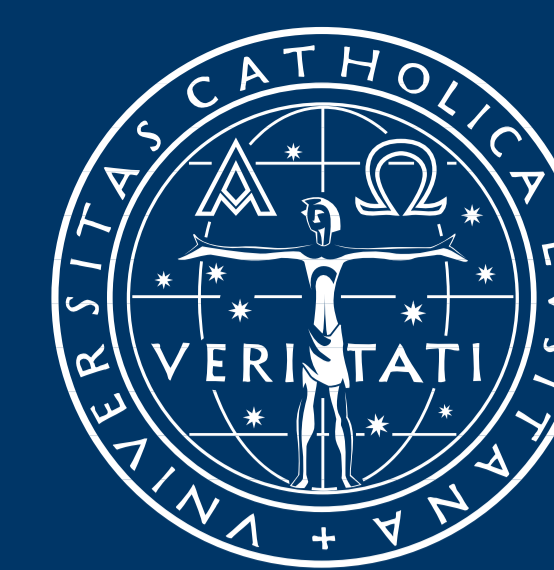


Students & Employability area: a particular experience of promoting employability in a systemic design

Authors: **Cardoso-Lopes, M. & Martins, A.**

mlcardoso@porto.ucp.pt

acmartins@porto.ucp.pt



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Introduction

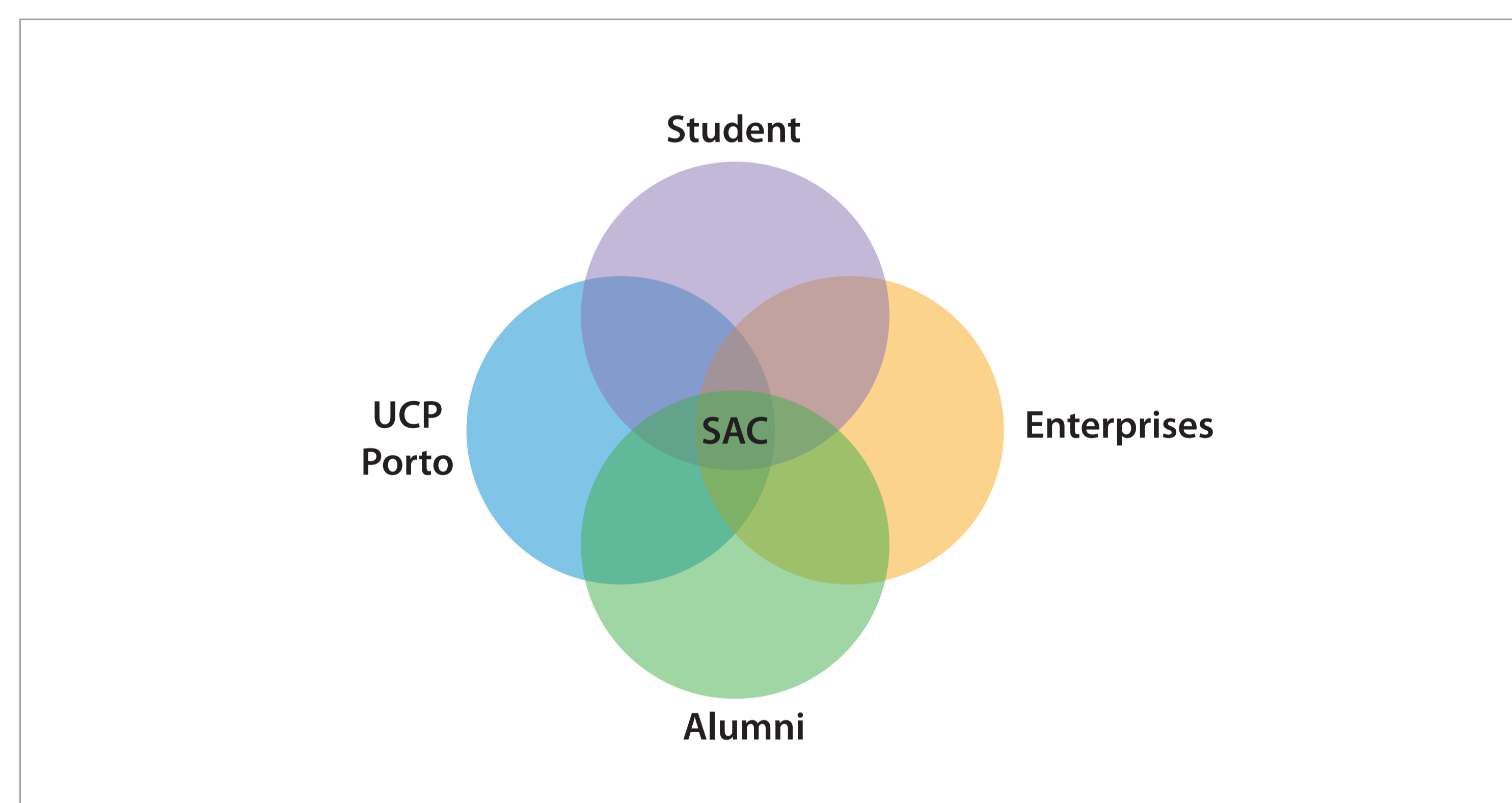
Today's worldwide framework is set by profound and robust changes at i) a political, social, cultural and economical level, particularly creating structural impact in the labour market and ii) Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Europe, facing the Bologna Agreement, in which the learning process aims at skills' development, seeking a closer cooperation between HEI and enterprises, therefore promoting employability of students and graduates. Consequently, new challenges and new tasks have to be addressed by HEI's internal devices (e.g.: "Career Services"). We intend to share our specific example (Students and Employability Area), aiming to promote employability through a systemic approach of each and every student whilst promoting internal and external exchange between Universidade Católica Portuguesa of Porto and enterprises. This area is intentionally designed as multidimensional device that works with students and graduates in several systemic valences, unlike most similar services, national and international, that embrace student's needs such as counselling, extracurricular activities or tuition support as separated domains from employability promotion.

Goals

- To share our experience of an HEI organization internal device that operates with both students as well as graduates in a systemic approach, both internal organizational (University's Schools) as well as organizational external (enterprises).

Results

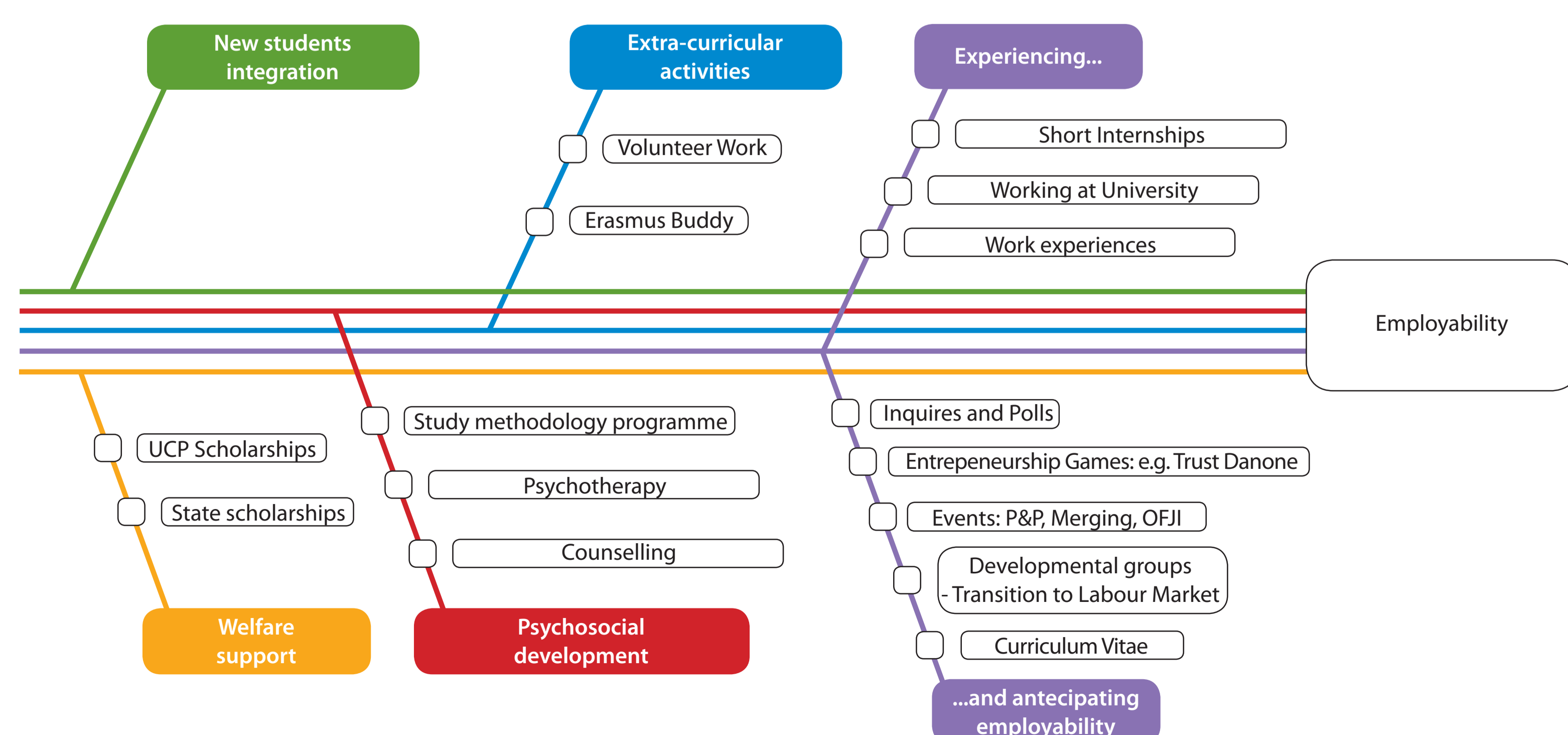
In our 8 years experience, our approach to organizational environment was intentionally systemic, intertwining interfaces between i) graduates' and alumni's needs ii) academic units and its impact on regional cluster as well as enterprises.



Unlike most similar services, national or international, our option resided in a multi-task and multi-valence service, where students' employability is the intended outcome of synergic interaction between other valences such as social action/tuition support, counselling/psychotherapy, extracurricular activities (e.g. summer internships, job opportunities, volunteer work in non-profitable institutions) thus promoting skills development.

Working as separated departments or severed processes, synergic effects wouldn't be possible if working outside common logistic structures.

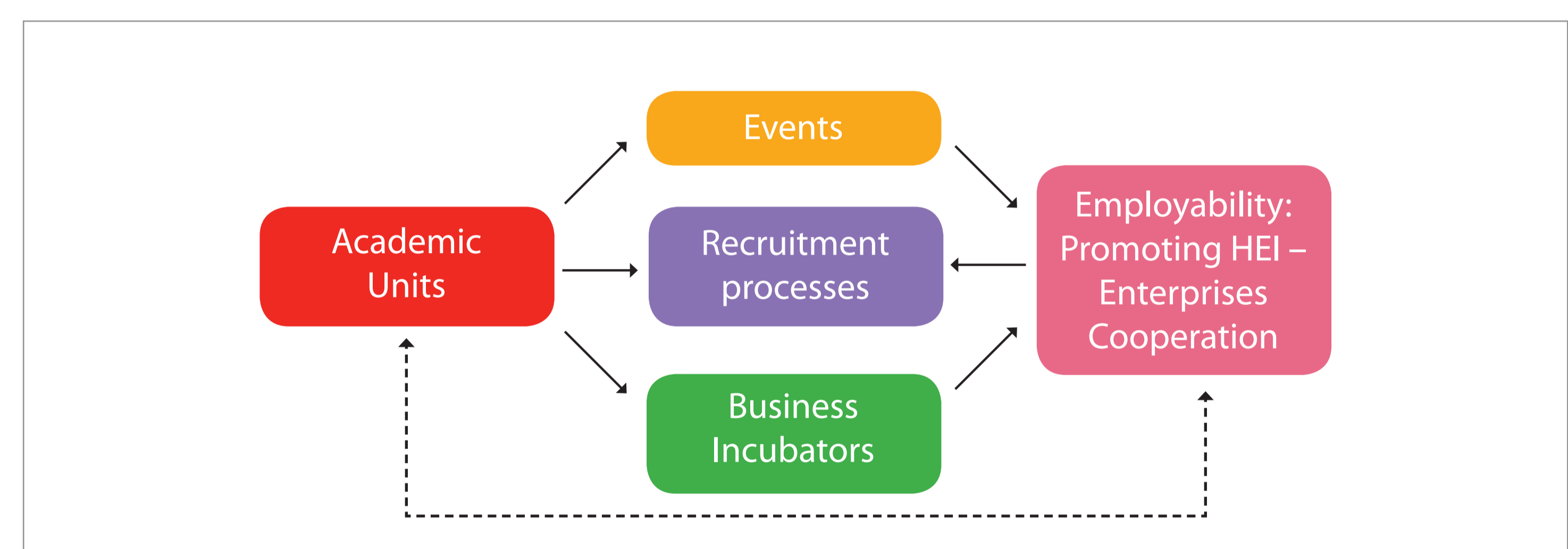
Student's point of view



For instance, a student looking for tuition to support fee payment can show difficulties in adapting to a new environment, adding worries to his scholar achievement. Methodology counselling can provide for new tools and can be useful to assess anxiety or depressive symptoms (either normative or not), which can provide for students to look for counselling/psychotherapy. These paths can also be complimentary, since extra-curricular activities can also help adapting to Campus, improving perception of well-being and thus promoting academic performance. All of them contribute to promotion of employability.

Another example is based on some students that get in touch with our department trying to solve her/his socio-economical problem (tuition payment). Our role is to try to solve that problem through scholarships mechanisms, as well as through students involvement in the solution by stimulating him to develop some work at school (library, for instance), in special projects (including research) or by applying to summer internships. Some enterprises are particularly interested in the information we can give them about those students which we know quite closely and that show important social and motivational skills, majored by the enterprises.

Organizational point of view



We aim to develop partnership with enterprises (promoting them nearby our students), which deeply want to be recognized as good place to work and want to draft talented young students; as well as with our students who want to get good job opportunities and careers. This goal has different ways of execution and needs to adapt its materialization language to the different segments of labour market. That is the reason why we've created special events to the Law market; the Economics and Management market; the Multimedia and Creative market. We want to get further which means that we need to be closer and closer to the market in a never ending partnership.



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Main conclusions

- Our subjective experience reports add-value of the outcomes of a i) proximity dynamics of action with both students and graduates demanding for specific logistics as a common area of work; ii) gathering in the same device the response to several non-curricular needs of both students and graduates serves purposes of this multi-valence system and iii) impact in Northern Region of Portugal, mainly made out of SME's whose need for survival in present economic setting largely depends on their human capital and its creativity and soft skills. In sum, if selected a small part of the process such as allowing a student tuition support the outcome can be global as in promoting competitiveness of enterprises in an European region.