



## Mergers in Higher Education: The Portuguese Case

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### Abstract

In recent years, we have witnessed across European countries a “merger’s mania” in the higher education sector as consequence of severe financial crisis or dramatic demographic changes. The mergers are the result of the voluntary initiative of institution and governments to restructure higher education systems in order to boost productivity, enhance teaching and learning quality, leverage research, increase effectiveness and efficiency or improve scores on ranks universities, for example, the attainment of “world class status”. Mergers have become an important tool for restructuring higher educational system and for changing as well the university model and governance. When thinking about mergers, corporate mergers are most salient. Higher educational mergers are a special case of organizational mergers, often characterised by their involuntary nature, being often used by authorities as a measure to restructure the higher educational sector. This was not the case of the University of Lisbon, which was not a question of adding two institutions imposed by a top-down decision from the Government but rather a bottom-up process initiated by the willing of the seven faculties of the former Technical University of Lisbon (TUL) and the eleven faculties of the former (Classical) University of Lisbon (UCL). The initial contacts for the merger were initiated at the end of 2010 by the rectors of the two universities and the merger was formally achieved in December of 2012. The process was led and controlled directly by the two rectors and the joint working group created in July of 2011. The main reasons for the merger were the possibility opened for expanding the research capacity, promoting cross-fertilization between disciplines as well as research projects, and for encouraging the teamwork and mobility of teachers and students. It was intended that the new University would be able to achieve a higher visibility at the international level and a leading role in higher education at the national level. Another relevant aim for the merger was the idea of such an institutional academic move could contribute as well for strengthening the links with the city of Lisbon, turning its University into a UniverCity.

