Consequently, it is imperative that adult distance education, either formal or informal, contributes to the reduction of the digital divide between the info-included and the info-excluded.

In this context, Universidade Aberta is strongly committed to contributing to the construction of the Knowledge Society, which encompasses the use of ICT in adult education and training, according to the recommendations that resulted from the studies on educational policies in the ambit of the Lisbon Strategy. However, more than concentrating its efforts on basic software use initiatives, instruments of basic digital literacy, the University focuses on the preparation of its students for the use of the modern means of communication and networked work.

Instead of establishing familiarity with the modern technological tools as a prerequisite for access, Universidade Aberta has defined as one of its central goals to promote educational strategies that contribute to the acquisition and development of digital literacy by its students.

To put this principle into practice, it is necessary to implement a virtual network of access points, through the development of synergies with local partners, be it municipal institutions, non-governmental organizations or private companies, for the creation of digital access spaces equipped with computers and an Internet connection. These spaces, which should preferably function during after-work hours, will be supported by Universidade Aberta through a permanent help desk service. As a means to achieve a closer relationship between Universidade Aberta, its partners and the users, these virtual access centers may benefit from a network of local, volunteer animators that includes, for example, former students[1] .

Moreover, considering that online education requires specific skills on the part of the students, all certified programs at Universidade Aberta will include a free, introductory module, where new students may acquire those skills before starting the course in which they are enrolled. As a matter of fact, studies on the use of ICT have shown that one way of promoting digital literacy is through the use of these tools in real life situations, since it is driven by a strong motivation resulting from the actual need to use them.

In this perspective, frequenting Universidade Aberta will constitute in itself a factor of social inclusion, through digital alphabetization, leading to social development.

[1] As an additional means of facilitating the access to technologies, the University, in collaboration with the students' representatives, might analyze the viability of protocols with hardware companies to allow students to buy personal computers at low cost. Besides this measure, the University might also consider the creation of personal spaces for the students in the University's portal, including a personal e-mail address (webmail).

3. APPLYING THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

3.1. The pedagogical elements in the 1st study cycle

The application of the model to the 1st study cycle presupposes that the teacher designs and organizes in advance a teaching and learning process through the adoption of a set of characterizing elements. These elements are structuring to the organization of virtual classes of up to 50 students each at the present phase of implementation.

Thus, the variant of the model for the 1st study cycle takes a more didactic approach, more dependent on the teacher's orientation, and the students should engage in the tasks assigned by the teacher and take responsibility for their learning in a self-directed perspective. This doesn't mean that in a second phase this variant can't adopt a more collaborative and constructivist approach, if the possibility of creating virtual classes with fewer students arises. In cases where current virtual classes have a small number of students, teachers may already, if they so wish, adopt this practice.

In any case, the teacher is responsible for programming the curricular unit, selecting the resources to make available or indicate to students, choosing the teaching strategies, elaborating and managing the activities to be performed by students,

For each curricular unit, the teacher designs a learning path which will originate a schedule of activities to be followed throughout the semester. This way, students will be able to plan their involvement in the different curricular units, effectively managing their study time and their learning.

The teacher will elaborate a **Tutoring Plan** in advance, covering the key aspects of his/her action: guide the students' self-learning, facilitate the active creation of meaning, organize study and work groups, schedule and organize specific moments for providing feedback, encourage students to make decisions on the preferred assessment mode, support interaction among students and promote opportunities for shared reflection.

In this variant, summative assessment consists of continuous assessment and a final, face-to-face written exam. The student may opt for the combination of both (continuous assessment plus exam) or just the exam.

The variant of the pedagogical model for the 1st study cycle is based on three core elements that make it possible for the teacher to organize and structure learning in each curricular unit and for the students to know their role and responsibilities: the **Curricular Unit Plan** (PUC – Plano de Unidade Curricular), the **Formative Activities Plan** (PAF – Plano de Actividades Formativas) and the **Learning Card** (CAP Cartão de Aprendizagem).

a) Curricular Unit Plan

The PUC, presented by the teacher at the beginning of the activities, is a document that guides the whole learning process. In face of this document, students will be informed about the subjects, the objectives and the competencies to develop in that curricular unit, as well as the teacher's expectations regarding their participation.

They can thus plan their study and the research to be done, organize the way in which they will manage their time (a very important point, since students will be taking several curricular units at the same time) and schedule the moments in which interaction is likely to be more intense. The PUC should clearly define:

- the competencies to develop
- the subjects to study
- the bibliography to consult
- what the teacher expects from the student
- what the student can expect from the teacher
- guidelines for the formative activities plan
- the schedule that the student must follow
- the assessment modes and criteria
- the organization of the student's learning card (CAP), with indications concerning the elaboration of the **e-folios** connected with this element.

b) Formative Activities Plan (PAF)

To give students a basis for working and acquiring intermediate objectives and competencies during the learning cycle, the teacher designs and organizes a series of formative activities, made available at different predefined moments in time. The typology of these activities varies according to the scientific field and the competencies to be developed, and are accompanied by indications that will help students self-assess their performance after having resolved them. This way students are able to monitor their learning, comparing their performance with the one expected by the teacher.

These are not, however, activities designed to coach students in responding to exam questions. Their aim is to help students identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning, so as to enable them to reflect upon these points, discuss them with their peers and later, if necessary, with the teacher. Some curricular subjects may imply the adoption of specific work typologies, but in general the activities to be proposed to students may take a great variety of formats, such as problem-solving, preparing conceptual maps and writing a report, comment or summary, among others, besides answering multiple-choice tests with automatic correction.

c) The Learning Card (CAP)

The Learning Card (CAP) is based on the "credit card" metaphor and aims to value the student's personal learning process. It is a personalized device that aggregates the results of what the student produced throughout the learning process in an organized and systematic assessment registration tool.

The philosophy behind the Learning Card rests on the concept of e-folio as an instrument for continuous assessment. The concept is based on the original idea of folio (a sheet of paper) adapted to the virtual (electronic) mode. The e-folio is thus a short digital document elaborated by the student and published online to be visualized by the teacher, and should clearly demonstrate that the student acquired or developed a given competence.

The students are expected to produce two or three e-folios throughout the curricular unit, according to the schedule defined by the teacher. These documents will follow the guidelines provided by the teacher and their nature will depend on the area of knowledge being studied. A critical reflection on the learning achieved, a report on conducted research or field work, the solving of a given problem, a summary of readings or short practical assignments, are some examples of what an e-folio might include. It is up to the teacher to decide on the type of work to ask from the students and on the format of the e-folio to be produced, according to the specific characteristics of the area of knowledge covered by the curricular unit and considering the competencies to be developed and assessed.

Bearing in mind that students enroll in several curricular units simultaneously, e-folios should preferably be short documents so that students can opt for continuous assessment in most (or all) of the curricular units if they so wish. This recommendation is essential if we take into account the number of e-folios that each teacher will have to assess.

It is up to the teacher of each curricular unit to organize the various stages of work – when to perform the formative activities, when to address doubts and difficulties, when to deliver each e-folio. Whenever possible, students should deliver e-folios after having performed a set of formative activities and having had the opportunity of clearing any doubts of difficulties they may have experienced. This will certainly ensure that the e-folios presented have a good average quality.

The e-folios may be complemented by a p-folio, a folio performed in a face-to-face setting. It may consist of a document elaborated by the student, according to a set of questions defined by the teacher, or take other forms, such as the presentation of a project or a report, according to the nature of the competencies to be develop by the students.

The e-folios and the p-folio (when applicable) together in articulation provide evi-

dence of the extent to which the student achieved the competencies expected in a given curricular unit. This way, by using the CAP, students invest in a continuous assessment process, being progressively credited the marks obtained, thereby eliminating some of the risks of concentrating assessment in a single moment or instrument. Furthermore, this system allows for the assessment of competencies throughout the semester, namely those that prove hard to assess using traditional instruments, such as a written final exam.

10% of the final grade	10% dof the final grade	20% of the final grade	60% of the final grade
e-fólio A (Credit: 2 marks)	**e-fólio B (Credit: 2 marks)**	**e-fólio C (Credit: 4 marks)**	**p-fólio (Credit: 12 marks)**

Figura 1_ Example Learning Card credited marks

In practice, students accumulate e-marks as they elaborate and deliver their e-folios (Fig. 1), to which the marks obtained in the p-folio, when used, are further added, bearing in mind that the p-folio can be set by the teacher at any point of the semester, and not necessarily at the end. The Learning Card will thus be credited according to students' investment along their learning process.

The teacher of each curricular unit is responsible for defining the nature of the e-folios and the marks assigned to each. If a p-folio is used in the assessment, it should be elaborated in such a way that it may complement (not overlap) the electronic assessment (e-folios). Hence the final grade in the curricular unit will result from the sum of the marks obtained in the e-folios and, when applicable, the p-folio.

If in a given year students fail to obtain the grade that would allow them to successfully complete the curricular unit, part of the accumulated credit may transit to the next time they enroll in the same curricular unit. In those circumstances, the teacher will ascertain which competencies have already been evidenced, and the student must perform the remaining e-folios or the p-folio the subsequent year.

3.2. The Virtual Class

All activities are done in the virtual class, through the use of technologies that allow interaction, information distribution and management of the learning contexts[2]. In this virtual class, the vital actors are the teacher, whose presence is indispensable to guide, facilitate and monitor the activities, and the student, the active agent of the learning process.

[2] The modern e-learning platforms make it easier to organize and manage virtual spaces, allowing for the direct use of a wide variety of communication resources, as well as the insertion of materials of different types.

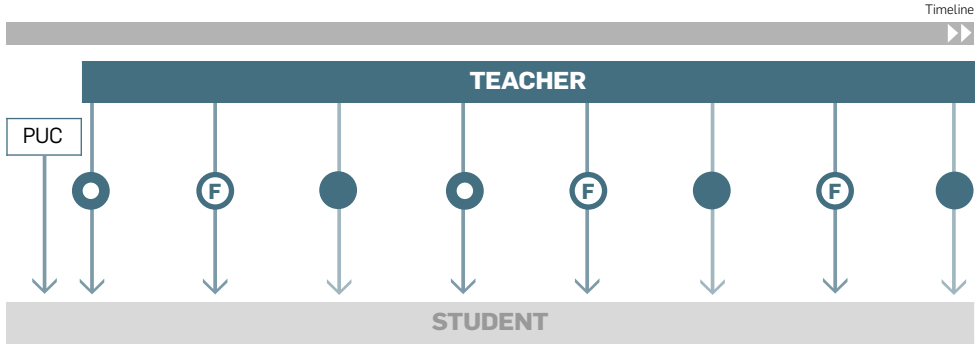


Figura 2_ Teacher intervention throughout the semester

PUC > Curricular Unit Plan
> formative activities
> teacher moderated forums (to answer students' doubts)
> instructions for the elaboration of the e-folios

It is essential that the students can be organized in groups with their own workspace, and the teacher will create these workspaces as learning progresses. The existence of discussion forums will make it possible for students to meet and discuss their readings, exchange ideas about the formative activities made available by the teacher and share the results of individual research. These collaborative learning spaces will be moderated by the students themselves and the teacher should encourage them to do so, promoting a sense of autonomy, initiative and creativity in the students, as well as a feeling of belonging to a learning community.

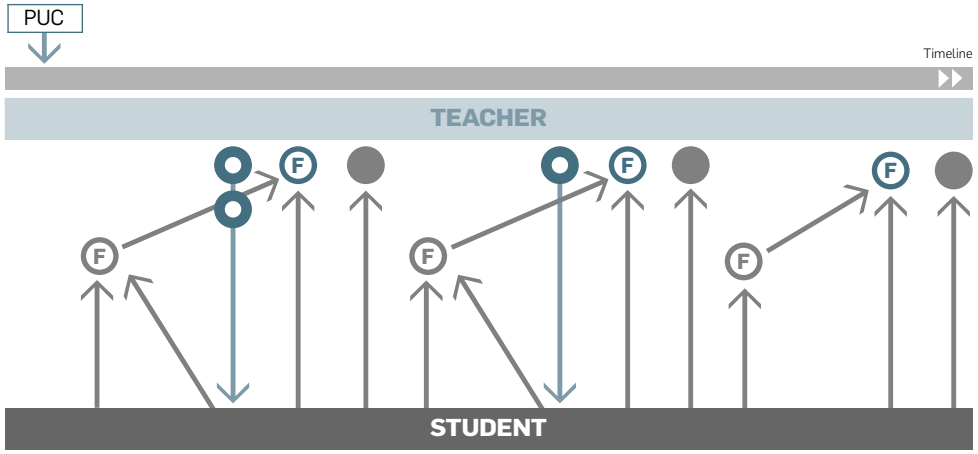


Figura 3_ An example of a possible schedule throughout the semester

PUC > Curricular Unit Plan
> performance of the formative activities suggested by the teacher
> participation in student moderated forums
> participation in teacher moderated forums
> e-folios to be elaborated and presented by the students

Besides these student moderated forums, the teacher will create discussion forums as needed, dedicated to the clarification of the most difficult or less well understood points, that s/he will moderate.

For example, the teacher may organize two forums right after the performance of the formative activities by the students, and a third near the end of the curricular unit. To avoid an emphasis on one-to-one, student-teacher interaction, the teacher should encourage students to discuss their doubts in the student moderated forums (the group workspaces), so that only issues that have already been discussed without a satisfactory outcome, or those considered very difficult by students will be presented for discussion in the teacher moderated forums.

These teacher moderated forums should have a specific time frame. To ensure flexibility of access for all students, they should be open during approximately a week. This will allow the teacher to better organize and moderate them, supporting the largest number of students possible.

As a way of providing synchronous interaction among the students, the teacher may make available a chat room that the students will use when they feel the need to. This space, where students can brainstorm, briefly exchange information or divide tasks will be managed by them with total autonomy. It may also contribute to deepen interpersonal relationships and to share interests other than academic. Synchronous communication, scheduled by students, might constitute an element of socialization and potentiate the development of virtual communities through the emergence of a feeling of immediacy.

That being said, the model we propose favors asynchronous communication, not only because of the flexibility it provides for the students but also because it makes for a richer, more profound interaction where all voices have equal chances of being heard[3] . In effect, in asynchronous discussions students can analyze carefully the interventions of others, do some research to complement an interesting point of view and share it with their colleagues, taking the discussion and the study to deeper levels, whereas in real time communication the speed of the information flow tends to limit the extent to which the dialogue can be developed.

3.3. Organization

3.3.1. Teaching team

The teaching team encompasses all the teachers who teach curricular units in the program. When the number of students in a given curricular unit is higher than the maximum defined for virtual classes – 50 students in this first phase of the model – additional classes will be created.

In such cases, and as a measure to ensure the quality of the instruction, a teacher from Universidade Aberta will be the scientifical and pedagogical responsible for the curricular unit, and work directly with one of the virtual classes: he will be the **teacher** of that curricular unit. The remaining virtual classes will be taught by **tutors** who might be teachers collaborating with the University and selected for this purpose only.

The teachers from Universidade Aberta will be responsible for the design and organization of the curricular units. They should elaborate the PUC (Curricular Unit Plan) and guide the tutors in its use with their respective virtual classes. To that end, they will also elaborate a Tutoring Plan describing their teaching scheme and the teacher's actions. Additionally, they will supervise the whole process of assessment, namely concerning the establishment of assessment and grade criteria for all the assessment instruments to be used in the curricular unit. From a functional point of view, tutors are coordinated in their scientific and pedagogical action by the teacher responsible for the curricular unit.

3.3.2. Familiarization with the online environment

A fundamental factor for online education is to have students familiarized with the online environment where learning is going to take place, its specific modes of communication and behavior, and the technologies that support it. Therefore, prior to the course, first time students will frequent a specific online module, organized in virtual classes of 50 students, with the objective of familiarizing themselves with the above aspects.

This module should last a minimum of two weeks and will be conducted by present or former online postgraduate students of Universidade Aberta. These monitors will be directly supervised by the course coordinator.

During this module, a Café or Social Forum will be created per year and course (e.g. 1st year, course X Café), as a context for more informal interactions. The whole community of teachers and students of a given year and program will have access to this Café, with the objective of developing socio-affective relationships and strengthening social presence, thus building support for cognitive and academic communication and interaction.

The familiarization module has a practical nature based on learning by doing. By the end of this module, students should have:

- acquired skills in the use of the technological resources available in the online environment (know how to do);
- acquired confidence and online social skills (both formal and informal) in the different modes of communication available in the virtual environment (know how to relate);

[3] This assumption does not exclude the occasional use of synchronous tools for specific areas of study, such as foreign languages.

- > acquired skills in different modes of online working and learning (self-learning, collaborative learning, pair learning, resource-based learning);
- > displayed competencies in projecting social presence through interaction in an informal context;
- > applied general Internet usage skills (communication, search, knowledge management and information evaluation) in the virtual environment where the course will take place (effective use of e-mail, know how to work in online groups, know how to search for and consult information on the Internet);
- > applied social interaction rules characteristic of communication in online environments.

3.3.3. Staff

In order to better articulate the planning of the teaching activities, each 1st study cycle course will have a staff composed by a coordinator, a vice-coordinator whenever deemed necessary, the teachers responsible for the curricular units, a permanent secretary and an element appointed by the Educational Multimedia Telematics Unit (UMTE).

This team should meet, wholly or partially, upon convocation by the course coordinator whenever s/he sees fit, namely to: a) plan the materials needed for the sev-eral curricular units (pre-course phase); b) monitor the course; c) analyze the functioning and/or evaluate the course.

Functions of the Coordinator

The coordinator should:

a) superintend and manage planing activities: before, during and post program
b) preside competency accreditation committees and superintend the corresponding scientific and pedagogical process;
c) schedule, supervise and coordinate the realization of the online familiarization modules;
d) supervise the organization and update of the program dossier. This dossier should contain the course's Curricular Unit Plans, Tutoring Plans and Guide; the classes rosters and students' e-mail addresses; data relative to the monitors who conduct the familiarization modules and to the external tutors; all the course-related documents;
e) articulate scientific and pedagogical matters with the Heads of the departments responsible for the curricular units in the program;
f) provide adequate measures for tutor training, when necessary;
g) superintend the program's evaluation process in close relation with the Quality Assurance services of Universidade Aberta.

The functions of the coordinator may be partially delegated to the vice-coordinator in case there is one.

Functions of the Secretary

The secretary should:

a) organize the program dossier and keep it updated, according to the coordinator's instructions;
b) gather, organize and keep updated a dossier of suggestions and/or complaints regarding the program;
c) assist the coordinator in the before, during and post program tasks;
d) interact with the other sectors of the university regarding administrative matters so as to facilitate procedures.

Functions of the UMTE representative

The representative of UMTE should:

a) define an execution plan for the creation of multimedia materials for the curricular units, according to the decisions reached in the meeting convoked by the coordinator;
b) schedule the design of the multimedia materials according to UMTE's own planning;
c) articulate the creation of these materials with the teachers responsible for the curricular units in which they will be used and according to the defined schedule.

3.3.4. Planning

In distance education systems the planning of instruction – the cycle of preparation, planning and development of a course or curricular unit – takes place long before the students start the course.

There are three life cycles in a course or curricular unit: 1) the program or pre-curricular unit cycle, involving its organization and preparation, that should start at least one semester in advance; 2) the program or curricular unit cycle, corresponding in this model to the semester; 3) the post-program or post-curricular unit cycle.

The coordinator will be responsible for organizing the whole process and monitoring its development, initiating the processes of pedagogical management and articulating the work of the program team: teachers of the various curricular units, tutors, monitors of the familiarization module and materials design (element of the UMTE).

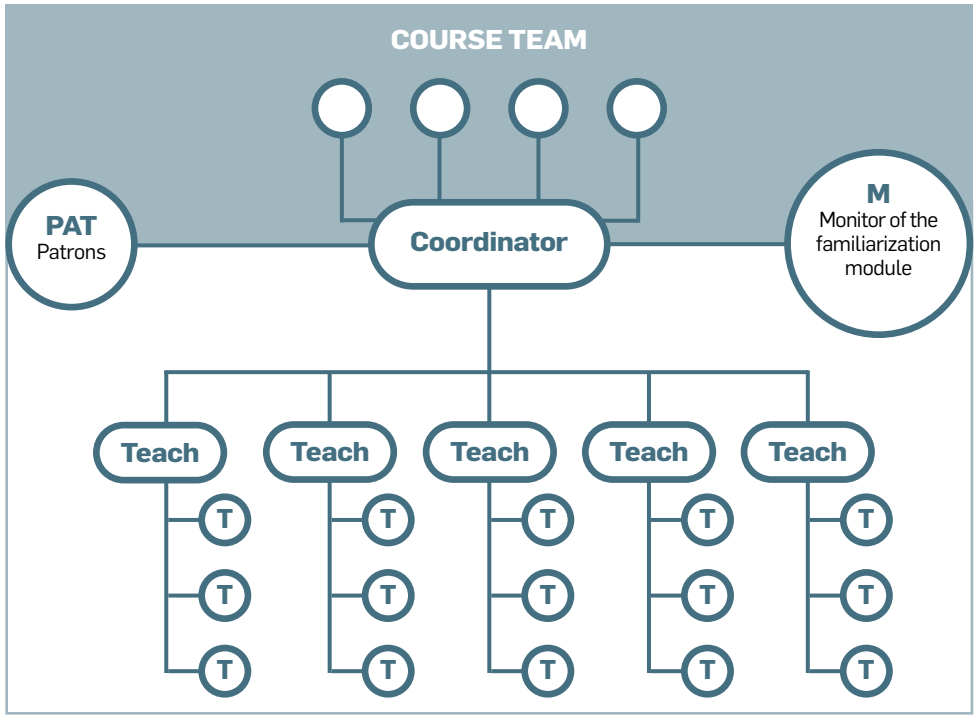


Figura 4_ 1st study cycle coordination scheme

A map with the description of the phased tasks regarding the pre-course cycle is presented in Annex I – 3.

3.3.5. The Patron

The patron is a figure created to assist Universidade Aberta's students and provide them non-academic support. It seeks to reinterpret not only the traditional student support systems and structures present in distance education institutions, but also the counseling and non-academic guidance that some of them offer. Coherent with a student-centered approach, the creation of this figure also reaffirms the commitment of the institution to support in a personalized, decentralized way, students' academic path and well-being through a network of patrons. These are former students of Universidade Aberta who are thus well aware of its characteristics, functioning, rules and institutional culture. The benefits of being in touch with such figures, themselves once students, with an accumulated experience with the institution, constitutes a part of the learning path offered by Universidade Aberta to its students.

Their functions and responsibilities revolve around the mediation between the individual student and the University. On the one hand, the patron helps the student establish and develop a relationship with the institution, advising him or her on its functioning and its rules and regulations, clarifying expectations and providing communication channels. On the other hand, the patron collaborates in identifying difficulties that the student might be facing and in finding solutions to be offered by the University.

The function of the patron has another important facet: guidance and counseling more focused on affective and social aspects, as an element of individualized support to the development of the student's personal learning project. From this point of view, the existence of the patron opens the door to the establishment of privileged affective relationships of an informal kind, based on mutual respect. It is also a way of assisting students in their adaptation to virtuality and to the methodology of distance education, defined by the pedagogical model; and of encouraging them to be active and motivated, capable of overcoming difficulties that might impair learning. A student support network based on peer interaction, i.e. a community, is thus brought to life.

After the network of patrons has been set, each patron will be tied to a virtual class, accompanying its students throughout the school year or, when feasible, throughout their whole academic path.

3.3.6. Learning materials and resources

Until recently the learning materials consisted of text-books specially design for self-learning, complemented with audio and video documents, following a pedagogical model of distance education centered on the interaction of the student with the contents. The model presented here proposes a rethinking of the role of the text-book in the learning process. In fact, today it is not only possible but also desirable to diversify the resources made available for the student in each curricular unit.

On the one hand, since distance education strategies have evolved, widening the field from independent learning to collaborative learning, there is no longer the need for text-books specially designed to serve a specific methodology. On the other hand, with the ever growing quantity of resources available, namely on the web, it makes more sense to guide and assist students in being able to take advantage of bibliographical research than to provide them condensed information in the form of a text-book.

We therefore advocate the production of reputed works published in Portuguese that might serve both Universidade Aberta's students and the students of other universities, as well as other audiences, but going beyond the tradition of self-instructional text-books. These works may be completely original or, if necessary, translated and adapted from reputed works written in other languages. The resources suggested to students should also include materials distributed freely or under Creative Commons Licenses on the web as a means of diversifying the sources available for their learning.

In addition to print works, it will be useful to create e-books, distributed and commercialized online, as well as other multimedia materials in the form of learning objects, using current technologies present in e-learning platforms, such as, for example, XML, PHP, ASP, Ajax, Javascript, Flash (SWF, FLV), Audio (WAV, MP3, VolP)

and 3D (VRML). Given the constant developments in the field of new technologies, the implementation of this model should soon include other modalities, namely those regarding emerging web 2.0 technologies or the integration with mobile systems.

Universidade Aberta should create a virtual media library, freely accessible by students, that may also direct them to search other repositories of materials and learning objects.

4. APPLYING THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

The low human interaction due to the absence of social contact and the limitations in certain areas of knowledge that require visualization of processes, physical contact or direct manipulation of real objects are frequently pointed out as weaknesses in computer mediated communication (CMC). On the other hand, it is widely accepted that making it possible for geographically dispersed populations to access education and training, with the flexibility in time management it allows, is a big advantage of CMC. Without this flexibility, such populations would hardly be able to cope with fixed learning schedules, too rigid to be compatible with their working schedules, familiar responsibilities, and so on.

The first disadvantage has been largely contested both by practice and by empirical research: CMC bears a strong socioemotional involvement, in many respects not inferior to what one experiences in face-to-face communication, and should be perceived today as more of a communication between humans, mediated by technology, than a human-machine communication. Online learning communities, energized by the potential of networked communication and nourished by principles of collaborative learning, benefit from the strong socio-affective, cognitive and motivational components of the Web, thus making it seem unreasonable to justify the need for blended learning on the basis of an alleged relational poverty of online courses. On the other hand, the difficulties in promoting, at a distance, certain skills in domains that require real physical interaction either with people, instruments or procedures, has given rise to innovations in the fields of Simulations, Virtual Laboratories and Remotely Controlled Laboratories highly relevant to distance education. However, these innovations still demand high investments and, in some situations, as is the case with some artistic activities, for example, face-to-face sessions may be needed to complement online learning.

Having this in mind and without dismissing a future evolution resulting from the development and dissemination of new technologies that present new possibilities, the implementation of the model in the 2nd cycle integrates two types of classes: the **virtual class**, entirely online, and the **blended class**, also online but complemented with face-to-face sessions.

This variant of the model to be applied to the2nd cycle should be extended to future 3rd cycle programs, although with a lower number of students per class - 10-15, at most – given the greater personalization required by these programs.

4.1. The pedagogical elements in the 2nd study cycle

The implementation of the model in the 2nd study cycle takes into account the distinct nature of this cycle - post-graduate studies - where students are already relatively autonomous and master some essential skills. It is important to stress that students' work should have innovative characteristics and evolve with a high level of autonomy.

In this context, the model's variant for this cycle relies on a structuring element: the **Learning Contract**. This instrument acts as mediator between the academic requirements typical of this study cycle and the students' needs and interests. In effect, it defines the necessary level of structure in the context of a group learning environment and, at the same time, incorporates a certain degree of flexibility adjustable in function of the student's personal rhythm and needs.

The Learning Contract is the core guiding document in each curricular unit, elaborated by the teacher of that unit. It serves as a communicational framework between the teacher and the individual student and is socially contextualized by the group.

The teacher designs a learning path to be followed by students based on the recommended materials and/or bibliography, and defines and organizes the moments for diversified interaction: within the class, within small groups or between the students and the teacher.

This learning path is based on a variety of previously designed activities, such as problem-solving, guided reading, discussions on given topics, case studies and analysis, individual research based on information sources that complement the suggested bibliography and elaboration of articles and documents.

The Learning Contract is made available to students at the beginning of the curricular unit and should be negotiated between the teacher and the students, allowing for some adjustments that take into account needs or relevant issues raised by the students. After these adjustments are made, the Learning Contract becomes a "navigational map" both for students and the teacher, although it might still undergo minor corrections resulting from unexpected problems in the students' personal learning.

In the elaboration of the Learning Contract each curricular unit should be divided in

a sequence of shorter work units. In each of these there is the need to indicate clearly the competencies to acquire or develop, the sequence of activities aimed at promoting them, the methodology to be used, the time they will take and the resources necessary. This way, students will be able, right from the start of the curricular unit, to organize their work, define priorities and establish a personal study and work schedule.

In this study cycle, continuous assessment, undertaken throughout the learning process, is mandatory in both variants, and may be complemented by a final assignment, where the student should demonstrate the acquisition of competencies in the curricular unit. The results obtained through continuous assessment should count no less than 60% for the final grade.

All the students admitted in 2nd cycle programs without previous experience in a 1st cycle course of Universidade Aberta will frequent a familiarization module with the characteristics already described for the 1st study cycle. This module is under the responsibility of the course coordinator.

Bearing in mind the characteristics of this study cycle, which impose the elaboration of a research work requiring personalized orientation by a teacher, the maximum number of students to include in each edition of a course should not exceed 25, being 20 a more desirable number. Moreover, given the high levels of interaction expected in this variant, it is advisable that the number of curricular units per semester does not exceed four.

4.2. Virtual Class

One of the modalities of organization for 2nd cycle programs is based on entirely virtual classes. This means that all activities are realized online using communication devices capable of integrating several communicational resources, as happens with the present e-learning platforms (learning management systems). However, the resort to these platforms should not ignore or prevent the gradual use of the new Web 2.0 technologies, namely blogs, wikis, e-portfolios, aggregators and other social software systems that encourage networking and knowledge sharing (personal learning environments).

This virtual variant is typically asynchronous so as to provide a maximum flexibility, which is considered the adequate situation for geographically dispersed students. For that matter, attendance to any existing face-to-face sessions (as those meant to present the course program, for example) is optional. The same reason justifies the option for online assessment modalities, either using the platform or the teacher's e-mail.

The teaching and learning model to adopt is organized in the following manner: each curricular unit contains sequences that integrates a phase of autonomous work on the part of the students with moments of discussion and resolution of several tasks by teams, through asynchronous, student organized and moderated forums, ending with teacher moderated asynchronous discussions on previously defined topics. Hence the model favors a learning perspective markedly collaborative.

The management of teaching and learning time should attend to students' individual mode of appropriation and to the desirable frequency of interaction between teacher and the students and among students. Thus the integration of autonomous learning experiences, based on learning resources, of teacher guided learning experiences and also of collaborative experiences, should make room for the diversity and the specificity of each student's learning process.

4.3. Blended Class

The design of blended programs implies the search for difficult balances between the quantity of online and face-to-face interaction and the nature of instruction to provide in each of these modalities. From the point of view of Distance Education, the face-to-face component of a blended course should be considered secondary and used mainly as a socialization factor or a laboratorial or residential period. It could also be used for more distributed sessions with a broader set of functions, such as the initial introduction of students and teachers, the presentation and discussion of rules and procedures, the discussion of projects or other assignments, the answering to students' doubts and questions or the presentation and discussion of final projects and assignments.

Considering the identity and the physical limitations of Universidade Aberta, this blended class modality is based on the assumption that most teaching and learning activities will happen online; face-to-face sessions should not exceed 25% of the contact hours. Assuming an average of around 200 contact hours per curricular year, face-to-face sessions can be organized to a maximum of 50 hours per year and taking into account the availability of the University's facilities.

These sessions can be distributed in fractions among each of the curricular units or be concentrated in one single period of time (Cf. 4.4.2). Students' attendance is mandatory once the need for face-to-face sessions is confirmed, so there needs to be a careful consideration on the nature of these sessions and their specific objectives should be made clear in the Learning Contracts.

Since continuous assessment and final assessment must coexist in the 2nd study cycle, as stated previously, the blended class modality may include final face-to-face assessment instruments. The adoption of an exam as final assessment mode requires that the time assigned to it be included in the total of face-to-face hours.

4.4. Organization

4.4.1. General organizational aspects

Given the nature of the 2nd study cycle, it is necessary to define a more centralized system of coordination that ensures a more personalized student support. This support will be available through the first and the second years and will be provided by the program coordinator, a teacher of Universidade Aberta.

The coordinator can be assisted by a vice-coordinator whenever necessary and delegate to him or her some of the coordination tasks. In order to assist students in logistic matters, the department responsible for the program will designate an element of the department's secretariat to work in close cooperation with the program coordinator.

The coordinator should:

a) superintend the processes of selection of candidates and accreditation of already acquired competencies;
b) coordinate the organization and maintenance of a program dossier containing the students' data, the Learning Contracts of the several curricular units in the course and all other documents relative to its functioning;
c) articulate the pedagogical action of the different teachers in the course with the objective of minimizing the overlapping of subjects and of conciliating the more intense periods in the different curricular units, so as to avoid superficial approaches to learning and to the realization of activities due to an excessive workload;
d) create and manage an online space open to all the course teachers in order to facilitate communication among them and implement the articulation mentioned in c);
e) organize and manage a module of familiarization with the online environment, similar to the one described for the 1st cycle, for the students who have never frequented a course in Universidade Aberta;
f) organize and manage an online space aimed at providing pedagogical support for the students;
g) organize and manage a socialization space open to all the students and teachers in the course, to serve as an informal virtual place where they can meet and communicate;
h) superintend and assist students in the selection of research themes conducting to the dissertation and in the choice of a supervising professor, in articulation with the course teachers or, when applicable, assist the students in the preparatory phase of their traineeship or the elaboration of their final project;
i) establish contacts with an element of the UMTE concerning the development of learning resources;
j) propose the Permanent Commission of the Department responsible for the course the constitution of the committees for the public dissertation defenses, in articulation with the professor supervising the dissertation, traineeship or project;
l) superintend the course evaluation in articulation with the Quality Assurance structure of the University.

The course secretary should:

a) organize students' applications for selection by the applications committee;
b) organize and maintain the course dossier according to the coordinator's instructions;
c) gather, organize and update in a dossier suggestions and/or complaints on the functioning of the course;
d) interact with the other sectors of the University regarding administrative matters so as to facilitate procedures.

4.4.2. Organizational aspects specific to the blended class

As previously stated, the blended class is based on the organization of activities in a virtual space, complemented by a number of contact hours in a face-to-face setting. According to the scientific nature of the curricular units in the course, there are two possible ways of organizing the face-to-face sessions: A) distributed sessions; and B) concentrated sessions.

In the first case, there will be 2 face-to-face sessions per curricular unit, near the end of the 4th and the 8th weeks of online work, plus an initial session. The objectives of these sessions should be defined by the coordinator together with the course teachers.

In the second case, there will be an initial face-to-face session and a full week of intensive face-to-face sessions in one or two curricular units, while the other units are taught entirely online. The face-to-face activities are organized as intensive workshops or laboratory work over a certain amount of time which cannot exceed two weeks of the course total.

The latter modality is more adequate when one or two curricular units demand face-to-face laboratorial practice or the development of competencies relative to artistic domains.

The selection of either modality should be discussed and approved by the Perma-

nent Commission of the Department responsible for the program. The several organizational stages for each modality are presented below.

Modality A – distributed sessions

1) Before the beginning of the program, the coordinator defines with the program teachers the objectives of the face-to-face sessions of each curricular unit.
2) Teachers define and plan a set of self-learning activities to be performed online in their curricular unit. Given the necessary interaction with the students, they should also plan 2 online teacher moderated discussions during the semester, the duration of which should be counted as contact hours in the curricular unit. Since students have 4 curricular units simultaneously, team activities should be restricted to 1 in each unit.
3) Teachers elaborate the Learning Contract for the curricular unit they are responsible for, which should include the schedule and objectives of the face-to-face sessions in the context of the learning activities.
4) The coordinator establishes contacts with an element of the UMTE concerning the development of learning resources;
5) The coordinator schedules the face-to-face sessions in the semester according to the following criteria: the pedagogical articulation of the work in the different curricular units; the predominant type of students (might imply the scheduling of sessions for after-work hours); and the availability of the University's facilities.
6) The coordinator organizes and manages an initial face-to-face session aimed at introducing the teaching team, the subject matters, the work methods, the assessment modes and the schedule of the face-to-face sessions. The duration of this session is included in the maximum face-to-face time.

Modality B – concentrated sessions

1) The coordinator, together with the teachers of the curricular units that require face-to-face sessions, defines the sessions' objectives, schedule and location, as well as the procedures to adopt.
2) The teachers of the curricular units to be taught entirely online elaborate the Learning Contract for their units.
3) The coordinator establishes contacts with an element of the UMTE concerning the development of learning resources;
4) The teachers of the curricular units that will include a face-to-face component plan both the activities to be performed online and those to be performed in the face-to-face sessions. In such cases, online activities should be planned for a period of around 8 weeks, and could be peformed before or after the face-to-face sessions. Based on this planning teachers elaborate the Learning Contract for their curricular unit.
5) The coordinator organizes and manages an initial face-to-face session aimed at introducing the teaching team, the subject matters, the work methods, the assessment modes and the schedule of the face-to-face sessions. The duration of this session is included in the maximum face-to-face time.

5. LIFELONG LEARNING

Education and training are no longer a sum of initial training or preparation for the world of work plus subsequent on-the-job training; they have become an integral part of the personal and professional life of the individuals in the 21st century. The current mobility in terms of employment, the fast erosion of acquired qualifications, the accelerated development of technologies, together with a longer life expectancy, call for the demand and offer of diversified educational programs, namely short competency-centered training programs or programs oriented towards cultural fruition.

If, on the one hand, the need for professional reconversion demands longer, more structured offers, on the other hand, short flexible programs enable individuals to increase or develop their knowledge and skills at any time, according to their needs and interests, without requiring a long term commitment.

In the first case, the current, or yet to create, 1st and even 2nd study cycle courses offered by Universidade Aberta, to which the variants of this pedagogical model are oriented, answer the needs of professional reconversion. In the second case, the short training courses that require certification need a simpler variant of the model, within the principles already established.[4]

The variant proposed here is a variant of the model for short educational programs that may be designed for between 2 and 5 ECTS, that is, between 52 and 130 hours. The first type of courses, around 2 ECTS, may consist of cultural extension programs, while the second, between 3 and 5 ECTS credits, may consist of in-service training packages aimed at professionals who need to develop or deepen their skills in a specific field of knowledge, as is the case with short professional training programs. In order to maximize flexibility, these programs are conducted entirely online, through asynchronous communication, and attendance to eventual initial face-to-face sessions is optional.

The didactic variant that defines the implementation of the pedagogical

[4] This variant does not include possible open content programs, prepared according to self-learning methodologies, freely available, and accessible by anyone without the need for certification.

model in short courses thus admits two possibilities: cultural extension programs and in-service professional training programs.

5.1. Cultural extension programs

The central objective of these programs is to deepen knowledge on specific subjects or acquire a particular competence.

This modality presupposes that the course is organized as a seminar, based on thematic discussions with guiding questions and supported by the exploration of suggested bibliography. From a pedagogical perspective, the course develops as a space of discussion and sharing among the participants, promoting the joint (re)construction of knowledge, while the teacher facilitates and moderates this process. Interaction levels among participants and between these and the teacher are expected to be high in such learning environments. Therefore, these courses should consist of a virtual class of up to 25 participants under the responsibility of a teacher.

From an organizational point of view, these courses might be based on the current asynchronous communication tools, such as forums, or on social networking tools.

Despite the open nature of these programs, their design and implementation should follow a specific methodology, based on the elements suggested below:

> consider a short period of time, at the beginning of the program, for the familiarization with the online environment, namely regarding virtual socialization and training on the collaboration tools to be used;
> elaboration of the **Program Agenda**, specifying the subjects, methodology, schedule of activities, assessment mode and criteria; if there is a face-to-face session, although attendance is optional, its objectives should be made clear in this document;
> adoption of an assessment mode based on portfolios elaborated by the participants throughout the course;
> certification at the end of the course for those participants who successfully complete it.

5.2. In-service training program

These programs are aimed at deepening knowledge or developing skills of a professional nature within a certain field of knowledge, and their duration is therefore longer, between 3 and 5 ECTS credits. For this modality, the design and implementation of educational programs based on projects or products to be developed by the participants is a more suitable approach.

Programs should be planned by topics or work phases, geared towards the acquisition or development of a small core of desired skills that become apparent in a final product elaborated by the participants.

The kind of work to be performed by the participants will require a close support (and consequent availability) on the part of the teacher. Virtual classes should therefore have a maximum of 25 participants under the orientation of a teacher assisted, if necessary, by a tutor collaborating with Universidade Aberta.

From a methodological perspective, the program is organized asynchronously, combining independent and collaborative learning; the different work phases should be previously defined in a Learning Contract. This contract is an adaptation of the 2nd study cycle Learning Contract.

The Learning Contract, which should be negotiated with the participants at the beginning of the course, should indicate:

> what is expected from the participants;
> the course program;
> the competencies to acquire/develop;
> the schedule and typology of activities;
> the specifications of the product to be elaborated and the respective assessment criteria;
> the objectives of the initial face-to-face session (attendance optional), if there is one;
> the fundamental bibliography.

As was the case with the previous modality, the program should include a module for familiarization with the online environment at the beginning of the course. The participants who successfully complete the course will obtain a certificate attesting the mastering of the skills that the course was meant to develop.

6. DEVELOPING THE MODEL

The model here presented can be further developed according to the evolution of the circumstances, although the direction they will take is not fully predictable. In fact, the development of new technologies, namely mobile, the evolution of web 2.0 and the emergence of new social networking tools lead to predict that the model will have to be

adjusted to these changes in the middle-term. However, the fact that the model has been based on a set of principles or cornerstones which are aligned with the new generation of distance education and the results of research in the field, make it possible to adjust it to new realities without giving up on its founding principles.

Thus, if the model here presented points to the possibility of virtual classes in the 1st study cycle with a relatively large number of students (50), its development may call for a revision of these numbers in the short term. The application of the model should therefore be periodically evaluated so as to adjust it to new emerging realities.

Turning from a middle-term scenario to a short-term analysis, the sound implementation of the model requires some measures that need to be emphasized; otherwise it might not evolve in the desired direction.

One of the basic aspects to take into account is the informatics system and its subsystems. In effect, the reinforcement or even the reorganization of the informatics support services in order to meet the challenges outlined above, such as digital inclusion or virtuality to serve large numbers of students, seem unavoidable. In this respect, it is of the utmost importance that the University is able to provide, in the very short term, a 24-hour Help Desk service accessible from any computer with an Internet connection. Such a system, present in virtual universities, provides quick assistance to students with any computer-related problem they may experience. Moreover, this system should be extended to provide assistance to teachers in solving occasional malfunctionings. This support system might be complemented with the creation of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) area in the University's portal, which would be periodically updated. These solutions are all the more important given that the University's students, adults with a demanding professional life, realize their learning activities at night and during the weekend.

In addition to the improvements in the infrastructure, it would also be timely to cre-ate digital web-based instruments to be integrated in the virtual environment as a means of assisting teachers in the planning of the learning activities. Such instruments could consist of interactive forms for the elaboration of the Curricular Unit Plan, the Learning Contract, the Tutoring Guide, the Course Guide or any other relevant documents.

Moreover, it is a priority that the model, in its different didactic variants, can be enriched through research and through the production of materials specific to learning in a particular area of knowledge, with a special emphasis on language learning, virtual laboratories, open source technologies and portable solutions.

bibliography

Anderson, T. & Elooumi, F. (Eds) (2003). *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. Canada: Athabasca University.

Anderson,T. (2003). Getting the Mix Right Again: An Updated and Theoretical Rationale for Interaction. *International Review of research on Open and Distance Learning*, 4(2). Available [http://www.irrodl.org/content/v4.2/anderson.html].

Amante, L., Quintas-Mendes, A. & Morgado, L. (2006). "Novos Contextos de Aprendizagem e Educação Online", in Colóquio Luso-Brasileiro "*Ensino a Distância e Comunidades Virtuais de Aprendizagem*", Universidade Estadual da Bahia, São Salvador da Bahia. [http://www.medeia.org/files/medeia_educaonline.pdf].

Annand, D. (1999). The Problem of Computer Conferencing for Distance-Based Universities. *Open Learning*, November.

Arbaught, J. B. (2001). How instructor immediacy behaviors affect student satisfaction and learning in web-based courses. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 64 (4), 42-54.

Barberà, E. (2006) . Aportaciones de la tecnología a la e-Evaluación. *Revista de Educación a Distancia*. V (6), 1-13.

Bartolomé, A. (2004). Blended Learning. Conceptos Básicos. *Pixel-Bit, Revista de Medios y Educación*, (23), 7-20.

Bates, A. W. (1990). The challenge of technology for European distance teaching. In A. W. Bates (Ed.), *Media and Technology in European Distance Education*, (pp. 17-26). Heerlen: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities.

Bates, T. (1996). Educational technology in distance education. In T. Plomp & D. P. Ely (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*, (pp. 527-534). Oxford: Pergamon.

Bates, T. (1999). Selecció de tecnologies. Determinació de las diferències. In J. M. Duart & A. Sangrà (Eds.), *Aprenentatge i virtualitat*, (pp. 223-253). Barcelona: Edicions UOC/Pórtic.

Bates, T. (2001). *Cómo gestionar el cambio tecnológico*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Bates,T. (1993). Theory and practice in the use of technology in distance education. In Keegan,D. (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of Distance Education*, (pp. 213-233). London: Routledge.

Bernath, U. J., Kleinschmidt, A. C., Waiti C. J., C., Zawacki J. O. (2003). Challenges for Study Centers in an Electronic Age: A case study of the Center for Distance Education at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany. *IRRODL*, 4 (1).

Bidarra, J. (2004). Hiperespaços e Materiais para Formação a Distância. In A. Dias, & M.J. Gomes (Coord.), *E-learning para E-formadores* (pp. 33-51). Guimarães: TecMinho.

Bidarra, J. & Dias, A. (2003). From Cognitive Landscapes to Digital Hyperscapes. *IRRODL*, 4 (2).

Brussa, et al. (2001). *La función tutorial*. Santa Fé: Homo Sapiens.

Castells, M. (2000). *La era de la información: La sociedad en red*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Castells, M. (2001). *La Galaxia Internet* Barcelona: Areté.

Centro de Informação Europeia Jacques Delors – Estratégia de Lisboa. In [http://www.ciejd.pt/pls/wsd/wsdwcot0.detalhe_area?p_sub=4&p_cot_id=952].

Christensen, T. K. (2003). Finding the Balance: Constructivist Pedagogy in a Blended Course. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 4 (3), 235-243.

Collis, B. (1998). New didactics for university instruction: Why and how?. *Computers & Education*, 31(4), 373-395.

Collis, B., Winnips, K., & Moonen, J. (2000). Structured support versus learner choice via the World Wide Web (WWW): Where is the payoff?. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research*, 11(2), 163-196.

Cornford, J. & Pollock, N. (2004). *Putting the university Online*. Buckingham:SRHE.

Dalsgaard, C. (2006). Social software: E-learning beyond learning management systems. EURODL. [http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2006/Christian_Dalsgaard.htm]

Davie, L. (1989). Facilitation Techniques. *Computers and Distance Education*, (pp. 74-85). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Davis, M. (1993). *A Tutor's Guide to Open Learning*. London: MacMillan Magazines.

Dillenbourg, P. (1999). Introduction: What Do You Mean By "Collaborative Learning? In P. Dillenbourg (Ed), *Collaborative Learning: Cognitive and Computational Approaches* (pp. 1-19). Oxford: Pergamon/EARLI.

Dillenbourg, P., Baker, M., Blaye, A. & O´Malley, C. (1996). The evolution of research on collaborative learning. In E. Spada & P. Reinman (Eds.). *Learning in Humans and Machine: Towards an interdisciplinary learning science* (pp. 189-219). Oxford: Elsevier.

Downes, S.(2005). E-learning 2.0. *eLearn Magazine*.

Figueiredo, A. D. & Afonso, A. P. (2006). *Managing Learning in Virtual Settings:The Role of Context*. Hershey: Information science Publishing.

Figueiredo, A. D. (2005). Learning Contexts: a Blueprint for Research. *Interactive Educational Multimedia*, 11 (127-139).

Freedman, T. (ed.), (2006). Coming of Age: An introduction to the NEW world wide web. [http://full-measure.co.uk/Coming_of_age_v1-2.pdf].

Garrison, R. & Anderson, T. (2000). Transforming and enhacing university teaching: stronger and weaker technological influences. In T. Evans & D. Nation (Eds.), *Changing University Teaching* (pp. 24-33). London: Kogan Page.

Garrison, R. & Anderson, T. (2003). *E-Learning in the 21 st Century*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Garrison, R. & Archer, W. (2000). A transactional perspective on teaching and learning. *A framework for adult and higher education*. New York: Pergamon/Earli.

Garrison, R. (2000). Theoretical Challenges for Distance Education in the 21st Century: A Shift from Structural to Transactional Issues. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 1, (1), 1-17.

Graham, C.R. (2005). Blended Learning Systems: Definition, Current Trends, and Future Directions. In C.J. Bonk & C. R. Graham, (Eds), *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., S. Francisco.

Grigorovici, D., Nam, S. & Russil C. (2003). The effects of online syllabus interactivity on student's perception of the course and instructor. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 6, (1), 41-52.

Gunawardena, C., and Zittle, F. (1997). Social presence as a predictor of satisfaction within a computer mediated conferencing environment. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 11(3), 8 – 26.

Harasim, L. (1989). On-Line Education: A New Domain. In R. Mason & A. Kaye (Eds.), *Mindweave: Communication, Computers and Distance Education*, (pp. 50-62). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Harasim, L. (2000). Shift happens. Online education as a new paradigm in learning. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 3, (1), 41-61.

Harasim, L. et al. (1995). Learning Networks: *A Field Guide to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: The MIT Press.

Illera, J. L. (2004). Digital Literacies. *Interactive Educational Multimedia*, 9, 48-62.

Jollife, A., Ritter, J., Stevens, D. (2001). *The Online Learning Handbook*. London: Kogan Page

Kraut, R. E., Fussell, S. R., Brennan, S. E., & Siegel, J. (2002). Understanding effects of proximity on collaboration: Implications for technologies to support remote collaborative work. In P. Hinds & S. Kiesler (Eds.) *Distributed Work* (pp. 137-162). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Kraut, R.E.; Fussell, S.R; Siegel, J. (2003). Visual Information as a Conversational Resource in Collaborative Physical Tasks. *Human Computer Interaction*, 18, 13-49.

Lazar, J. & Preece, J. (2002). Social Considerations in Online Communities: Usability, Sociability, and Sucess factors. In Oostendorp (Ed.), *Cognition in the Digital world*, (pp. 1-38). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lentell, H. (2003). The importance of tutor in open and distance learning. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking Learner support in distance education*, (pp. 64-76). London: Routledge-Falmer.

Littlejohn, A. (2003). *Reusing Online Resources- a sustainable approach to e-learning*. London: Kogan Page.

Ma, J., and Nickerson, J. V., (2006). Hands-on, Simulated and Remote Laboratories: A Comparative Literature Review. *ACM Computing Surveys*, 38 (3), 1-24.

Malheiro, S., Morgado, L. & Quintas-Mendes, A. (2007). Analysis Of Engaged Online Collaborative Discourse: A Methodological Approach. *In Computers and Education – Towards Educational Change and Innovation. Springer Science*, no prelo.

Mason, R. & Bacsich, P. (1998). Embedding computer conferencing into university teaching. *Computers & Education*, 30, (3/4), 249-258.

Mason, R. & Kaye, A. (1989). *Mindweave: Communication, Computers and Distance Education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Mason, R. (1992a). Evaluating Methodologies for Computer Conferencing Applications. In A. Kaye (Ed.), *Collaborative Learning Through Computer Conferencing*, (pp. 105-116). Berlim-Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

Mason, R. (1992b). *Computer Conferencing: The Last Word*. Columbia: Beach Holme Publishers.

Mason, R. (1993a). The Textuality of Computer Networking. In R. Mason (Ed.), *Computer Conferencing: The Last Word*, (pp. 23-36). Victoria: Beach Holme Publishers.

Mason, R. (1993b). Introduction: Written interactions. In R. Mason (Ed.), *Computer Conferencing. The Last Word*, (pp. 3-22). Victoria: Beach Holme Publishers.

Mason, R. (1998a). *Globalising Education - Trends and Applications*. London: Routledge.

Mason, R. (1998b). Models of Online Courses. *ALN Magazine*, 2, (2), 1-10.

Mason, R. (1999). IET'S Masters in Open and Distance Education: What have we learned?, CITE Report nº248: The Institute of Educational Technology. In: [http://ietopen.ac.uk/pp /r.d.mason /publications.html].

Mason, R. (2000). From distance to online education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 3, 63-74.

Mason, R. (2002). Effective facilitation of online learning: The Open University experience. In J. Stephenson (Ed). *Teaching and Learning Online. Pedagogies for New Technologies*, (pp. 67-75), London: Kogan Page.

Mason, R. (2003). On-line learning and supporting students: new possibilities. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education*, (pp. 90-101). London: Routledge Falmer.

Mills, R. (2003). The centrality of learner support in open and distance learning: a paradigm shift in thinking. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education*, (pp. 102-113). London: Routledge Falmer.

Moore, M. (1993). Theory of transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education*, (pp. 22-38). New York: Routledge.

Moore, M. (2005). Editorial. Blended Learning. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 19 (3), 129-132

Moore. M. (1989). Three Types of Interaction. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 3, (2), 1-6.

Morgado, L. (2005). Novos Papéis para o Professor /Tutor na Pedagogia Online. In R. Vidigal, & A. Vidigal, (Eds), *Educação, Aprendizagem e Tecnologia*. Lisboa: Edições Sílabo.

Morgado, L. (2004). O que faz o Tutor na Sala de Aula Virtual? Análise dos Actos de Tutoria. In F. Ramos, A. Moreira & H. Caixinha, (Eds), *Actas da Conferência eLES'04 -eLearning no Ensino Superior. Aveiro*: Universidade de Aveiro.

Morgado, L. (2004). *O Ensino-Aprendizagem Online: Contextos e Interacções*. Tese de Doutoramento em Ciências da Educação. Lisboa: Universidade Aberta.

Morgado, L. (2003). Os novos desafios do tutor a distância: o regresso ao paradigma da sala de aula. Revista *Discursos, Série Perspectivas em Educação*, 1, 77-90.

Morgado, L. (2001). O papel do professor em contextos de ensino online: problemas e virtualidades. Revista *Discursos*, nº especial, III Série.

Morgado, L., Pereira, A., Mendes, A. (2007). The "Contract" as a Pedagogical Tool in E-Learning. In Computers and Education – *Towards Educational Change and Innovation*. Springer Science, [no prelo].

Morgado, L., Pereira, A., Mendes, A., Aires, L. (2005). Para uma Pedagogia do eLearning: o "contrato" como instrumento mediador da aprendizagem. In A. Mendes, I. Pereira, R. Costa, (Eds), *Actas do VII Simpósio Internacional de Informática Educativa (SIIE05)*, pp.125-130. Leiria, Portugal.

Morgado, L., Francisco, D. & Machado, G. (2005). Interacção e Presença Social em Ambientes Virtuais de Aprendizagem. In A. Mendes, I. Pereira, R. Costa, (Eds), *Actas do VII Simpósio Internacional de Informática Educativa (SIIE05)*, pp.263-268. Leiria, Portugal.

Morgado, L., Nurmela, S., Miranda, R. & Pereira, A. (2004). A Formação de Tutores Online: um estudo de caso. In F. Ramos, A. Moreira & H. Caixinha (Eds), *Actas da Conferência eLES'04 -eLearning no Ensino Superior*, Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro. [http://www.eles04.ua.pt/apresentacoes].

Nickerson, J.V., Corter, J.E., Esche, S.K., and Chassapis, C. (2006). A Model for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Remote Engineering Laboratories and Simulations in Education. *Computers & Education*, (In Press, Corrected Proof).

Oliver, M. & Trigwell, K. (2005). *Can "Blended Learning" Be Redeemed? E-Learning*, 2, (1),17-26.

O'Reilly, T. (2005). What Is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of software. [http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html?page=1].

Osguthorpe, R.T. & Graham, C.R. (2003). Blended Learning Environments. Definitions and Directions. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 4 (3), 227-233.

Palloff, R. M. & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey -Bass Publishers.

Palloff, R. M.& Pratt, K. (2001). *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom: The Realities of Online Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Palloff, R.M. & Pratt, K. (2003). *The Virtual Student*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parlamento Europeu. A Estratégia de Lisboa, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/highlights/pt/1001.html].

Paulsen, M. (1995). Overview of CMC and the Online Classroom. In Z. L. Berge & M. P. Collins (Eds.), *Computer Mediated Communication and the Online Classroom*, pp.31-58. Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Pereira, A. (2006). Pedagogical Issues in Open and Distance Learning, In Vermeersch J. (Coord.), *Introduction to Distance Education*, pp. 41-54. Bruxelas.

Pereira, A., Mehlecke, Q., Miranda, B., Oliveira, I., Bastos, G. (2005). A Interacção professor/estudante: uma experiência de seminário aberto em Educação a Distância. In A. Mendes, I. Pereira & R. Costa (Eds), *Actas do VI Simpósio Internacional de Informática Educativa*, Leiria, Portugal.

Pereira, A., Morgado, L., Quintas-Mendes, A., Amante, L. (2006). Um Modelo Pedagógico para o Ensino Graduado Online: e-grad. In *Actas do 1º Colóquio Luso-Brasileiro Ensino a Distância e Comunidades Virtuais de Aprendizagem*, Universidade Estadual da Bahia, São Salvador da Bahia. [http://www.medeia.org/files/medeia_egrad.pdf]

Pereira, A., Quintas-Mendes, A., Mota, J., Morgado, L, Aires, L. (2004). Instrumentos de Apoio ao Ensino Online: Guia do Professor/Tutor e Guia do Estudante Online. Revista *Discursos Série Perspectivas em Educação*, 2, 195-221.

Pereira, A., Quintas-Mendes, A., Mota, J., Morgado, L, Aires, L. (2003). Contributos para uma Pedagogia do Ensino Online Pós- Graduado: Proposta de um Modelo. Revista *Discursos Série Perspectivas em Educação*, 1. [http://www.medeia.org/files/modelopedagogico.pdf]

Peters, O. (1993). Distance education in a post industrial society. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education*, pp. 39-58. New York: Routledge.

Peters, O. (2000a). The transformation of the university into an institution of independent learning. In T. Evans & D. Nation (Eds.), *Changing University Teaching*, pp. 10-23. London: Kogan Page.

Peters, O. (2000b). Digital Learning Environments: new possibilities and opportunities. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 1 (1), 1-19.

Peters, O. (2000c). Learning & Teaching in Distance Education. *Pedagogical Analysis and Interpretations in an International Perspective*. London: Kogan Page.

Peters, O. (2001). *Didática do Ensino a Distância*. S. Leopoldo: Editora Unisinos.

Peters, O. (2002). Distance Education in Transition. *New Trends and Challenges. Oldenburg*: Bibliootheks und Informationssystem der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg.

Porter, S. (2000). Cooking Up a Successful Class. In K. W. White & B. H. Weight (Eds.), *The Online Teaching Guide*, pp. 83-94. Boston: Ally & Bacon.

Quintas-Mendes, A., Morgado, L., Amante, L. (2007). Online Communication and E-Learning, in Kidd, T. *Handbook of Research on Instructional Systems and Technology* [no prelo].

Quintas-Mendes, A., Crato, R. (2004). Formação de e-formadores: alguns princípios pedagógicos, Revista *Discursos Série Perspectivas em Educação*, 2, 171-176.

Rourke, L., Anderson, T., Garrison, D. R., and Archer, W. (2001). Assessing social presence in asynchronous text-based computer conferencing. *Journal of Distance Education*, 14(2), 50–71.

Salmon, G. (2000). E-Moderating. *The key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: Kogan Page.

Salmon, G. (2002). E-tivities. *The key to active online learning*. London: Kogan Page.

Sangrà, A. & Duart, J. M. (1999a). Formació universitària per mitjà del web: un model integrador per a l'aprenentatge superior. In J. Duart & A. Sangrà (Eds.), *Aprenentatge i virtualitat* , pp. 57-77. Barcelona: Ediuoc/Pórtic.

Sangrà, A. & Duart, J. M. (1999b). Aprenentatge i virtualitat: un nou paradigma formatiu?. In J. M. Duart & A. Sangrà (Eds.), *Aprenentatge i virtualitat*, pp.11-16. Barcelona: Ediuoc/Pórtic.

Sangrà, A. (2000). Materiales en la web. Un proceso de conceptualización global. In M. Duart & A. Sangrà (Eds.), *Aprender en la virtualidad*, pp. 189-202. Barcelona: EDIUOC/Gedisa.

Sangrà, A. (2001). La calidad en las experiencias virtuales de educación superior. *Cuadernosirc.com*, 1-11.

Sangrà, A. (2002a). Educación presencial y a distancia: punto de encuentro. In Dell`Ascenza (Ed.), *Présence et Distance dans la formation à l`échange*. Íbis. Pavia: Como.

Sangrà, A. (2002b). A new learning model for the information knowledge society: the case of UOC. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 2, (2), 1-19.

Schrum, L. (1993). Social Interaction through online writing". In R. Mason (Ed.), Computer Conferencing. *The last word*, pp. 171-196. Victoria: Beach Holme Publishers.

Serrano Muñoz, J. & Prats Prat, J. (2005). Repertorios abiertos: el libre acceso a contenidos. In L. Navarra (Coord.), Uso de contenidos digitales: tecnologías de la información, sociedad del conocimiento y universidad. *Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento* (RUSC) , 2, (2).

Sherow, S. & Wedemeyer, C. (1990). Origins of Distance Education. In R. D. Garrison & D. Shale (Eds.), *Education at a Distance: From Issues to Practice*, pp. 7-22. Malabar: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company.

Shin, N. (2002). Beyond Interaction: the relational construct of 'Transactional Presence. *Open Learning*, 17, (2), 121-137.

Shin, N. (2003). Transactional Presence as a Critical Predictor of Success in Distance Learning. *Distance Education*, 4, (1), 69-86.

Short. J., Williams, E. and Christie, B. (1976). *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications*. Toronton: Wiley.

Simon, M. (2000). Managing Time: Developing Effective Online Organization. In K. W. White & B. H. Weight (Eds.), *The Online Teaching Guide: An Handbook of Attitudes, Strategies, and Techniques for the Virtual Classroom*, pp. 73-82. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Simpson, O. (2002). *Supporting Students in Online, Open and Distance Learning*. London: Kogan Page.

Stephenson & M. Laycock (Eds.). *Using Learning Contracts in Higher Education*. London: Kogan Page.

Stephenson, J. & Laycock, M. (2002). Learning Contracts: Scope and Rationale. In J. Stephenson & M. Laycock (Eds.), *Using Learning Contracts*, pp. 17-28. London: Kogan Page.

Stephenson, J. (2002). Learner-managed learning-an emerging pedagogy for learning online. In J. Stephenson (Ed.). *Teaching and Learning Online: Pedagogies for New Technologies*, pp. 219-224. London: Kogan Page.

Stewart, D. (1998). Tuition and Counselling. Supporting the teachers for competitive advantage. In C. Latchem & F. Lockwood (Eds.), *Staff Devellopment in Open and Flexible Learning*, pp. 148-156. London: Routledge.

Swan, K & Shih, L. F. (2006). On the nature and development of social presence in online course discussions. (Accepted for publication in the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network*).

Swan, K. (2001). Virtual Interaction: Design Factors affecting student satisfaction and perceived learning in asynchronous online courses. Distance Education, 22, (2), 306-331.

Swan, K. (2002). Building learning communities in online courses: the importance of interaction. Education, *Communication and Information*, 20 (1), 23-50.

Tait, A. (2000). *Planning student support for open and distance learning"*. Open Learning, 15(3), 287 – 299.

Tait, A. (2000). Rethinking learner support in the Open University U.K.: a case study. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education*, 185-197. London: Routledge Falmer.

Tait, A., Mils, R. (2003). *Rethinking learner support in Distance Education*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Talbot, C. (2003). *Studying at a distance. Maidenhead*: Open University Press.

Tennant, M. (1997). *Psychology and Adult Learning*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Tiffin, J. & Rajasingham, L. (1997). *En busca de la clase virtual: la educación en la sociedad de la información*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Tolmie, A. & Boyle, J. (2000). *Factors influencing the sucess of computer mediated communication (CMC) environments in university teaching: a review and case study*. Computers & Education (34), pp. 119-140.

Weiss, R. (2000). *"Humanizing the Online Classroom"*. In R. Weiss, D. Knowlton et al. (Eds.), *Principles of Effective Teaching in the Online Classroom*, pp. 47-53. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weller, M. (2002). *Delivering learning on the Net*. London: Kogan Page.

Weller, M. (2004). *Models of Learge- Scale of Elearning*, JALN, 8 (4).

Wheeler, S. & Birtle, J. (1995). *A Handbook for Personal Tutors. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education,* Open University Press.

Wiley, D. A. (2000a). *Connecting learning objects to instructional design theory: A definition, a metaphor, and a taxonomy. In D. A. Wiley (Ed.), The Instructional Use of Learning Objects*: Online Version. [http://reusability.org/read/chapters/wiley.doc].

Wiley, D. A. (2000b). *Learning object design and sequencing theory*. Tese de Doutoramento (não publicada). Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

Xalabarder, R. (2005). *Copyright y derecho de autor: ¿convergencia internacional en un mundo digital? Presentación. In Copyright y derecho de autor: ¿convergencia internacional en un mundo digital?* . Revista de Internet, Derecho y Política, 1. [http://www.uoc.edu/idp/1/dt/esp/xalabarder02.pdf].

Xalabarder, R. (2006). *Las licencias Creative Commons:una alternativa al copyright?*, UOC Papers: Revista sobre la sociedad del conocimiento, 2.

ANNEXS

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

ANNEX

1_ Curricular Unit Plan Template

2_ Tutoring Plan Template

3_ Advanced Planning Map

4_ Study Program Guide Template

ANNEX I

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

Curricular Unit Plan Template

CURRICULAR UNIT :_____ **CODE:**_____

TEACHER:_____

What is the Curricular Unit Plan (PUC)?

The PUC is a document which aims to guide the students' learning process throughout the curricular unit. It therefore requires an attentive reading which will be useful to you along your learning. Here you will find information on the subjects to study, the bibliography needed and the competencies to develop; but also information on how the learning process is organized, how to use and benefit from the virtual environment of this curricular unit, what is expected from you and how you will be assessed, among other aspects that are fundamental to achieve success.

Presentation of the Curricular Unit

[Include synopsis of the Curricular Unit]

Competencies to Develop

At the end of this Curricular Unit, the student is expected to have acquired the following competencies:

Contents of the Curricular Unit

In this Curricular Unit the following topics will be studied:

Topic 1 _____

1.1 _____

1.2 _____

1.3 _____

Topic 2

2.1

2.2

2.3

Topic 3

3.1

3.2

3.3

Work Methodology

[Insert here general guidelines on the work methodology to adopt, bearing in mind the Course Guide and the specificity of the curricular unit, namely:

> Number of student moderated forums in the curricular unit;
> Information about the organization of those forums;
> Subject-matter covered;
> Number of students in each forum;
> Teacher moderated forums: duration and objectives;
> Indications about the nature and objectives of the Formative Activities Plan proposed for the curricular unit].

Bibliography and Other Learning Resources

[Insert here indications about the bibliography and/or other learning resources to be used. Indicate how to access these resources: will they be made available by the teacher in the virtual classroom? Should they be bought by the students? Are they available on the web? etc.]

Required Bibliography

Optional Bibliography (if any)

Other Resources

Assessment

Continuous Assessment – Learning Card (CAP)

Assessment in this curricular unit is continuous and registered in each student's Learning Card.

This Learning Card, specific of this curricular unit, is a personalized device to which only the student has access.

Assessment is carried out through the elaboration of ... (insert here the number - 2 or 3) e-folios and one p-folio (when applicable).

The e-folio is a short digital document delivered electronically to the teacher. The p-folio is a complementary assessment instrument that is carried out in a face to face setting.

The marks obtained in the e-folios and, when it is used, in the p-folio are credited by the teacher in the student's learning card during the semester.

Calendar and Work Plan

This *Calendar* presents the temporal distribution of the various Topics/Contents and the respective work guidelines, so that you can plan, organize and develop your study. Here you will find information about when to deliver the e-folios and the dates for the teacher moderated forums, among other important aspects in your learning process. This information is complemented by orientations that you should consult regularly in your Virtual Classroom.

[An example of a possible Calendar and Work Plan is presented here. The column – **What is expected from the student** – is meant to provide all the specific guidelines that the teacher feels are relevant to guide the study and work of the students in the development of the topics. The example given here is merely illustrative].

MONTH 1

[October or March]	What is expected from the student
1st Week [..... to .....]	Start by consulting the guidelines given in the virtual classroom relatively to Topic 1: [...] [...] [work suggestions] [Exchange ideas with your colleagues in Forum 1] [...]
2nd Week [..... to .....]	[Perform the formative activities of Topic 1] [Compare your answers to the indications given in the text] [Discuss with your colleagues in Forum 1: present your point of view, explain what you did, express doubts, help and ask for help, if necessary.]
3rd Week [..... to .....]	[Participate in the Forum “Dúvidas 1” (Doubts 1) moderated by the teacher to get answers to your doubts or difficulties.]
4th Week [..... to .....]	[Consult the instructions in the Forum "Avaliação Contínua" (Continuous Assessment) relative to the elaboration of e-folio A.].

MONTH 2

[November or April]	What is expected from the student
1st Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
2nd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
3rd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
4th Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]

MONTH 3

[December or May]	What is expected from the student
1st Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
2nd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
3rd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
4th Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]

MONTH 4

[January or June]	What is expected from the student
1st Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
2nd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
3rd Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]
4th Week [..... to .....]	[...] [...]

ANNEX I
DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

Tutoring Plan Template

CURRICULAR UNIT:_____ **CODE:** _____

The Tutoring Plan describes in detail all the actions to be performed by the tutor in the curricular unit. The teacher of the curricular unit is responsible for its elaboration.

TUTORING PLAN

A) YOUR ROLE AS A TUTOR IN THE CURRICULAR UNIT
[Introduction by the teacher of the curricular unit]

1) Motivate the students
2) Answer students' doubts
2) Moderate discussion forums
3) Assess and grade the e-folios, p-folios and exams (when applicable)

B) YOUR ROLE AS A TUTOR DURING SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
[Description of the Tutor's actions according to the given items]

1) Welcome message
OBJECTIVE: Ensure that everyone knows the Curricular Unit Plan.
DATE: Opening day of the Curricular Unit.
TUTOR TASKS: Publish a Welcome Message in *PLACARD DE NOTÍCIAS* (News Forum). Briefly introduce yourself in this message.

2) Presentation of the Curricular Unit Plan [PUC]
OBJECTIVE: Garantir que todos conheçam o Plano da Unidade Curricular.
DATE: 1º dia de abertura da unidade curricular.
DURATION: A three-day discussion forum for answering any doubts is recommended.
TUTOR TASKS: Publish a message in *PLACARD DE NOTÍCIAS* (News Forum) announcing that the PUC is available; open the forum for answering doubts about the PUC – *DÚVIDAS GERAIS*(General Doubts). Publish a message in this forum clearly stating its objective. Answer any doubts the students may have about the PUC. A daily visit to the forum during the first week is recommended.

3) Opening of Topic 1
OBJECTIVE: Ensure that everyone has access to Topic 1.
DATE: _____
TUTOR TASKS: Open Topic 1. Publish a message in *PLACARD DE NOTÍCIAS* (News Forum) announcing this.

4) Make available the first document of the Formative Activities Plan [PAF].
OBJECTIVE: Provide the students with activities through which they can study and practice the contents and competencies to acquire/develop and perform self-assessment.
DATE: _____
TUTOR TASKS: Make available the document "Topic 1 – Formative Activities Plan". Publish a message in "Placard de Notícias" (News Forum) announcing this and providing the information needed for self-assessment.

5) (...)
6) (...)

WEEK	START / END	ACTIVITY	TUTOR ACTION (ALL EXPECTED TUTOR ACTIONS SHOULD BE DESCRIBED)
WEEK 1	X to Y	Beginning of the Semester. Start of the learning activities.	Publish welcome message, in which the tutor also introduces him or herself. Present the PUC to the students. Answer any doubts posted in the forum. Open Topic 1.
WEEK 2	X to Y	**Formative Activities 1**	Make available the Formative Activities 1. Publish a notice in the News Forum ("Placard de Notícias") calling students' attention to this.
WEEK 3	X to Y	Student Moderated Forum	Make available the answers to the Formative Activities 1 for self-assessment.
WEEK 4	X to Y	Student Moderated Forum	Organize and open the forums for students to discuss in group the answers to the Formative Activities.
WEEK 5	X to Y	Tutor Moderated Forum	Organize, open and moderate the forum "Dúvidas I" (Doubts 1)
WEEK 6	X to Y	***e- folio* A**	Organize the Learning Card ("Cartão de Aprendizagem") Forum. Publish a message in this forum with the instructions for the elaboration of e-folio A.
To fill in with the number of weeks of the semester(....)	(....)	(....)	(....)

ANNEX I

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

Advanced Planning Map

	MONTH 6	MONTH 5	MONTH 4
Coordinator	• Staff meeting to trigger the processes; • Creation of a Virtual Coordination Area; • Meeting with the teachers responsible for the curricular units for planning and organization; • Preparation and Agenda of the Familiarization Module and choice of tutors; • Selection of learning materials. When the materials to be designed involve the UMTE*, their planning and development will be performed with the member of the course team who articulates and coordinates with the respective service; • Tutor selection process triggered.	• Meeting with the Tutors; • Meeting with the Monitors of the Familiarization Module and beginning of its preparation; • Definition of the Patrons and develop ment of contacts with them;	• Tutor training process triggered;
Entire Team	• Staff meeting; • Articulation of the staff with the UMTE when materials to be designed involve that unit.		
Teacher	• Meeting of all the teachers responsible for the curricular units with the Coordinator, for planning and organization; • Beginning of the planning and the pedagogic design of the curricular unit; • Each teacher starts to elaborate the Curricular Unit Plan (PUC) and the Tutoring Plan for their curricular units.	• Continuing the elaboration of the Curricular Unit Plan (PUC) and the Tutoring Plano for the curricular unit.	• Beginning the implementation of the curricular units in the LMS (Learning Management System) and articulation with tutors; • Continuing the development of the Tutoring Plan.
Tutor		• Meeting with the Coordinator;	• Beginning of Tutor Training;
Monitor		• Meeting with the Coordinator; • Beginning of the preparation of the Familiarization Module	
Patron			

*Education Multimedia Telematies Unit

	MONTH 3	MONTH 2	MONTH 1	MONTH 0
Coordinator	• Allocation of Patrons; • Meeting with the Patrons;	• The Familiarization Module should now be ready under the supervision of the coordinator.	• Beginning of the Familiarization Module for all the students enrolled in the study program; • Meeting with the teachers. • Ensure that the curricular units are all ready and implemented in LMS, althought still not visible to students.	• Beginning of the semester.
Entire Team			• Meeting of the staff.	• Beginning of the semester.
Teacher	• Continuing the implementation of the curricular units in the LMS (Learning Management System) and articulation with tutors. • Continuing the development of the Tutoring Plan.	• Each teacher coordinates the tutors of their curricular unit, presenting the Tutoring Plan and addressing some teaching matters in a team work environment.	• All materials developed by the UMTE* should be tested and integrated in the LMS by the teachers of the curricular units; • Meeting with the coordinator • The curricular units should all be ready and implemented in the LMS, although still not visible to students.	• Beginning of the semester.
Tutor		• Work with the teacher of the curricular unit on the Tutoring Plan and on some teaching matters in a team work perspective.		• Beginning of the semester.
Monitor		• The Familiarization Module should now be ready under the supervision of the coordinator.	• Beginning of the Familiarization Module for all the students enrolled in the study program.	
Patron	• Information about classes allocated; • Meeting with the course coordination.			• Beginning of the semester.

* Education Multimedia Telematics Unit

ANNEX I

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE TO THE 1ST STUDY CYCLE

Study Program Guide Template

4

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN _____

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Universidade Aberta. The participation in the course you have selected will be an active process, where learning has been planned to try to ensure your success.

This Guide is your "information kit". It tells you **what** to do, **how** to do it and **when** to do it, as an online student in this undergraduate course. Therefore, read it carefully. The aim of this Guide is to give you important information about the objectives and practices of the undergraduate course in _____ [fill in with the name of the course] of Universidade Aberta.

2. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The undergraduate degree in _____ may be accomplished by combining the approval in_____as Major and in_____as Minors [description of the possible combinations leading to a undergraduate degree in this study program].

3. TARGET GROUP

The undergraduate degree in_____is directed _____

4. REQUIREMENTS

Besides the conditions stated above, the following are fundamental prerequisites for the admission to the undergraduate degree in _____

_____

5. CANDIDATURES

[Description of the admission procedures]

The schedule for **candidatures**[1], **admissions and matriculations**[2] is the following

_____

_____

[1] **INFORMATION AND CANDIDATURES**
Tel.
Fax:/ e-mail:

[2] **ADMISSION AND MATRICULATION**
Rua da Imprensa Nacional, n.º 102
1250-127 Lisboa
Tel. 21 3916588/6568/6579/
808200215/808216523 Fax 21 3970841

6. COMPETENCIES TO ACQUIRE

As a student, you are expected to have acquired or developed the following competencies by the end of the study program:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. TUITION

[Information about tuition]

8. DEGREE DIPLOMA

The undergraduate degree in _____ is certified by _____(diploma) and presupposes the attendance to and the approval in the curricular units that constitute the Major _____ and _____, totaling 180 ECTS credits.

9. STUDY PLANS

The study Program is constituted by semestral curricular units.

Each semester has a duration of 20 weeks, 5 of which are allocated to final assessment activities.

The semesters at Universidade Aberta follow the calendar below:

1st SEMESTER – from_____ to _____

2nd SEMESTER – from_____ to _____

Prior to the beginning of the curricular units of the 1st semester, students attend an **Online Familiarization Module**.

[Insert here a description of the study plan leading to the degree; the number of semesters; and any other information considered indispensable for students to know beforehand their study path; mention here any precedences].

MAJOR IN ....

[To adapt according to study plans and combinations; possibly replace by other organizational tables]

CURRICULAR UNIT	YEAR/SEMESTER	TOTAL WORKLOAD (HOURS)	ECTS

MAJOR IN....

[To adapt according to study plans and combinations; possibly replace by other organizational tables]

CURRICULAR UNIT	YEAR/SEMESTER	TOTAL WORKLOAD (HOURS)	ECTS

10. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The teaching and learning activities relative to the different curricular units are performed at a distance, in a virtual environment, using an e-learning platform.

The first semester is anticipated by an introductory module – Familiarization Module – held totally online, with the duration of X weeks. This module aims to familiarize you with the virtual environment and the elearning tools, and promote the acquisition of online communication skills and online social skills necessary to the building of a virtual learning community. Former Universidade Aberta's students who have already taken other online courses may be dispensed from attending this module.

This module takes place from _____ to_____ . Instructions on how to access the module will be sent to you.

11. THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

The undergraduate degree in ____ follows a pedagogical model specifically designed for online learning at Universidade Aberta.

This model is based on the following principles:

> Learner centered learning, which means students are active and responsible for knowledge building;

> Learning based on flexibility of access (contents and learning activities), without temporal or spatial constraints, according to students availability. This principle is translated in the primacy of asynchronous communication, allowing for non-coincidence in time and space, since communication and interaction happen when they are convenient for students, giving them time to read, process information, reflect and then respond or interact.

> Learning based on diversified interaction - teacher-students, students-students and students-learning resources – socially contextualized.

Based on these principles you will find four vital elements in your learning process:

THE VIRTUAL CLASS_The student integrates a virtual class where the teachers and the other students have access. The learning activities take place in the virtual space of each curricular unit throughout the semester, with resort to communication devices. There are two types of forums: student moderated forums and teacher moderated forums. Student moderated forums are workspaces for the class in which students interact about the subjects they are studying: aspects that may raise doubts, reflections that are shared, exchange of opinions on certain topics, comparison of the answers given to the activities, etc. Teacher moderated forums are meant to answer students' doubts and help them overcome difficulties that haven't been solved through the discussion among them.

These forums are opened by the teacher at predefined times. Communication is essentially asynchronous and written.

THE CURRICULAR UNIT PLAN (PUC)_The PUC is a document presented by the teacher at the beginning of the curricular unit meant to guide the students' learning process. It requires a careful reading and is valuable throughout the work in the UC. It contains information on the objectives of the curricular unit, the subjects and contents to study, the competencies to develop, the organization of the learning process, the learning resources, what is expected of you as a student, what you can expect from the teacher/tutor, and the assessment criteria.

THE FORMATIVE ACTIVITIES PLAN (PAF)_ To help students take advantage of the learning resources, the teacher will make available, at specific times, sets of activities together with guidelines on how students can verify if they have achieved the expected competencies in the contents they refer to. Difficulties in the resolution of these activities should be discussed with the classmates in the student moderated forums, so as to enable the sharing among all of the knowledge acquired. Difficulties and doubts that cannot be overcome will be dealt with in the teacher moderated forums.

THE LEARNING CARD (CAP)_ The learning card is a personal device that allows students to visualize at any time the grade they obtained in continuous assessment activities. During the learning process the teacher will solicit the elaboration of two or three e-folios (short digital documents). The elaboration and delivery of the e-folios corresponds to the continuous assessment performed electronically. The e-folios may be complemented by a p-folio performed in a face to face setting. The sum of the marks obtained in the e-folios and in the p-folio, when applicable, will constitute the grade in the curricular unit.

12. LEARNING AND STUDY TIME

Learning at a distance in a virtual class means you will not meet in the same place and at the same time with your teachers and colleagues, which will give your learning plenty of flexibility, since it is independent from the time and space both of teachers and of students.

You will have, naturally, to dedicate time to studying and learning. That is why for each curricular unit the number of effective working hours expected from you is defined, in terms of ECTS units.

You should take into account that each credit unit (1 ECTS) corresponds to 26 hours of effective work, according to Universidade Aberta's regulations concerning the implementation of the ECTS credit units system. This includes, for example, the reading of various documents, the performance of online and offline activities, the reading of messages, the elaboration of personal documents, the participation in asynchronous discussions and the work required for assessment and grading.

13. THE LEARNING RESOURCES

In the different curricular units you will be asked to work and study with the support of several learning resources, such as writen texts, books, web resources, learning objects, etc. in different formats. Although many of these resources are digital and made available online, in the context of the virtual class, there are others, like books, that you should purchase in a bookstore or ..... prior to the beginning of the curricular unit, so as to ensure the right learning conditions at the time you will need that resource.

[Insert the bibliographical references to be acquired by students prior to the beginning of the course. If they should do so at a specific location, add that information here.]

14. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment in each curricular unit is continuous and performed electronically through 2 or 3 e-folios that the students will elaborate according to the instructions given by the teacher/tutor. This can be complemented by a p-folio, which is an assessment activity performed in a face to face setting.

The number of e-folios and their marks, as well as the marks allocated to the p-folio, if there is one, are stated in the Curricular Unit Plan (PUC).

The grade of each e-folio and, when that is the case, of the p-folio, are registered in the student's learning card, to which only the student has access.

Approval in the study program requires approval in all its curricular units with a grade that cannot be inferior to 10 marks.

The formative activities made available for the students to perform during the curricular unit do not count for students' final grading.

15. PROGRAM COORDINATION

The undergraduate degree in _____ is coordinated by Professor___, _____ of Universidade Aberta, who is responsible for supervising its design and implementation, and also for performing its evaluation.

As a student, what can you expect from the course coordinator? The course coordinator (and the vice-coordinators, when the course has them) will support your learning process along the course, through a set of mechanisms, namely by:

a) organizing and coordinating an online familiarization module for students admitted to the program who have not previously taken a course at Universidade Aberta;
b) coordinating the organization of the different curricular units that compose the program and their general functioning;
e) articulating the pedagogical action of the program teaching team

16. TEACHING TEAM

Your learning process will be supported by a teaching team composed by the teachers responsible for the course's curricular units.

Prof. X _____

Prof. X _____

17. THE PATRON

In this course, besides teachers, your virtual class will be assisted by a Patron. This will be a former Universidade Aberta's student, whose function is to help you in matters of a non-academic nature. As a student who has already studied at our institution and has, therefore, a history with us and our practices, the Patron possesses a deep knowledge of Universidade Aberta's characteristics, functioning, rules and institutional culture, being thus able to effectively help you in various ways.

But the Patron is also someone who has already experienced what it is to be an online student, one who will understand you and sympathize with your perspective, helping you to integrate in this virtual context.

18. FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

This module takes place before the course and has a duration of X weeks. It is a practical module, focused on learning "how to do" things.

The aim of this module is to familiarize students with the characteristics of the online environment, promoting the acquisition of several competencies which ensure a successful online learning experience. Thus, by the end of this module, you should have:

> acquired skills in the use of the technological resources available in the online environment (know how to do);
> acquired confidence in the different modes of communication available in the virtual environment (know how to communicate), namely in asynchronous communication;
> acquired skills in different modes of online working and learning - self-learning, collaborative learning, resource-based learning;
> applied general Internet usage skills (communication, search, information management and evaluation) in the virtual environment where the course will take place; know how to use the communication tools, how to work in online groups, how to search for and consult information on the Internet);
> applied the rules of social interaction specific to communication in online environments (know how to relate).

19. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In case you need help or support concerning the technological environment in which the course takes place please contact service X. _____

20. SINOPSIS OF THE CURRICULAR UNITS

CURRICULAR UNIT A _____

CURRICULAR UNIT B _____

21. PROGRAM WEB ADDRESS (URL)

Indicate here the program web adress _____

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

ANNEX III

1_ Learning Contract
Template – Virtual Class

2_ Learning Contract
Template – Blended Class

3_ Study Program Guide
Template – Virtual Class

4_ Study Program Guide
Template – Blended Class

ANNEX II

DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

Learning Contract Template – Virtual Class

INTRODUTION

The *Learning Contract* is a specific instrument of Universidade Aberta's Pedagogical Model for all 2nd study cycle courses, both in the virtual class modality and in the blended class modality.

The *Learning Contract* will accompany you throughout the semester and serves as a "course map", not only for you as a student but also for the teacher, stating the responsibilities and duties of both. This Learning Contract describes the learning path proposed to you in the context of your virtual class. It is also a guide for the contents, the curricular unit structure, the activities to perform, the work methodology and assessment. It should thus be an element of frequent consultation.

I. EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

What is expected of you in the curricular unit .....?

[State here the expectations the teacher has concerning the curricular unit and students' action. Besides these expectations, also include the objectives for the curricular unit.].

II. COMPETENCIES TO DEVELOP

What are the competencies to develop in this curricular unit?

[Insert here the competencies that students should acquire or develop in this curricular unit].

III. CONTENTS

[Present here the topics/contents]

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

IV. METHODOLOGY OF ONLINE WORK

What work methodology are we going to adopt?

[The teacher of the curricular unit should explain the methodology to adopt according to the Pedagogical Model. It should be taken into consideration that the variant of the model for the 2nd study cycle defines the existence of independent learning periods combined with collaborative learning periods. This process implies that students follow a working path based on the resources provided and the organization/planning of times for diversified interactions, within the whole class, within small groups or with the teacher.]

V. LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Rresources are all the bibliographic materials required to support learning, whether available online or offline (texts, articles, books, e-books, learning objects, web sites, vídeos, podcasts, blogs, wikis, cd-roms, dvds, etc.).

(All bibliography to be used in the curricular unit should be indicated here. It should be made clear which items will be made available online by the teacher and those that have been indicated prior to the beginning of the semester to be acquired by students. All bibliography to be acquired previously by students should be indicated to the coordinator to be included in the Course Guide. One should bear in mind that students come from very diversified geographical areas and may need some time to acquire the items.)

The URLs (web addresses) of any web sites to be used should also be indicated in this Learning Contract.

Teachers may indicate complementary Learning Resources, if they so wish, for further study.

LIST OF LEARNING RESOURCES

VI. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Describe the design/configuration of the virtual class in this curricular unit, including resources available, such as a News Forum, for notices and announcements or a General Glossary, for example.

VII. SEQUENCE OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

[Describe fully and in detail all the activities to be performed during the semester, as well as their sequence. This sequence allows students to have a clear perception of what is asked of them in the curricular unit and juggle these demands with their personal and professional agendas. A possible format is given below as an example]

EXAMPLE A

Topic	Topic: Training of trainers
Activity	Activity 1
Duration	from x to y
Competencies to develop	Present well-founded arguments on different learning activation methods; reflect upon the trainer's action, etc....
Description	The activity has 2 parts: **A)** Self-learning based on the free exploration and analysis of the various activation methods presented in the Bibliographic Interactive Tool; **B)** Discussion: from 27 to 30 June The discussion with all the class members will be carried out in Forum Z and should focus on the following question: What is the importance of the trainer in designing the pedagogical plan for an online course?
Resources	Bibliographic Interactive Tool about Learning Activation Methods. This tool will be made available online at the beginning of the activity.
Assessment	The discussion will be assessed according to the criteria defined in this Learning Contract for the assessment of discussions in point X.

EXAMPLE B

Topic: x

Activity 1: Learning activation methods

from x to y

Objectives: Analyse different activaton methods; discuss the trainer's action; etc. ...

Description:

1º) Free exploration and analysis of the several activation methods presented in the bibliography;

Discussion between 27 and 30 June

2º) Discussion in this forum focused on the following question: Why is it important that the trainer, when designing the pedagogical plan for the course, is clearly aware of what needs to be done and worked, and defines in detail the following parameters: Student Participation, Online Organization, Calendar and Trainer's Action for all activities?

Learning Resources: Glossary on Activation Methods

Assessment: The discussion will be assessed according to the criteria defined for the assessment of Discussions specified below:

Topic: Z

Activity 2 _____ from x to y

Objectives:

Description:

Resources:

Assessment:

VIII. ASSESSMENT

[Learning assessment should be made explicit and described in detail, stating the assessment criteria for each activity (for example, the number of discussions assessed, their relative weight, the criteria to be used, etc.]

Example:

1) Participation in the 3 discussions (Discussion 1: Topic X_____ ; Discussion 2: Topic Y_____ Discussion 3: Topic Z_____ with, at least, X messages;

2) Presentation of a final assignment, consisting in: Elaboration of a report according to the variable of distance learning chosen – x, y, z, w

3) Etc...

GRADING

a) Participation in the discussions: 60% (12 marks)

b) Final assignment: (40%) (6 marks)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

I) ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSIONS

Description of the assessment criteria for discussions...

I I) ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Example: The final assignment should focus on the analysis of_____ The paper should have a maximum of 10 pages of written text (indicate if other formats are possible). The following assessment criteria will be used:

> clarifies and delimits the ambit of the analysis

> masters the concepts studied in the curricular unit and applied in the assignment;

> demonstrates capacity for questioning, reflecting and elaborating ideas based on the concepts and topics studied.

IX. CALENDAR

This Calendar presents the temporal distribution of the several Activities to be performed in this curricular unit during the semester. The map is organized in weeks. That does not mean that each activity will have that duration.

Note: Some adjustments may be made to accommodate for unexpected problems.

MONTH	WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM YOU	BIBLIOGRAPHY	ASSESSMENT
September	8 to 15					
September	16 to 22					
September	23 to 29					
October	30 to 5					
October	6 to 12					
October	13 to 19					
October	22 to 5					
November	6 to 12					
November	13 to 19					
November	20 to 29					
November						
December						
January						
January						
January						

ANNEX II
DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

Learning Contract Template – Blended Class

INTRODUTION

The *Learning Contract* is a specific instrument of Universidade Aberta's Pedagogical Model for all 2nd study cycle courses, both in the virtual class modality and in the blended class modality.

The *Learning Contract* will accompany you throughout the semester and serves as a "course map", not only for you as a student but also for the teacher, stating the responsibilities and duties of both. This Learning Contract describes the learning path proposed to you in the context of your blended class. It is also a guide for the contents, the curricular unit structure, the activities to perform, the work methodology and assessment. It should thus be an element of frequent consultation.

I. EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

What is expected of you in the curricular unit .....?

[State here the expectations the teacher has concerning the curricular unit and students' action. Besides these expectations, also include the objectives for the curricular unit.]

II. COMPETENCIES TO DEVELOP

What are the competencies to develop in this curricular unit?

[Insert here the competencies that students should acquire or develop in this curricular unit].

III. CONTENTS

[Present here the topics/contents]

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

IV. METHODOLOGY OF ONLINE WORK

1) Which work methodology are we going to adopt in the virtual environment?

[The teacher of the curricular unit should explain the methodology to adopt according to the Pedagogical Model. It should be taken into consideration that the variant of the model for the 2nd study cycle defines the existence of independent learning periods combined with collaborative learning periods. This process implies that students follow a working path based on the resources provided and the organization/planning of times for diversified interactions, within the whole class, within small groups or with the teacher.]

2) Which work methodology are we going to adopt in the face to face sessions?

[In case the face to face sessions adopt different methodologies from session to session, according to their objectives , a detailed description by session is recommended.].

V. LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Rresources are all the bibliographic materials required to support learning, whether available online or offline (texts, articles, books, e-books, learning objects, web sites, vídeos, podcasts, blogs, wikis, cd-roms, dvds, etc.).

(All bibliography to be used in the curricular unit should be indicated here. It should be made clear which items will be made available online by the teacher and those that have been indicated prior to the beginning of the semester to be acquired by students. All bibliography to be acquired previously by students should be indicated to the coordinator to be included in the Course Guide. One should bear in mind that students come from very diversified geographical areas and may need some time to acquire the items.)

The URLs (web addresses) of any web sites to be used should also be indicated in this Learning Contract.

Teachers may indicate complementary Learning Resources, if they so wish, for further study.

LIST OF LEARNING RESOURCES

VI. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Describe the design/configuration of the virtual class in this curricular unit, including resources available, such as a News Forum, for notices and announcements or a General Glossary, for example.

VII. SEQUENCE OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Describe fully and in detail all the activities to be performed during the semester, as well as their sequence. This sequence allows students to have a clear perception of what is asked of them in the curricular unit and juggle these demands with their personal and professional agendas. A possible format is given below as an example.

EXEMPLE A

Topic	Topic: Teacher Training
Activity	Activity 1
Decorre entre	from x to y
Competencies to develop	Present well-founded arguments on different learning activation methods; reflect upon the trainer's action, etc....
Description	The activity has 2 parts: **A)** Self-learning based on the free exploration and analysis of the various activation methods presented in the Bibliographic Interactive Tool; **B)** Discussion: from 27 to 30 June The discussion with all the class members will be carried out in Forum Z and should focus on the following question: What is the importance of the trainer in designing the pedagogical plan for an online course?
Resorces	Bibliographic Interactive Tool about Learning Activation Methods. This tool will be made available online at the beginning of the activity.
Assessment	The discussion will be assessed according to the criteria defined in this Learning Contract for the assessment of discussions in point X.

EXEMPLE B

Topic: x

Activity 1: Learning activation methods

from x to y

Objectives: Analyse different activaton methods; discuss the trainer's action; etc. ...

Description:

1º) Free exploration and analysis of the several activation methods presented in the bibliography;

Discussion between 27 and 30 June

2º) Discussion in this forum focused on the following question: Why is it important that the trainer, when designing the pedagogical plan for the course, is clearly aware of what needs to be done and worked, and defines in detail the following parameters: Student Participation, Online Organization, Calendar and Trainer's Action for all activities?

Learning Resources: Glossary on Activation Methods

Assessment: The discussion will be assessed according to the criteria defined for the assessment of Discussions specified below:

Topic: Z

Activity 2 _____ from x to y

Objectives:

Description:

Resources:

Assessment:

VIII. ASSESSMENT

[Learning assessment should be made explicit and described in detail, stating the assessment criteria for each activity (for example, the number of discussions assessed, their relative weight, the criteria to be used, etc.

Example:

1) Participation in the 3 discussions (Discussion 1: Topic X.....; Discussion 2: Topic Y.....; Discussion 3: Topic Z.....) with, at least, X messages;

2) Presentation of a final assignment, consisting in: Elaboration of a report according to the variable of distance learning chosen – x, y, z, w

3) Etc.....

GRADING

a) Participation in the discussions: 60% (12 marks)

b) Final assignment: (40%) (6 marks)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

I) ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSIONS

Description of the assessment criteria for discussions...

I I) ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Example: The final assignment should focus on the analysis of ... The paper should have a maximum of 10 pages of written text (indicate if other formats are possible). The following assessment criteria will be used:

> clarifies and delimits the ambit of the analysis

> masters the concepts studied in the curricular unit and applied in the assignment;

> demonstrates capacity for questioning, reflecting and elaborating ideas based on the concepts and topics studied.

IX. CALENDAR

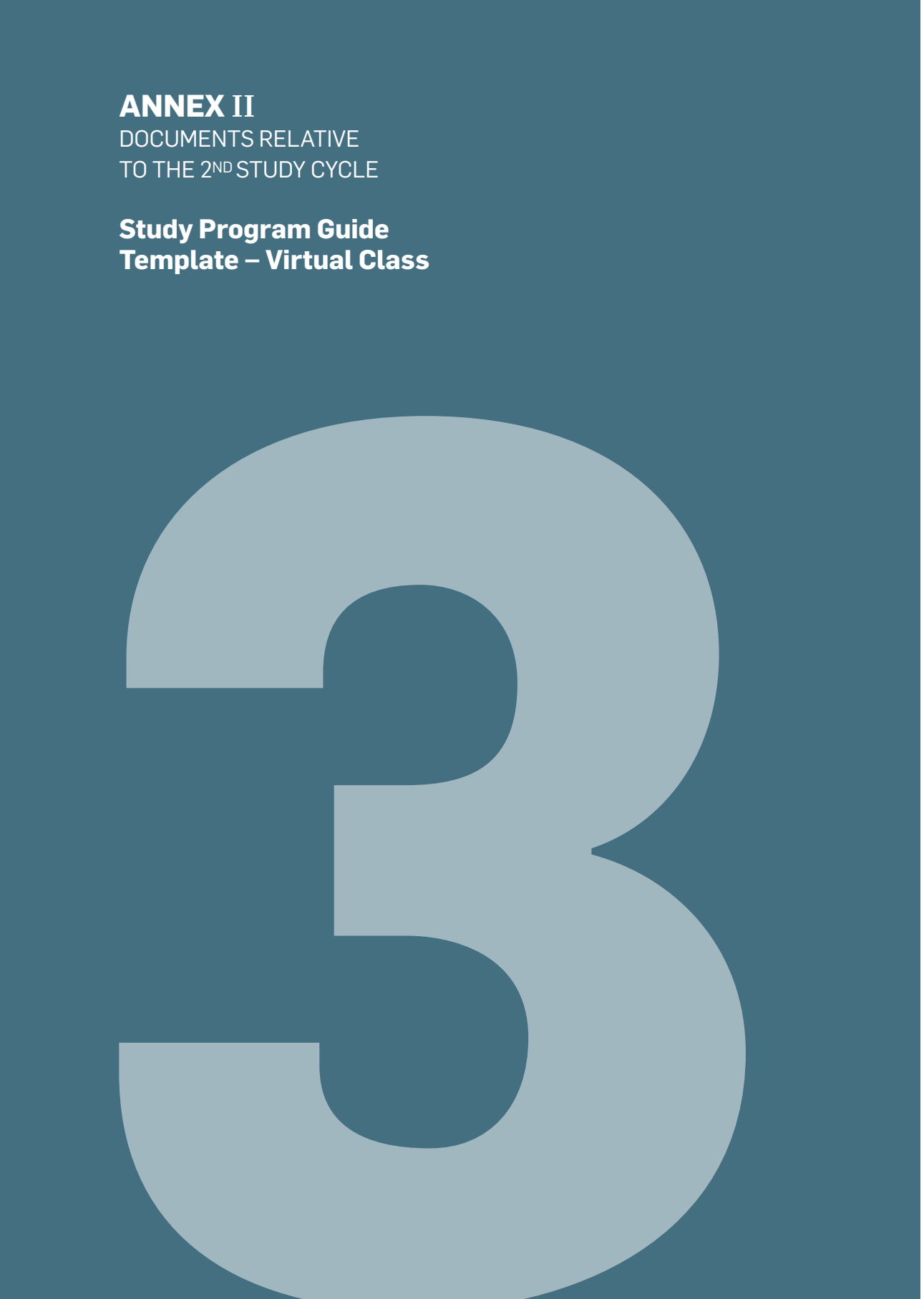
This Calendar presents the temporal distribution of the several Activities to be performed in this curricular unit during the semester. The map is organized in weeks. That does not mean that each activity will have that duration.

Note: Some adjustments may be made to accommodate for unexpected problems.

MONTH	WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM YOU	BIBLIOGRAPHY	ASSESSMENT
September	8 to 15					
September	16 to 22					
September	23 to 29					
October	30 to 5					
October	6 to 12					
October	13 to 19					
October	22 to 5					
November	6 to 12					
November	13 to 19					
November	20 to 29					
November						
December						
January						
January						
January						

ANNEX II
DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

Study Program Guide Template – Virtual Class



MASTER'S DEGREE IN _____

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Master's degree in _____! To participate in this course will be an active process, where individual and collaborative learning have been designed interdependently.

This Guide is your "information kit". It tells you **what** to do, **how** to do it and **when** to do it, as an online student in this course. Therefore, read it carefully. The aim of this Guide is to give you important information about the objectives and practices of the Master's degree in_____of Universidade Aberta.

2. THE CREATION OF THE MASTER'S DEGREE

Under proposal of the Scientific Council and according to the clause x) of article y of Decreto-Lei n.º _____, from_____ of (month) _____, (year), and the despacho n.º _____, of_____, published in Diário da República, and in the terms of the deliberation n.º _____ of the University Senate, in its session of _____ of_____200____, the 2nd study cycle course – Master's Degree in_____ at Universidade Aberta was created, and its Regulamentation published in Despacho n.º_____; D.R. nº_____ II Série de_____

3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS MASTER'S DEGREE

The Master's degree in _____has as main objectives to _____.

As a student, you are expected to have acquired or developed the following competencies by the end of this course:

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. TARGET GROUP

The Master's degree in _____is directed towards _____(...)

5. PRE-REQUISITES

Besides the conditions stated above, the following are fundamental prerequisites for the admission to this Master's degree

_____

_____

_____

6. CANDIDATURES

To formalize your candidature, you should _____ .

The candidates will be sorted according to the following criteria_____(...)

The schedule for **candidatures** [1] , **admissions** and **matriculations** [2] is the following:

Candidatures	
Evaluation of candidatures by the jury	
Response to the candidates	
Complaints	
Matriculations and admissions	
Beginning of the program	

The maximum number of admissions in the Master's degree in _____is X.

The percentage of vacancies allotted to _____is X.

7. TUITION

Tuition's value is _____ €, with the following distribution:

> Matriculation fee €

> Fee for the curricular year _____ €

> Fee for the 2nd year _____ €

> Dissertation fee _____ €

The fee for the curricular year can be paid in full at the time of registration or in three equal installments: the 1st at the time of registration and matriculation; the 2nd at the beginning of the 2nd trimester; and the third at the third trimester.

8. DEGREE DIPLOMA

The Master's degree in _____is certified through a magistral letter and presupposes the attendance and approval in all the curricular units that constitute the program, the elaboration of an original dissertation specifically written to this effect, which must be presented, defended and approved in a public session.

1 **INFORMATION AND CANDIDATURES**
Tel.
Fax:/ e-mail:

2 **ADMISSION AND MATRICULATION**
Rua da Imprensa Nacional, n.º 102
1250-127 Lisboa
Tel. 21 3916588/6568/6579/
808200215/808216523 Fax 21 3970841

9. DEGREE PLAN

The Master's degree in _____ is a 2nd study cycle program leading to a diploma of _____

It is divided in a curricular year, corresponding to the Program in_____ and a second year dedicated to the preparation, elaboration, presentation and defense of a dissertation.

The curricular component is organized in X semesters, each corresponding to _____ECTS credits, totaling the creditation of _____ECTS credits, totaling the creditation of _____ ECTS units.

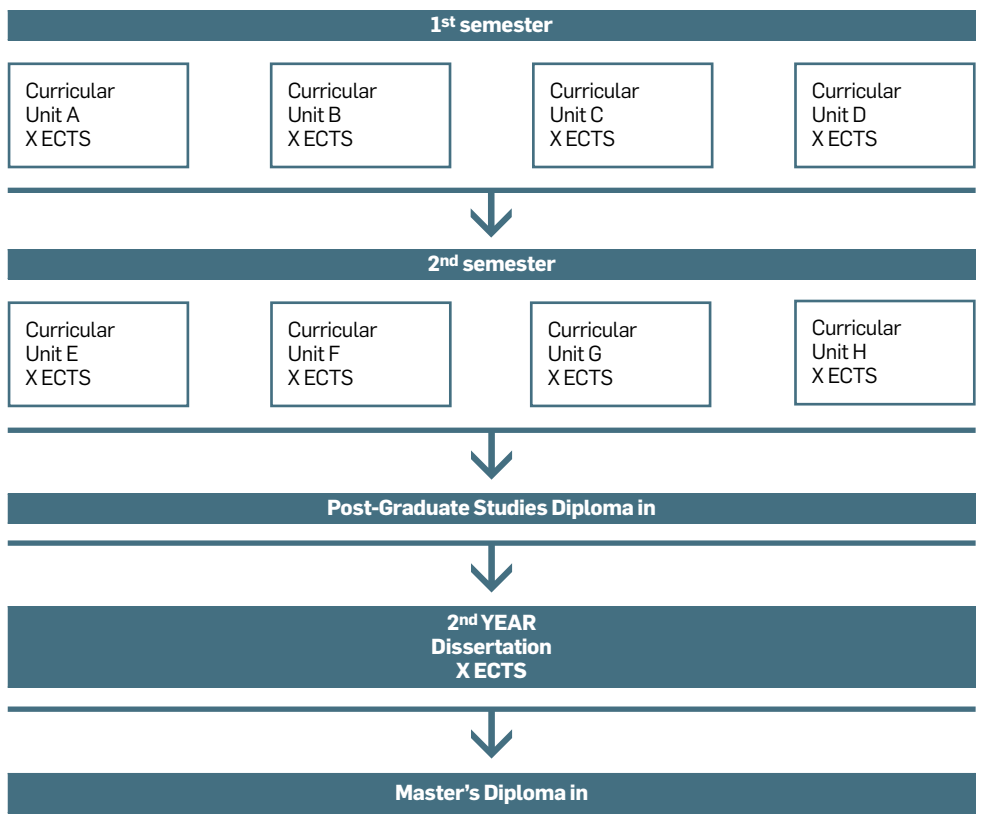
This first year is implemented in X semesters taught online only and in a sequence. Each semester is composed by X curricular units, totalling X curricular units.

Each semester has a duration of 20 weeks, being 5 of them allocated for final assessment activities. The two weeks traditionally reserved for Christmas holidays and the week reserved for Easter holidays are not included.

> 1st SEMESTER – from _____ a_____

> 2nd SEMESTER – from _____ a_____

ONLINE FAMILIARIZATION MODULE



Once approved in the curricular component, the student initiates the 2nd year, dedicated to the preparation, elaboration, presentation and defense of a dissertation, Project or Traineeship Report under the supervision of a Professor or of a Specialist, teacher in the course.

In no more than 30 days after the publication of the last assessment results of the curricular component, the student should deliver in the master secretariat the dissertation plan, the name of the supervisor and a letter by him/her confirming the acceptance of this supervision, which will be appraised by the program coordination team. The second part of the program should take place in the immediate following school year.

The study program is equivalent to X_____ ECTS credits, being _____ relative to the curricular component and _____to the preparation, elaboration and presentation of the dissertation.

10. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The curricular component of the program and the curricular units it includes are taught at a distance, in a totally virtual environment, through the use of an elearning platform (indicate other web tools if they are to be used).

The first semester is anticipated by an introductory module – Online Familiarization Module – held totally online, with the duration of 2 weeks. This module aims to familiarize you with the virtual environment and the elearning tools, and promote the acquisition of online communication skills and online social skills necessary to the building of a virtual learning community. Former Universidade Aberta's students who have already taken other online courses may be dispensed from attending this module.

This module takes place from _____to_____. Instructions on how to access the module will be sent to you.

11. THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

The Master's degree in _____follows a pedagogical model specifically designed for online learning at Universidade Aberta.

This model is based on the following principles:

> Learner centered learning, which means students are active and responsible for knowledge building;

> Learning based on flexibility of access (contents and learning activities), without temporal or spatial constraints, according to students availability. This principle is translated in the primacy of asynchronous communication, allowing for non-coincidence in time and space, since communication and interaction happen when they are convenient for students, giving them time to read, process information, reflect and then respond or interact.

> Learning based on diversified interaction - teacher-students, students-students and students-learning resources – socially contextualized.

Based on these principles you will find four vital elements in your learning process:

THE VIRTUAL CLASS_ The student integrates a virtual class where the teachers and the other students have access. The learning activities take place in the virtual space of each curricular unit throughout the semester, with resort to communication devices. This space is multi-functional and aggregates a series of resources, distributed by different collective work spaces where student-student and teacher-student interaction takes place. Communication is essentially asynchronous and written.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT_ The teacher of each curricular unit will propose the class a Learning Contract. All the work to be performed is described in this contract, organized and sequenced in activities previously designed, based both on independent and also on collaborative learning. The teacher schedules the times for independent learning, based on a variety of learning resources and tasks (documents, bibliography, research, analysis, evaluation, experimentation of tools, etc.) and times for diversified interaction in the virtual class (the whole class, small groups of students, teacher-students).

12. STUDY AND LEARNING TIMES

Learning at a distance in a virtual class means that you will not meet your colleagues or your teachers at the same place and at the same time. It is a kind of learning that gives you flexibility because it is independent from the time and place where you are.

You will, obviously, have to dedicate time to studying and learning. Thus, each curricular unit has defined the number of study hours and effective workload expected from you, expressed in ECTS units.

1 ECTS unit corresponds to 26 hours of effective work, according to the regulations regarding the ECTS Credit Units System at Universidade Aberta, which includes, for example, the reading of various documents, the performance of online and offline activities, the reading of messages, the elaboration of personal documents, the participation in asynchronous discussions, and the work required for assessment and grading.

13. LEARNING RESOURCES

You will be asked in the different curricular units to use several types of learning resources (articles, books, web resources, learning objects, (...) in various formats. Although some of these resources are in digital format and made available in the virtual class, others, like books and .... should be acquired by you (in online or offline bookstores, or through other means) before the beginning of the course, to ensure that you will have those resources when you need them to support your learning.

(Indicate here all bibliographic references to be acquired by the students prior to the beginning of the semester).

14. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment in the curricular units comprises two modalities:

> continuous assessment: 60%

> final assessment: 40%

Continuous assessment contemplates a diversified set of strategies and instruments, such as _____for example. Final assessment involves _____.

The successful completion of the curricular component of the course requires approval in all its curricular units with a grade of 10 or more marks.

15. PROGRAM COORDINATION

The Master's degree in ____is coordinated by Prof.(s)____, _____ of Universidade Aberta, responsible for supervising its design and implementation, and for performing its evaluation.

As a student, what can you expect from the coordinator? The coordinator (or vice-coordinator, if there is one) will support your learning process along the program through a set of pedagogic mechanisms, namely by:

a) coordinating and managing a virtual space dedicated to the pedagogic support of the students enrolled (Space X);

b) organizing and managing an Online Familiarization Module for the students admitted to the program who haven't previously attended any course in Universidade Aberta;

c) organizing and managing a Virtual Socialization space (Café) to function as an informal meeting place for students and teachers;

d) coordinating and organizing the different curricular units that compose the program and their general functioning;

e) operating the pedagogic articulation of the teaching team;

f) supporting students in the selection of the subjects leading to research for the dissertation.

Coordinator's e-mail address:

_____

_____

16. TEACHING TEAM

Your learning process will be supported by a teaching team formed by the teachers responsible for the program's curricular units. Below we present a short curricular note on each teacher.

Prof. X _____

Prof. Y _____

17. FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

This module takes place before the beginning of the program and has a duration of 2 weeks. It is a practical module, focused on learning "how to do" things.

The aim of this module is to familiarize students with the characteristics of the online environment, by promoting the acquisition of several competencies which ensure a successful online learning experience. Thus, by the end of this module, you should have:

> acquired skills in the use of the technological resources available in the online environment (know how to do);

> acquired confidence in the different modes of communication available in the virtual environment (know how to communicate), namely in asynchronous communication;

> acquired skills in different modes of online working and learning - self-learning, collaborative learning, resource-based learning);

> applied general Internet usage skills (communication, search, information management and evaluation) in the virtual environment where the course will take place; know how to use the communication tools, how to work in online groups, how to search for and consult information on the Internet);

> applied the rules of social interaction specific to communication in online environments (know how to relate).

18. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In case you need help or support concerning the technological environment in which the program takes place please contact service _____.

19. MASTER SECRETARIAT

The Master's degree in ____has a Secretariat with the following timetable ____and whose contact is :_____

20. STUDY PLAN

Curricular Unit	Semester	Total workload (hours)	ECTS
C. U. A			
C. U. B			
C. U. C			
C. U. D			
C. U. E			
C. U. F			
C. U. G			
C. U. H			

The Master's degree in____ for the____–____ School year has the following Study Plan:

21. BRIEF SINOPSIS OF THE CURRICULAR UNITS

CURRICULAR UNIT A _____

CURRICULAR UNIT B _____

CURRICULAR UNIT C _____

22. COURSE WEB ADDRESS

Indicate here the program web adress _____

ANNEX II
DOCUMENTS RELATIVE
TO THE 2ND STUDY CYCLE

Study Program Guide Template – Blended Class

4

MASTER'S DEGREE IN _____

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Master's degree in _____! To participate in this course will be an active process, where individual and collaborative learning have been designed interdependently.

This Guide is your "information kit". It tells you **what** to do, **how** to do it and **when** to do it, as an online student in this course. Therefore, read it carefully. The aim of this Guide is to give you important information about the objectives and practices of the Master's degree in_____of Universidade Aberta.

2. THE CREATION OF THE MASTER'S DEGREE

Under proposal of the Scientific Council and according to the clause x) of article y of Decreto-Lei n.º _____, from_____ of (month) _____, (year), and the despacho n.º _____, of_____, published in Diário da República, and in the terms of the deliberation n.º _____ of the University Senate, in its session of _____ of_____200____, the 2nd study cycle course – Master's Degree in_____ at Universidade Aberta was created, and its Regulamentation published in Despacho n.º_____; D.R. nº_____ II Série de_____

3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS MASTER'S DEGREE

The Master's degree in _____has as main objectives to _____.

As a student, you are expected to have acquired or developed the following competencies by the end of this course:

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. TARGET GROUP

The Master's degree in _____is directed towards _____(...)

5. PRE-REQUISITES

Besides the conditions stated above, the following are fundamental prerequisites for the admission to this Master's degree

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. CANDIDATURES

To formalize your candidature, you should _____ .

The candidates will be sorted according to the following criteria_____(...)

The schedule for **candidatures** [1] , **admissions** and **matriculations** [2] is the following:

Candidatures	
Evaluation of candidatures by the jury	
Response to the candidates	
Complaints	
Matriculations and admissions	
Beginning of the program	

The maximum number of admissions in the Master's degree in _____is X.

The percentage of vacancies allotted to _____is X.

7. TUITION

Tuition's value is _____ €, with the following distribution:

> Matriculation fee _____ €

> Fee for the curricular year _____ €

> Fee for the 2nd year _____ €

> Dissertation fee _____ €

The fee for the curricular year can be paid in full at the time of registration or in three equal installments: the 1st at the time of registration and matriculation; the 2nd at the beginning of the 2nd trimester; and the third at the third trimester.

8. DEGREE DIPLOMA

The Master's degree in _____is certified through a magistral letter and presupposes the attendance and approval in all the curricular units that constitute the course, the elaboration of an original dissertation specifically written to this effect, which must be presented, defended and approved in a public session.

1 **INFORMATION AND CANDIDATURES**
Tel.
Fax:/ e-mail:

2 **ADMISSION AND MATRICULATION**
Rua da Imprensa Nacional, n.º 102
1250-127 Lisboa
Tel. 21 3916588/6568/6579/
808200215/808216523 Fax 21 3970841

9. DEGREE PLAN

The Master's degree in _____ is a 2nd study cycle program leading to a diploma of _____

It is divided in a curricular year, corresponding to the Program in_____ and a second year dedicated to the preparation, elaboration, presentation and defense of a dissertation.

The curricular component is organized in X semesters, each corresponding to _____ECTS credits, totaling the creditation of _____ECTS credits, totaling the creditation of _____ ECTS units.

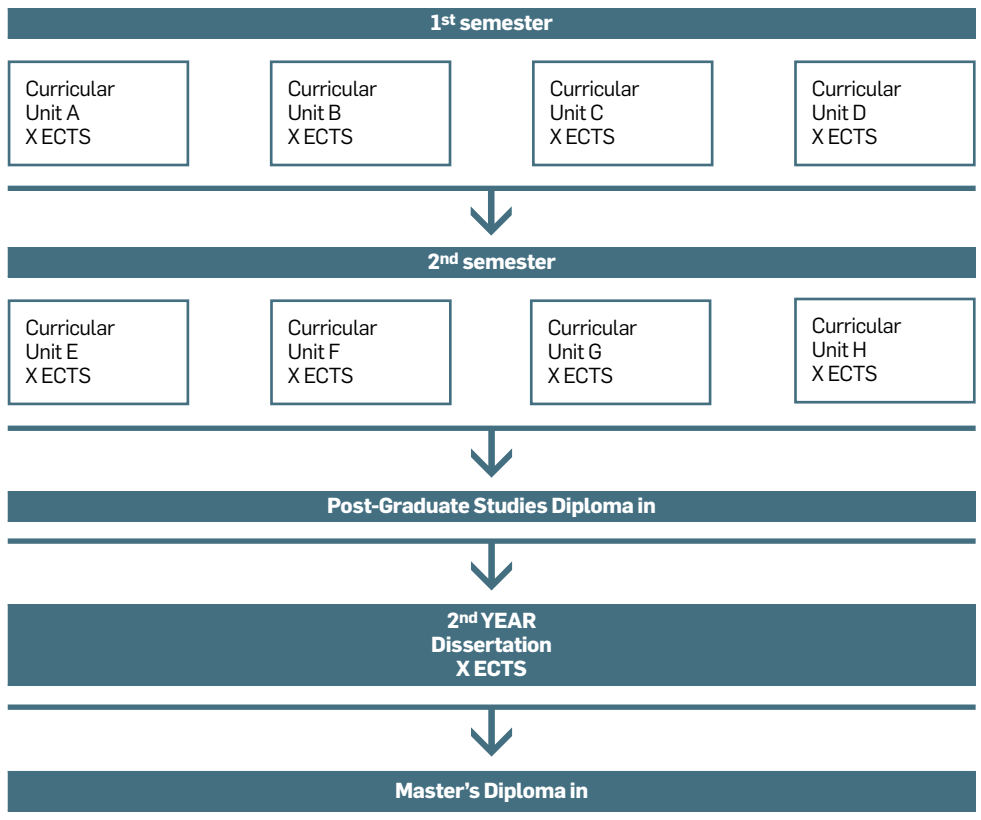
This first year is implemented in X semesters taught online only and in a sequence. Each semester is composed by X curricular units, totalling X curricular units.

Each semester has a duration of 20 weeks, being 5 of them allocated for final assessment activities. The two weeks traditionally reserved for Christmas holidays and the week reserved for Easter holidays are not included.

> 1st SEMESTER – from _____ a_____

> 2nd SEMESTER – from _____ a_____

ONLINE FAMILIARIZATION MODULE



Once approved in the curricular component, the student initiates the 2nd year, dedicated to the preparation, elaboration, presentation and defense of a dissertation, Project or Traineeship Report under the supervision of a Professor or of a Specialist, teacher in the course.

In no more than 30 days after the publication of the last assessment results of the curricular component, the student should deliver in the course secretariat the dissertation plan, the name of the supervisor and a letter by him/her confirming the acceptance of this supervision, which will be appraised by the coordination team. The second part of the course should take place in the immediate following school year.

The study program is equivalent to X_____ ECTS credits, being _____ relative to the curricular component and _____to the preparation, elaboration and presentation of the dissertation.

10. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The curricular component of the program and the curricular units it includes are taught at a distance, mainly online, through the use of an elearning platform (indicate other web tools if they are to be used), complemented by some face to face sessions. The course starts with a face to face session.

(Describe whether the course is organized according to the blended class model with A) distributed sessions or B) concentrated sessions. The exact dates of the face to face sessions should be given in this guide, along with the schedule by curricular unit, time and place).

Blended class with distributed sessions	Sessions dates	Time and place
Inicial face to face session		
Curricular unit X	23.11.2008	10:30	13:00 Coimbra (R. X, sala)
Curricular unit Y		
Curricular unit Z		
Curricular unit K		
Curricular unit W		

or

Blended class with distributed sessions	Datas das sessões	Time and place
Inicial face to face session		
Curricular unit X	From 26.11.2007 to 30.11.2007	Form yh to X h Lisbon (R. X, room)

11. THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

The Master's degree in _____follows a pedagogical model specifically designed for online learning at Universidade Aberta.

This model is based on the following principles:

> Learner centered learning, which means students are active and responsible for knowledge building;

> Learning based on flexibility of access (contents and learning activities), without temporal or spatial constraints, according to students availability. This principle is translated in the primacy of asynchronous communication, allowing for non-coincidence in time and space, since communication and interaction happen when they are convenient for students, giving them time to read, process information, reflect and then respond or interact.

> Learning based on diversified interaction - teacher-students, students-students and students-learning resources – socially contextualized.

Based on these principles you will find four vital elements in your learning process:

THE VIRTUAL CLASS_ The student integrates a virtual class where the teachers of the course and the other students have access. The learning activities take place mostly in the virtual space of each curricular unit throughout the semester, with resort to communication devices. This space is multi-functional and aggregates a series of resources, distributed by different collective work spaces where student-student and teacher-student interaction takes place. Communication is essentially asynchronous and written. The face to face sessions in this course are (concentrated or distributed) in the semester.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT_ The teacher of each curricular unit will propose the class a Learning Contract. All the work to be performed is described in this contract, organized and sequenced in activities previously designed, based both on independent and also on collaborative learning. The teacher schedules the times for independent learning, based on a variety of learning resources and tasks (documents, bibliography, research, analysis, evaluation, experimentation of tools, etc.) and times for diversified interaction in the virtual class (the whole class, small groups of students, teacher-students).

12. STUDY AND LEARNING TIMES

Learning at a distance in a virtual class means that you will not meet your colleagues or your teachers at the same place and at the same time. It is a kind of learning that gives you flexibility because it is independent from the time and place where you are.

You will, obviously, have to dedicate time to studying and learning. Thus, each curricular unit has defined the number of study hours and effective workload expected from you, expressed in ECTS units.

1 ECTS unit corresponds to 26 hours of effective work, according to the regulations regarding the ECTS Credit Units System at Universidade Aberta, which includes, for example, the reading of various documents, the performance of online and offline activities the reading of messages, the elaboration of personal documents, the participation in asynchronous discussions, and the work required for assessment and grading.

13. LEARNING RESOURCES

You will be asked in the different curricular units to use several types of learning resources (articles, books, web resources, learning objects, ……,….., …) in various formats. Although some of these resources are in digital format and made available in the virtual class, others, like books and …. should be acquired by you (in online or offline bookstores, or through other means) before the beginning of the course, to ensure that you will have those resources when you need them to support your learning.

(Indicate here all bibliographic references to be acquired by the students prior to the beginning of the semester).

14. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment in the curricular units comprises two modalities:

> continuous assessment: 60%

> final assessment: 40%

Continuous assessment contemplates a diversified set of strategies and instruments, such as _____, for example. Final assessment involves _____.

The successful completion of the curricular component of the course requires approval in all its curricular units with a grade of 10 or more marks

15. PROGRAM COORDINATION

The Master's degree in _____is coordinated by Prof.(s) _____, of Universidade Aberta, responsible for supervising its design and implementation, and for performing its evaluation.

As a student, what can you expect from the coordinator? The coordinator (or vice-coordinator, if there is one) will support your learning process along the program through a set of pedagogic mechanisms, namely by:

a) ccoordinating and managing a virtual space dedicated to the pedagogic support of the students enrolled (Space X);
b) organizing and managing an Online Familiarization Module for the students admitted to the program who haven't previously attended any course in Universidade Aberta;
c) organizing and managing a Virtual Socialization space (Café) to function as an infomal meeting place for students and teachers;
d) coordinating and organizing the different curricular units that compose the program and their general functioning;
e) operating the pedagogic articulation of the teaching team;
f) supporting students in the selection of the subjects leading to research for the dissertation.

Coordinator's e-mail address:

_____

_____

16. TEACHING TEAM

Your learning process will be supported by a teaching team formed by the teachers responsible for the program's curricular units. Below we present a short curricular note on each teacher.

Prof. X _____

Prof. Y _____

17. FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

This module takes place before the course and has a duration of 2 weeks. It is a practical module, focused on learning "how to do" things.

The aim of this module is to familiarize students with the characteristics of the online environment, by promoting the acquisition of several competencies which ensure a successful online learning experience. Thus, by the end of this module, you should have:

> acquired skills in the use of the technological resources available in the online environment (know how to do);

> acquired confidence in the different modes of communication available in the virtual environment (know how to communicate), namely in asynchronous communication;

> acquired skills in different modes of online working and learning - self-learning, collaborative learning, resource-based learning);

> applied general Internet usage skills (communication, search, information management and evaluation) in the virtual environment where the course will take place; know how to use the communication tools, how to work in online groups, how to search for and consult information on the Internet);
> applied the rules of social interaction specific to communication in online environments (know how to relate).

18. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In case you need help or support concerning the technological environment in which the program takes place please contact service X. _____.

19. MASTER SECRETARIAT

The Master's degree in _____has a Secretariat with the following timetable _____and whose contact is _____

20. STUDY PLAN

The Master's degree in____ for the____–____ School year has the following Study Plan:

Curricular Unit	Semester	Total workload (hours)	ECTS
C. U. A			
C. U. B			
C. U. C			
C. U. D			
C. U. E			
C. U. F			
C. U. G			
C. U. H			

21. BRIEF SINOPSIS OF THE CURRICULAR UNITS

CURRICULAR UNIT A _____

CURRICULAR UNIT B _____

CURRICULAR UNIT C _____

22. PROGRAM WEB ADDRESS

Indicate here the program web address _____

Data de edição_ Universidade Aberta 2008©
Design_ Atelier Henrique Cayatte
com Paula Cabral | Pedro Gonçalves
Pré-Impressão e Impressão_ Europress
Tiragem_ 1000 exemplares
ISBN_ 978-972-674-534-1
Depósito legal_ 277569/08