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RECOGNITION IN PORTUGAL OF USJ'S DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF PORTUGAL (UCP) OR OTHER PORTUGUESE UNIVERSITIES

A university degree or diploma attests to the level of education of its holder and as such may be required by an employer or by another higher institution of higher education when enrolling for further studies. In principle, a diploma should be self-sufficient. However, the great difference in quality between institutions, the enormous number of institutions of higher education in the world today, the mobility of academics, and the not infrequent falsification of credentials have led countries to produce legislation regarding the recognition of degrees and diplomas.

For the better guidance of USJ's alumni who would like to obtain recognition of their degrees and diplomas in Portugal, we have collected the information below.

THE SIGNATURES ON USJ'S DIPLOMAS

1. The diplomas for the University of Saint Joseph's (USJ) degree granting programmes are signed by the Rector of USJ, by the Rector of the Catholic University of Portugal and, in the cases of master and doctoral programmes, also by the Chancellor of USJ. This procedure is set out in USJ's Charter, which was initially the Charter of the Instituto Interuniversitário de Macau (see Portaria do Governo de Macau n.º 207/96, 12 de Agosto). Article 7 of the Charter reads as follows: "The academic degrees and professional diplomas granted by IIUM are equivalent (*homólogos*) to those conferred by the Catholic University of Portugal and automatically recognized by [UCP]".
2. When the administration of Macao was transferred to China, in 1999, a new legal situation came into being, compounded shortly afterwards by the adoption by Portugal of the requirements of the Bologna Agreement. Since then, UCP can no longer confer degrees in another institution, much less when it is in a foreign territory, neither can it "automatically" recognize degrees granted by another university. Under the Bologna Agreement, academic degrees in the European Union require accreditation by a national accreditation agency, and these accredited degrees cannot be passed on or attributed to programmes taught outside the institution and the campus for which accreditation and registration of the programme were granted (see art. 45-B of Decreto-Lei n.º 74/2006, altered by Decreto-Lei n.º 65/2018).
3. Nevertheless, the Rector of UCP continues to sign USJ's diplomas. But now she does so as vice-chair of the Catholic Foundation for Higher Education, title-holder or owner of USJ. And as head of a prestigious university and permanent member of the Foundation, she is particularly responsible for overseeing the quality of USJ's academic provision.

RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS IN PORTUGAL

1. The issue of recognition in Portugal of academic degrees and higher education diplomas conferred by foreign higher education institutions has been addressed, from 1 January 2019, by [Decreto-Lei n.º 66/2018, de 16 de agosto](#), the application of which was regulated by [Portaria n.º 33/2019, de 25 de janeiro](#). There are now three types of possible recognition, depending on origin of the diploma and the objectives of the applicant:
 - a. **Automatic recognition** – Provides full recognition but covers the degrees and diplomas only of those countries and regions listed by the [Commission for the](#)



[Recognition of Foreign Degrees and Diplomas](#). Macao and the degrees and diplomas of its higher education institutions are still not on that list. To be entered on the list, Macao will have to satisfy the requirements and standards of higher education in Portugal (as it has begun to do by changing its relevant law and regulations) and then negotiate an agreement between governments and relevant departments.

- b. **Recognition of level** (i.e. recognition that a Bachelor of Education, in Macao, is at the level of a *Grau de Licenciatura*, in Portugal) – Is a declaration that the degree or diploma of the applicant is at the same academic level as a similar degree or diploma in the Portuguese education system. The request for recognition is submitted to an institution that grants an equivalent degree or diploma in the same academic field. When a similar request has been submitted before to the same Portuguese institution, *recognition of level can be granted on the basis of precedent*, so long as all the following premises are true:
- i. The degree or diploma was granted by the same foreign institution, in the same country or region as the previous request;
 - ii. The programme has the same name as that of the previous request;
 - iii. The foreign degree or diploma has the same name as that of the previous request;
 - iv. The duration and number of credits of the programme are identical to those of the previously request.
- c. **Specific recognition** (i.e. that a Bachelor of Education, in Macao, is equivalent to a *Licenciatura em Educação*, at UCP) – Declares that the form and content of the degree or diploma is comparable. Assessment is made, on a case by case basis, of a degree or diploma in a given area of formation, specialty, or branch of knowledge, to confirm that they are of the same level and content as the equivalent degree or diploma of the institution being asked to provide the recognition. So, the request must be made to an institution which confers a degree or diploma in the same field of studies. To receive this type of recognition the applicant may be required to undergo a written or oral assessment. Special conditions are in place for programmes of 300 to 360 ECTS credits.

CONCLUSION

1. As Macao and its higher education system is not listed for automatic recognition of degrees by the Portuguese Commission for the Recognition of Foreign Degrees and Diplomas, requests have to be submitted to a university in Portugal.
2. USJ is working with UCP to set up a permanent working relationship for the recognition of degrees and diplomas, so that applicants from USJ may, in the not too distant future, find procedures streamlined. This will involve UCP assessing and receiving regular updates on active degree granting programmes at USJ, so it can provide rapid **recognition of level** and **specific recognition** when requested.
3. The same may be undertaken with other higher education institutions which could usefully provide **specific recognition** for USJ degrees and diplomas, if their degrees and diplomas are more prestigious in a particular area or if UCP does not provide an equivalent programme to one being run at USJ.