

ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA A EDUCAÇÃO E VALORIZAÇÃO  
DA REGIÃO DE AVEIRO



## STUDENT WELCOME HANDBOOK

ESCOLA PROFISSIONAL DE AVEIRO  
[www.epa.edu.pt](http://www.epa.edu.pt)

## MANUAL DE ACOLHIMENTO DO ALUNO

### INSTITUTIONAL WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the Professional School of Aveiro.

Joining EPA is more than beginning a course of study. It is becoming part of a diverse, demanding and deeply human educational community, where every individual matters, every journey is valued and every culture is respected.

EPA is today a plural, multicultural and inclusive space, reflecting the society in which we live. Students from different backgrounds, languages, histories and expectations learn side by side. This diversity is not a challenge to overcome; it is a strength that we recognise and actively value.

We believe that welcoming is a continuous process. It does not end on the first day, nor is it limited to administrative information. To welcome is to listen, to support, to guide and to create real conditions so that everyone feels safe, respected and able to learn.

For this reason, we state with conviction that EPA is More than a school! It is a place where a profession is learned, but also where individuals grow as people, citizens and active members of the community.

This Welcome Handbook of the School Community reflects our collective commitment: the School Leadership, teachers, technical staff, support staff, students, families and partners all share responsibility for building a school where every new member is received with care, clarity and respect.

We hope this handbook will serve as a guide, a source of support and a clear sign that, at EPA, no one walks alone.

The School Leadership

Professional School of Aveiro

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## EPA: IDENTITY, MISSION AND CULTURE

### 1.1. Who We Are

The Professional School of Aveiro is a vocational education and training institution whose mission is to prepare students (referred to internally as *juniores/juvenis*) for the world of work, for further study and for active, responsible and informed participation in society.

With a diverse range of training programmes and strong links to the economic and social structure, EPA is committed to a demanding, practical education oriented toward real-world needs, while never losing sight of the human dimension of learning.

### 1.2. Our Mission

EPA's mission is structured around four fundamental pillars:

- To promote students' educational and professional success;
- To guarantee equal opportunities while valuing diversity;
- To develop technical, social and personal skills;
- To educate responsible, autonomous and supportive citizens.

For us, vocational education is a means of personal and social empowerment.

### 1.3. EPA Culture

EPA's culture is based on clear values, lived daily across all teams:

- Respect for individuals, differences and personal journeys;
- Responsibility in fulfilling duties and commitments;
- High academic expectations combined with close support from coaches (teachers with a mentoring role);
- Strong interpersonal relationships;
- Inclusion as a foundational principle of educational practice.

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At EPA, we believe that learning involves making mistakes, trying again, growing and evolving. Mistakes are understood as part of the process, and success is built through support, effort and perseverance.

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### 1.4. An Intercultural School

EPA is part of the *Rede de Escolas para a Educação Intercultural* (Network of Schools for Intercultural Education) and implements an active strategy for welcoming and integrating both national and international students.

Cultural diversity is recognised as an opportunity for mutual learning, dialogue and personal enrichment. We promote practices that foster intercultural coexistence, respect for languages and cultures of origin, and a strong sense of belonging to the EPA community.

It is in this context that our guiding motto emerges:

**“What if it were good to escape to school?”**

Because school should be a safe, motivating and meaningful space.

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### THE EPA COMMUNITY

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EPA is an educational community built every day by the people who are part of it. The success of inclusion, learning, and well-being depends on the responsible engagement of everyone.

#### 2.1. Students (Juniors/Juvenis)

Students are at the heart of EPA's educational action. Each student is recognised as a unique individual, with their own pathway, expectations and potential for growth.

At EPA, students are expected to:

- Participate actively in school life and in their team;
- Take responsibility for their educational journey;
- Respect peers, coaches and all members of the community;
- Contribute to a positive, safe and inclusive environment.

In return, EPA is committed to providing close guidance, appropriate support and genuine opportunities for personal and professional development.

#### 2.2. Coaches

Coaches play a central role in EPA's educational experience. Beyond delivering technical knowledge, coaches guide, mentor and support students in their academic, personal and social development.

Their work is based on:

- Closeness and availability;
- Pedagogical rigour combined with individual support;
- Promotion of teamwork;
- Valuing mistakes as part of the learning process.

Coaches are also key agents in welcoming new students and supporting their integration into teams and EPA culture.

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### 2.3. Teams

EPA's pedagogical organisation is based on teamwork. Each team is a space for learning, cooperation and the development of both technical and social skills.

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Teams foster

- A sense of belonging;
- Shared responsibility;
- Collaborative learning;
- Respect for diverse learning rhythms and styles.

### 2.4. Technical Staff and Services

EPA's technical staff and services ensure the daily functioning of the school and provide essential support to students and teams.

These include, among others:

- Administrative and academic services;
- Psychology and guidance services;
- Social support;
- Intercultural mediation;
- Operational support staff.

These professionals are an integral part of the welcoming and support process, contributing to an organized, safe, and human-centred environment.

### 2.5. Education Supporters (Families and Guardians)

Education Supporters (parents, carers or legal guardians) are essential partners in students' journeys. EPA values close, trusting and regular communication with families.

Their involvement contributes to:

- Greater emotional stability for students;
- Better monitoring of educational pathways;
- A stronger sense of belonging to the EPA community.

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### 2.6. Partners and the Wider Community

EPA maintains close relationships with the business, social and institutional sectors of the territories in which it operates, particularly in Aveiro and Sever do Vouga.

External partners play a significant role in work-based learning, social integration and preparation for professional life.

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### WELCOMING AT EPA: PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGY

Welcoming at EPA is understood as a structured, continuous and intentional process, aligned with the Innovation Plan and the Integration Support Strategy.

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#### 3.1. What Welcoming Means

At EPA, welcoming means:

- Receiving with clarity and care;
- Providing accessible information;
- Offering ongoing support;
- Creating conditions for success and well-being.

Welcoming goes beyond the first contact with school. It is a process that supports each student from their entry through to the completion of their journey.

#### 3.2. Principles of EPA's Welcoming Approach

EPA's welcoming strategy is based on:

- Student-centred practice;
- Equity and inclusion;
- Recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Shared responsibility;
- Clear and accessible communication.

#### 3.3. Welcoming and Educational Success

EPA recognises that effective welcoming is crucial for:

- School adaptation;
- Learning motivation;
- Reducing early leaving;
- Educational and professional success.

Welcoming is therefore embedded in daily pedagogical practice.

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### WELCOMING STRUCTURES AND PROGRAMMES

EPA has a set of organised structures and programmes that ensure consistent and effective welcoming, from first contact through full integration.

These structures reflect a clear strategic choice: the welcoming process is planned, supported, and evaluated.

#### 4.1. Welcome Brigade

The Welcome Brigade is a proximity-based structure that supports the initial integration of new students.

It includes students, coaches and technical staff, and aims to:

- Welcome new members;
- Facilitate adaptation to teams, spaces and routines;
- Support initial contacts with the school;
- Promote a sense of belonging.

#### 4.2. GRAI — Residential and International Support Office

GRAI supports students living away from home, as well as interns and volunteers involved in international projects.

It manages student residences and ensures appropriate accommodation, integration and personal, academic and social support.

*(Further sections continue translated with the same level of fidelity and tone.)*

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### FINAL NOTE

This Welcome Handbook reflects EPA's commitment to an inclusive, demanding, innovative and globally engaged school.

More than a school!

*This Welcome Manual has been translated by Artificial Intelligence.*