

Supporting First-Year Student Success @Universidade Portucalense: From Monitoring to Engagement, Development, and Excellence

Alexandra M. Araújo & Sandra Fernandes

Universidade Portucalense

Promoting student success in the first year of higher education requires institutions to understand students' diverse needs, foster meaningful engagement from the outset, and create opportunities for students to develop their potential. This presentation showcases three complementary initiatives developed at Universidade Portucalense (UPT) within the broader +Sucesso@UPortucalense project.

The “Observatory of First-Year Students” establishes a longitudinal approach to understanding students' trajectories. Through the systematic collection of self-reported information on student profiles (including adaptation to higher education, competence development, engagement, satisfaction, and academic performance), the Observatory supports the identification of protective and risk factors associated with success and persistence. Its findings inform institutional and pedagogical practices aimed at supporting diverse student needs. The “It's UPTo You” project provides an early intervention designed to promote first-year students' integration and engagement. Through collaborative, practice-based activities developed during the first week of the semester, students are encouraged to build meaningful peer connections, engage actively with their courses, and address challenges related to the Sustainable Development Goals. A third initiative, the “Summer School for Student Excellence” focuses on recognizing and further developing first-year success. High-performing first-year students from each bachelor's degree participate in an intensive three-day programme addressing leadership and personal development, communication, emotional intelligence, Design Thinking and creativity, professional skills, and peer reflection and learning. Together, these initiatives illustrate UPT's commitment to a holistic and inclusive culture of first-year success, from monitoring students' experiences, supporting their transition, and empowering them to thrive and contribute as future leaders.

Palavras-chave: first-year experience; student success; student engagement; evidence-informed practice; transition.

Nome de Responsável pela Equipa: Alexandra M. Araújo

Projeto PRR associado: +Sucesso@Universidade Portucalense