

# Building a Framework Based on European Quality Standards for Prevention and E-learning to Evaluate Online Training Courses in Prevention

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**Citation** | Henriques, S., Broughton, N., Teixeira, A., Burkhart, G., Miovský, M. (2019). Building a Framework Based on European Quality Standards for Prevention and E-learning to Evaluate Online Training Courses in Prevention. *Adiktologie*, 19(3), 153–161; doi 10.35198/01-2019-003-0004.

**SUMMARY:** Prevention practitioners are required to develop their skills and competencies in response to recent advances in prevention science. It is thus important to develop training programmes which ensure the development of a prevention workforce. Aiming to respond to this need, the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention is based on the European Universal Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) and delivered online. In view of this being the first online course based on the EUPC, the absence of training programmes for prevention practitioners in Portugal, and the significance of international guidelines in these two domains (prevention and online distance learning), it was considered important

to create a framework which supports the evaluation and monitoring of the course. This paper presents a framework for the evaluation of the specialised training course in prevention based on two models: the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards, and the adaptation of the European Standards and Guidelines to digital programmes and courses – Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision. Given the importance of quality assurance in contemporary society, the framework presented in this paper is a tool that may be useful for evaluating other online distance learning programmes which focus on the professional development of prevention practitioners.

**Keywords** | Prevention Professionals – Addiction Prevention Training Course – Quality Standards – Framework for Evaluation

Submitted | 14 May 2019

Accepted | 20 April 2020

**Grant affiliation** | This article is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as project GA ČR P407 no. 19-14801S “Minority stress in non-heterosexuals in the Czech Republic” and also by the project “Sustainability for the National Institute of Mental Health”, under grant number LO1611, with financial support from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports of the Czech Republic under the NPU I programme.

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## ● 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Prevention practitioners are required to develop their skills and competencies in response to recent advances in prevention science. In the United States, Price (1983) was one of the first authors to comment on prevention training and education. According to Price, prevention science has four core domains: problem analysis, innovation design, field trials, and innovation diffusion. The latest European report highlighted that there has been an increase in training initiatives throughout its countries (EMCDDA, 2018). In Portugal, a recent report recognised the need for institutions to make a greater effort to coordinate, integrate, and cooperate in order to fill training gaps and needs (SICAD, 2018). Other work has identified that prevention practitioners come from diverse scientific backgrounds such as psychiatry, psychology, medicine, nursing, social work, and sociology, but they do not have specialised training in prevention interventions and research (Henriques, Burkhart, & Miovsky, 2019; Henriques, Silva, & Hsu, 2018).

In this case, it is important to develop training programmes which ensure the development of a prevention workforce. Aiming to respond to this need, the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention is based on the European Universal Prevention Curriculum<sup>1</sup> (EUPC) and delivered online (further details about the process in Henriques, Burkhart, & Miovsky, 2019). In view of this being the first online course based on the EUPC, the absence of training programmes for prevention practitioners in Portugal, and the significance of international guidelines in these two domains (prevention and online distance learning), it was considered important to create a framework which supports the evaluation and monitoring of the course. A member of ICUDDR, a member of the EMCDDA, and the coordinator of the training course conducted the evaluation study.

This paper presents a framework for the evaluation of the specialised training course in prevention based on two models: the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EMCDDA, 2011), and the adaptation of the European Standards and Guidelines (ENQA, 2015) to digital programmes and courses – Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision (ENQA, 2018). Given the importance of quality assurance in contemporary society, the framework presented in this paper is a tool that may be useful for evaluating other online distance learning programmes which focus on the professional development of prevention practitioners.

### 1.1 Quality assurance

Quality management systems have developed rapidly over the past century (Hellman & Liu, 2013). Technological innovations have led to the adaptation and advancements of

theories and practices across all domains of daily life – business organisations, professional classes, and teaching and learning processes.

The concept of quality is complex, polysemic, and subjective. The American Society for Quality (ASQ, 2019, s.p.) defines it as:

“...a subjective term for which each person or sector has its own definition. In technical usage, quality can have two meanings: (1) The characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied need; (2) A product or service free of deficiencies ... fitness for use ... conformance to requirements.”

The European Social Survey (ESS, 2012, p. 25) with Eurostat defines quality, on the basis of the ISO definition (ISO 9001:2015, 3.6.2) as:

“...the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements. Quality is a multi-faceted concept. The dimensions of quality that are considered most important depend on user perspectives, needs and priorities, which vary across groups of users. Several statistical organisations have developed lists of quality dimensions...”

Quality may also be defined as the essential or distinctive property, characteristic, or attribute that makes differentiation possible. That has led to the alternative definition of quality as distinctiveness (Miranda & Teixeira, 2005), which is particularly effective in education.

Quality assurance is any systematic process of determining whether a product or service meets specified requirements, as well as stated or implied needs or expectations. It establishes and maintains set requirements for developing or manufacturing reliable products. A quality assurance system is meant to increase customer confidence and a company’s credibility, while also improving work processes and efficiency, and it enables a company to compete better with others (Hellman & Liu, 2013). Quality assurance has two main roles and there are tensions between them; they are the means of accountability and the route to quality improvement (Butcher & Wilson-Strydom, 2013) and enhancement.

A more extensive definition of quality assurance in digital formats of education, particularly e-learning, can be found in the ISO/IEC 40180:2017 standard.

### 1.2 European quality standards for prevention

The EMCDDA (2011, p.25) defines quality standards as:

“Generally accepted principles or sets of rules for the best/most appropriate way to implement an intervention. Frequently they refer to structural (formal) aspects of quality assurance, such as environment and staff composition. However, they may also refer to process aspects such as

adequacy of content, process of the intervention or evaluation processes ... Quality standard: A benchmark that helps judge whether an activity, a provider, etc. represents high quality. Quality standards are typically based upon professional consensus. Their main focus is on structural and procedural aspects of quality assurance, e.g. evaluation, staff composition and competencies, participant safety, etc.”

Professional consensus and general acceptance of the European standards rely on the international team involved in their systematisation, the contributions of other professionals in the field, and the collaboration with major documents and official bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Thus, they provide a robust European framework on how to conduct high-quality drug prevention, which must be: relevant (focused on fulfilling the needs of participants, while making reference to relevant policy); ethical (incorporating principles such as ensuring voluntary participation and providing real benefits for participants); evidence-based (making use of the best available scientific evidence); effective (achieving set goals and objectives without causing harm), and feasible (achievable with the available resources, and marked by a logical and coherent approach) (EMCDDA, 2011, pp. 25–26).

Furthermore, the EMCDDA states that “the standards can be used to inform the development of prevention strategies, to assess and develop organizations providing prevention services, or as a reference framework in professional development” (EMCDDA, 2011, p. 12). For the focus of this paper, the point related to professional development is the most relevant. The prevention standards are a tool which provides supporting materials, training and education for a wide range of drug professionals, and the accreditation of model programmes (EMCDDA, 2011, p. 13).

Prevention can therefore be conceptualised as strategies which help young people to adjust their behaviour, skills, and wellbeing in areas where they may be influenced by many factors, such as social norms, interaction with peers, living conditions, and their own personality traits (EMCDDA, 2011; Burkhart & Simon, 2015; Simon & Burkhart, 2015). These strategies have different foci, as can be seen in the quote below (EMCDDA, 2011, p. 19; Foxcroft, 2014):

“Environmental prevention strategies target social norms, universal prevention targets skills development and interaction with peers and social life, selective prevention focuses on living and social conditions, and indicated prevention facilitates dealing and coping with individual personality traits and psychopathology.”

### 1.3 Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision

The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are appropriate for use in quality assurance processes for e-learning. More recently, the developments and challeng-

es related to alternative learning and teaching methods – which are increasing as a result of advances in information and communication technology – have been emphasising the need to develop non-traditional methodologies for evaluating these non-traditional forms of education. The Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision (ENQA, 2018) are the result of this effort, produced by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education working group.

As the Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision (ENQA, 2018) address the design of e-learning courses, we chose to use these guidelines as the basis for our framework for evaluating the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention. The Considerations were also chosen because they are the result of an intensive discussion process involving relevant experts and stakeholders in Europe, as well as the outcomes of international research.

Higher education institutions are increasingly concerned with quality assurance in relation to teaching, learning, and assessment. There are various reasons behind this, including “growing massification, to the increase of educational offers and to the loss of confidence in” higher education institutions (Fonte & Teixeira, 2018, p. 9). Thus, improving standards in higher education institutions requires a systematic, critical, and continuous analysis of the data and information collected through students, professors, stakeholders, and wider society, as well as research findings.

Standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of e-learning programmes, and also for the higher education institutions offering them, do not prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented. Instead they provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for ensuring high-quality learning environments, research, and innovation in higher education (ENQA et al., 2015, p. 7):

“At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement ... A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution’s activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement).”

Higher education institutions are increasingly integrating e-learning into their teaching (Gaebel & Zhang, 2018; Dias et al., 2015). There is great diversity among institutions, programmes, and approaches to e-learning, as well as quality assurance procedures (ENQA, 2018; Dias et al., 2015). This diversity results in difficulties with e-learning terminology and conceptual definitions.

Technological and pedagogical innovations in this dynamic field mean that definitions are regularly revised and adapted to reflect new realities. For this article, the most fitting defi-

dition is that of an online course<sup>2</sup> (ENQA, 2018, p. 4; Bates, 2017), which is facilitated through the use of ICT and the internet and includes open educational resources (OERs). The Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention best fits the definition of Open Distance Education; that is (according to OPC, 2018 in Fonte & Teixeira, 2018, p. 7)

“... a combination of the traditions of knowledge sharing and the 21st century technology, in order to create a vast pool of openly shared educational resources, while harnessing today’s collaborative spirit to develop educational approaches that are more responsive to learner’s needs ... Encompasses resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide ...; and ... seeks to scale educational opportunities by taking advantage of the power of the internet, allowing rapid and essentially free dissemination, and enabling people around the world to access knowledge, connect and collaborate.”

Furthermore, the ENQA (2018, p. 5) argues that

“...e-learning components present opportunities for students to use personalised and flexible (in time and place) paths, while ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The presentation of content can be more flexible than in traditional classroom-based environments, exploiting online information sources as well as video and audio channels. Nonetheless, sometimes personalised and flexible (or innovative) elements in e-learning are not easily understandable in a rigid and overly regulated context. It is important to note that e-learning is a very dynamic and innovative field of learning.”

## ● 2 DISCUSSION OF A FRAMEWORK

When designing a framework for evaluating the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention, we combined two models for European standards: one for prevention and one for e-learning. The main characteristics of these models are presented in this paper and now we shall discuss how they work together for assessing the quality of the programme.

**2** | Online courses are a form of distance education where the primary delivery mechanism is the internet. They can be delivered synchronously or asynchronously. All teaching and guidance is conducted at a distance. In synchronous online courses, students and an instructor participate at the same time, but at separate locations and not on an institutional campus. These courses may be delivered by video conferencing, web conferencing, audio conferencing, etc. In asynchronous courses, students are not required to participate in sessions at the same time as the instructor. These may be print-based courses or online courses using a learning management system, for instance. Another method of providing distance and online education is the use of Open Educational Resources (OER); these are materials that are offered freely for use by teachers and learners, i.e. without financial cost and with few or no restrictions on how the material may be adapted and reused (ENQA, 2018, p. 4; Bates, 2017).

## 2.1 Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention

The Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention is based on the EUPC<sup>3</sup> and delivered online by Universidade Aberta (UAb). It is the only public distance education university in Portugal and is a member of the International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR) as an ‘education provider’.

This training delivery model achieves good geographical coverage, particularly in remote areas, extending beyond the scope of traditional universities’ reach. Therefore, it may be particularly useful for: 1) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for professionals already working in this field or related ones, and 2) countries with a large territorial area, particularly in the Portuguese-speaking world.

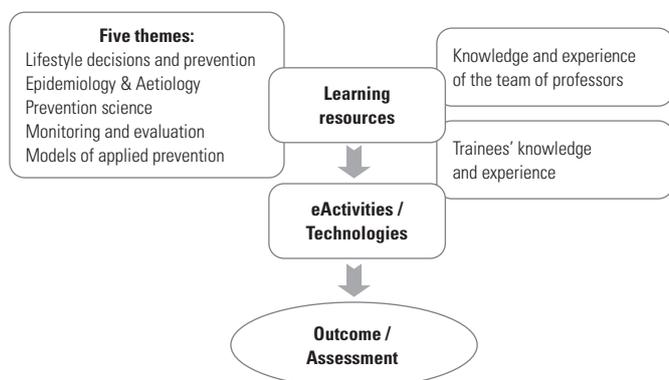
The teaching and learning activities of the programme proceed asynchronously using UAb’s virtual learning environment. This is based on a Moodle e-learning platform, complemented by other digital environments and tools typical of Web 2.0 and 3.0. The programme design is based on the principles and guidelines established in the Virtual Pedagogical Model<sup>4</sup> specifically created for online teaching and learning at UAb.

The Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention is worth ten credits for the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). It is aimed at graduates of the social area with professional roles or interests in health education, particularly in prevention. It is especially appropriate for coordinators of prevention programmes, technicians working in the prevention field, and prevention professionals in general.

The overall goal of prevention is to reduce the health, social, and economic problems associated with risk behaviours (such as psychoactive substance use, online addiction, and gambling), which requires the support of trained professionals to implement strategies. Thus, the specialised training course has the following objectives: to provide an introduction to the fundamentals of prevention science; to provide the necessary information for the selection and implementation of preventive interventions; to provide the necessary tools to inform stakeholders about evidence-based prevention, and to provide the necessary tools to coordinate the implementation and evaluation of interventions based on validated scientific knowledge. At the end of the course, the student is expected to be able to: recognise and understand preventive approaches based on scientific evidence; identify and utilise the necessary tools for the coordination, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based preventive interventions; distinguish different principles of preventive interventions appropriate to different contexts or groups, and identify principles of preventive interventions based on the family, school, workplace, community, environment, and media.

**3** | ©HoGent – following the translation and adaptation protocol

The pedagogical design, resources, technology and tools, interaction and collaboration, e-activities, and contents are presented below. (Figure 1.)



**Figure 1** | Pedagogical design of the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention

‘Lifestyle Decisions and Prevention’ is an introductory module aimed at situating prevention in the field of health education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and conceptually exploring prevention based on scientific evidence. It also addresses the role and advocacy of the prevention professional and specific ethical issues which may arise in the role. The next module is ‘Epidemiology and Aetiology’, which contextualises psychoactive substance use in Europe and Portugal. It also covers gambling (for money), as a risk-based behaviour which may develop into addictive behaviour. Aetiology models are relevant in this context for the identification of factors or mechanisms associated with dependencies.

The main scientific theories used in prevention are discussed in the ‘Science of Prevention’ module. This theoretical frame-

work is fundamental for understanding which components of prevention are necessary and useful for the creation and development of preventive or health education interventions. This is complemented by the study of international standards for prevention, European standards for quality prevention, and customised programmes in health education. ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ addresses several types of research that can be used to monitor or evaluate preventive interventions. The issue of collaborative work with evaluation teams and research institutions, as well as the formation of communities of practice, is also addressed in this module. Finally, ‘Prevention Models’ covers models applied to diverse groups and contexts, namely the family, school, work contexts, community, environment, and media. The specific challenges and issues related to health education and prevention will be discussed for each context or group. The focus of this approach is based on evidence-based practices.

## 2.2 The evaluation framework

The framework is based on the following standards, of which ten are taken from the European drug prevention quality standards (EMCDDA, 2011), and ten from the European Standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of E-Learning provision – Higher Education Institutions (ENQA, 2018) (Table 1).

When cross-comparing both sets of quality standards (prevention and e-learning), it is possible to identify some congruency between the standards. There are five main congruent areas. The first one concerns the timeline of the programme and the design and formal approval of the programme. The timeline allows staff and trainees to work towards specific deadlines and to coordinate their work with other demands (such as work and family). For these reasons,

European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EMCDDA, 2011)	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of E-Learning provision – HEI (ENQA, 2018)
1.3 Describing the need – justifying the intervention	
3.2 Using a theoretical model	
3.3 Defining aims, goals, and objectives	
3.6 Determining the timeline	1.2 Design and approval of programmes
4.1 Designing for quality and effectiveness	1.1 Policy for quality assurance
	1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes
6.3 Monitoring the implementation	
8.1 Determining whether the programme should be sustained	1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance
5.3 Setting up the team	1.5 Teaching staff
5.4 Recruiting and retaining participants	1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification
	1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment
	1.6 Learning resources and student support
	1.7 Information management
8.2 Disseminating information about the programme	1.8 Public information

**Table 1** | Congruent standards for evaluating the online Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention

the timeline must be realistic, feasible, and agreed upon by all participants. The programmes should be designed and approved by fulfilling the formal procedures required by the higher education institution where they are being offered and, when necessary, by the national system (in Portugal it is the Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education). It is challenging to design online programmes that guarantee the development of skills and a sense of learning, as well as a sense of a professional and practice community. The ENQA (2018, p. 8) highlighted some benefits (which arguably come together with challenges) of such courses, including:

“...programme modularity, online assessment methods, building online academic communities, integrating knowledge and skills development, and offering personalised instruction to meet different learning needs and aspirations”.

The second congruent area is based around designing for quality and effectiveness. This requires the creation of learning activities which participants are likely to find interesting and meaningful, and which allow for professional development through achieving goals and developing skills. It also concerns the institutional policy for quality assurance as part of their strategic management. Determining whether the programme should be sustained and the cyclical external quality assurance form the third congruent area. As such, it is important to undergo an evaluation (of the process and outcome), in order to provide evidence of the (cost-) effectiveness and the participants' attainment.

The fourth area concerns the recruitment and retention of participants, and other formal procedures such as student admission, progression, recognition, and certification. In particular, this area aims to identify the target population, inform and enrol them, and help to ensure that the participants complete the course and achieve targets. Online programmes are advantageous for reducing barriers to participation, such as time, location, and access constraints.

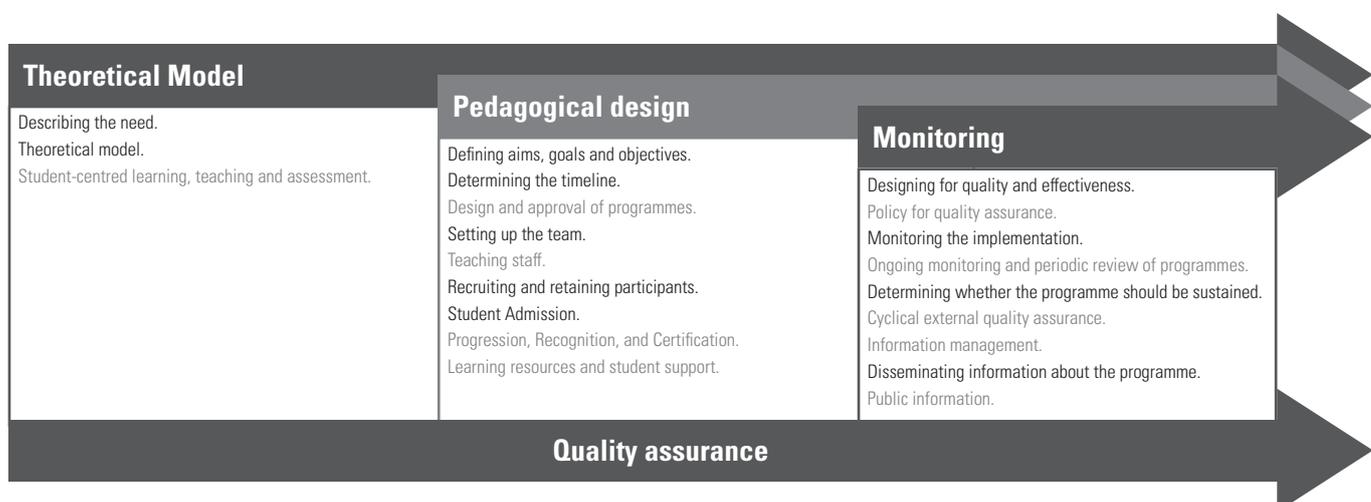
Higher education institutions have regulations covering all phases of the student life cycle – admission, progression, recognition, and certification. The final area focuses on disseminating information about the programme, allowing support to be gained for its continuation, feedback to be acted upon, and improvements to be made.

When discussing a framework for the evaluation of a training programme for prevention practitioners, three fundamental levels must be considered: the theoretical model, pedagogical design, and monitoring. In these levels, the quality standards for prevention and for e-learning are synthesised and converge for quality assurance (*Figure 2*).

The emphasis in Prevention Science has shifted towards understanding how the quality standards may be operationalised in a training programme, and how to achieve positive impacts upon practitioners' professional development. At the same time, the acceleration of technological and social change is pushing higher education institutions towards offering more relevant, affordable, and flexible academic programmes (Choudaha & Van Rest, 2018). As a result, universities have the opportunity to maximise the potential of teaching and learning through online learning.

The Specialised Training Course in Addiction Preventions' theoretical model combines the UAb Pedagogical Virtual Model\* with the EUPC and prevention science. The Virtual Pedagogical Model for prevention programmes was specifically designed for the teaching and learning processes at UAb, and is based on the following key principles (Pereira et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2018):

- i. student-centred learning, making students actively responsible for their knowledge-building process;
- ii. education based on flexibility of access to learning (contents and activities), without time or space constraints, according to the students' availability. This principle is ma-



**Figure 2** | Fusion – synthesised evaluation matrix (Black: European Drug Prevention Quality Standards; Grey: European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of E-learning Provision)

terialised by prioritising asynchronous communication, in which space and time do not have to coincide, since communication and interaction take place whenever it is convenient for the trainee, allowing them to read, process the information, think about it, and engage in a dialogue or interact;

iii. education based on diversified student-professor and student-student interaction, or even interaction between the student and resources. According to this principle, the professor has various communication devices to plan and design according to their pedagogical strategy;

iv. education that promotes digital inclusion, in that it helps adults (students) who might not otherwise be able to develop the skills of accessing and mastering technologies to do so.

This is an interactive and collaboration-based model which supports the emergence of virtual communities of learning and practice (Moreira, Henriques, Goulão, & Barros, 2017). Since education is a collaborative experience embedded in cognitive development and a social context (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; 2001), the learning process is student-centred. Such centrality means that the student becomes an active element in the process of constructing knowledge (Goulão & Cerezo Menéndez, 2016; Azevedo & Cromley, 2004).

A worthwhile educational experience occurs within the interaction of three core elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; 2001). Cognitive presence means the extent to which the participants are able to construct meaning through sustained communication; it is a vital component of critical thinking. Social presence is the ability of students to project their personal characteristics into the community of learners. It has the purpose of supporting cognitive presence and contributing to the success of the educational experience. Teaching presence is a means to support and enhance social and cognitive presence, for the purpose of realising educational outcomes.

Evidence-based Prevention frames the implementation science through the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS) and prevention science through the European Universal Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) for prevention professionals' qualifications. The model for training professionals aims to respond to the need of training for prevention practitioners and provides an opportunity for their professional growth.

The pedagogical design considers the need for prevention practitioners to apply robust and science-based practice through the EUPC (as described above). Additionally, in order to be compatible with the current demands of prevention professionals in networked societies, the training programme was designed to be delivered online. The pedagogical design represents a sophisticated and innovative system which brings quality concerns into the training

programmes and their outcomes – professionally trained prevention practitioners.

The aims and objectives of the specialised course are clearly laid out in the Learning Agreement, which is easily accessible and readily available to all participants and staff in the programme. The 'Skills' section of the Learning Agreement sets out the skills which trainees should have acquired by the end of the course. This corresponds with the EMCDDA definition of 'goals', which is "clear statements on the programme's outcome for participants at the completion of the intervention" (EMCDDA, 2011, p. 120). This section was adapted from the training goals and learning objectives of the EUPC to ensure that the objectives of the course are specific and realistic. However, the objectives were adjusted so that they are more attainable within the timeframe and were formulated in terms of the specific group of participants, taking into consideration their prior expertise and knowledge as prevention professionals. In terms of the programme's focus on prevention, the current course was broadened from the UPC to include non-substance addictions such as gambling and technology, in order to reflect the current reality of addiction in Portugal.

Monitoring for quality and effectiveness requires a combination of two distinct but linked factors. On one hand, there are the assessment methods to measure competence adequately and on the other, the policy for quality assurance and the cyclical external quality assurance processes.

As learning and teaching are becoming increasingly focused on competence (Baartman, Bastiaens, Kirschner, & Vleuten, 2007), the student should receive feedback, guidance, supervision, support, and/or additional training to help them improve in their areas of weakness. Courses which measure competence utilise a combination of different assessment methods, such as collaborative work, thematic debates, experience sharing, reflection on practice, and prevention science. As an illustration, the relevance of the course is highlighted below in one of a student's reflections:

"The Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention gave us the opportunity to interconnect the main topics that should be part of the training for a prevention workforce. The design of the programme is conceptually wide and drove us down several paths, from scientific knowledge and the evidence base to knowing how to deliver interventions. In association with these student-centred strategies, the learning was collaborative and diverse. There was always support from staff on a group and individual level. Efforts to understand the learners' needs were also evident, in order to identify areas which needed addressing. It was also important to highlight the learners' attributes, such as what the individual learner, or practitioner, brought to the course." (Practitioner, trainee, male, 45 years old).

On the basis of these points, we agree with Bain's view of "... the potential of assessment as a means of directing student learning and a discussion around how students might be

empowered by a dialogic approach to assessment practice rooted in critical pedagogy” (Bain, 2010, p. 14).

The Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention proposed a policy for its quality assessment, with objectives for monitoring the course, introducing improvements, producing good practices, and producing knowledge. Additionally, the course coordination develops collaborations with the International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), and HoGent®.

External quality assurance is of the utmost importance at UAb, notwithstanding the absence in Portugal of a regulatory and normative framework towards the quality monitoring of Open Distance Education (Fonte & Teixeira, 2018). In 2010, UAb was awarded the ‘EFQUEL Prize’ by the European Foundation for Quality in E-learning (EFQEL) and certified with the ‘UNIQUE Quality Label’ for the use of ICT in Higher Education (Universities and Institutes). In the same year, UAb was also qualified by an international panel of independent experts as the flagship institution for teaching via e-learning systems in Portugal. Within the European Levels of Excellence framework, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) distinguished UAb with the First Level of Excellence – Committed to Excellence (C2E) in 2011. In 2016, UAb’s commitment to quality was recognised again by EFQM, which honoured the University with four stars in the 2nd Level of Recognised for Excellence (R4E). The information security of the learning platform of Universidade Aberta has been certified by the Portuguese Association of Certification (APCER) with the ISO/IEC 27001 in 2017.

UAb’s Virtual Pedagogical Model® (Pereira et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2018) is entrenched in accessibility, flexibility, interactiveness, personalisation, and productivity. According to Ossiannilsson and Landgren (2012), these are the critical issues that should be taken into account to meet students’ expectations, demands, and rights.

### ● 3 FINAL REMARKS

On the basis of the European quality standards in prevention and e-learning, the authors proposed a framework for monitoring the Specialised Training Course in Addictions Prevention. The results show that it is possible to develop training programmes which are based on the EUPC and delivered online and are of verified efficacy, effectiveness, and readiness for adoption.

The relevance of the education and training of the prevention workforce follows at least three perspectives (Ostaszewski et al., 2018, p. 14):

“a) Prevention is a multidisciplinary area of work and it demands extensive knowledge and skills;

b) The target groups of prevention work are often people at risk (vulnerable groups) and professionalism (e.g. trained staff) should be a key guideline and standard in our work;

c) Prevention is not a harmless activity by default, so a well-trained prevention workforce is needed to avoid possible harmful side-effects.”

The emphasis in prevention science has shifted more towards understanding how such programmes can be developed, implemented, and monitored on a broader scale to produce greater impacts, and will guide the professional development of prevention practitioners as they seek to discover, research, and bring to the field new prevention programmes and policies. The attention to the benefits, but also the challenges related to the increasing digitalisation of our lives, mark quality in open education as comprising the following (Ossiannilsson, Altinay, & Altinay, 2016, p. 169):

“Efficacy: fitness for purpose of the object and concept being assessed.

Impact: a measure of the extent to which an object or concept proves effective, impact depends on the nature of the object or concept itself, the context in which it is applied, and the use to which it is put by the user.

Availability: a pre-condition for efficacy and impact to be achieved; availability is thus also an essential part of the element of quality. In this sense, availability includes concepts such as transparency and ease of access.

Accuracy: a measure of precision and the absence of errors in a particular process or object.

Excellence: compares the quality of an object or concept to its peers and to its maximum quality potential.”

From here, a consortium of diverse European institutions (from universities to NGOs) designed a proposal to the European Commission. *Preventiondistance* aims to develop distance learning-based and interactive prevention training for frontline prevention professionals in areas with less geographical access to training centres, delivering European and international quality standards and training curricula: the European Universal Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) and the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS).

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