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The University of Algarve's (UAlg) mission involves creating, sharing and spreading knowledge. Of all the qualifications that can be gained at university – from undergraduate to master's degrees and PhDs – the courses most heavily geared towards creating knowledge are Doctorates.

PhD degrees are awarded to students who demonstrate the following: the capacity to gain a systematic understanding of a particular scientific field; the capacity to design, plan, adapt, and carry out scientific research; have carried out significant, original research work that has helped extend the boundaries of knowledge, part of which has been published in peer-reviewed journals either within Portugal or abroad; the ability to promote technological, social or cultural progress in an academic or professional context, operating within a knowledge-based society.

The first doctoral thesis written at UAlg dates back to 1990. Produced in the field of Marine Biology, it was entitled "The importance of the Ria Formosa in the biological cycle of *Solea senegalensis* Kaup 1858, *Solea vulgaris* Quenel 1806, *Solea lascaris* (Risso, 1868) and *Microchirus azevia* (Capello, 1868)". The university's 100th thesis was defended in 2004, with numbers increasing rapidly ever since. Today, the University has contributed to the completion of over 600 theses.

This issue of the UAlgzine is dedicated to the University's current doctoral programmes, which encompass five scientific fields: Health Sciences; Economic and Business Sciences; Exact and Engineering Sciences; Natural and Environmental Sciences; and Social Sciences and Humanities. Research has progressively been conducted within the Research and Development Units, connecting to projects and always seeking to solve problems, as can be seen from the examples presented. As such, we can be certain of our contribution to the promotion of culture and science in society, arming society with the tools it needs to respond to social, scientific and technological changes.

The events of the past couple of years have made the importance of knowledge abundantly clear in every area, from finding ways in which to respond to the public health crisis to adapting work models. Society is also becoming increasingly aware of the pivotal role played by higher education institutions in responding to the major challenges currently faced, such as combating climate change and the digital transformation, to name but two.

We seek to ensure that our doctoral programmes contribute to boosting intelligence, green practices, and eco-friendliness in the Algarve, Portugal, and Society, allowing us to become more connected, more social and bringing us closer to people.

Paulo Águas

RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

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