



CAPES EVALUATION (2017–2020) AND SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE SOCIOLOGY FIELD

A AVALIAÇÃO DA CAPES (2017-2020) E AS EXPERIÊNCIAS EXITOSAS DOS PROGRAMAS DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO DE EXCELÊNCIA ACADÊMICA DA ÁREA DE SOCIOLOGIA

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Abstract: This article examines the procedures adopted by Capes for the attribution of grades 6 and 7 to programs in the Sociology Field, with the objective of identifying the courses at this level and mapping the successful experiences of the academic excellence programs. The methodology employed was Content Analysis of the Sociology Field Evaluation Report, the Individual Graduate Program Evaluation Forms, among other documents. The results recurrently show that the respective Evaluation Committees highlight the following practices in these programs: a high volume of publications, coordination and/or participation in international research projects, especially those with external funding; involvement of the student body in faculty research projects; intellectual production at a superior level; synergy between research projects developed and research lines; and the absence of thematic overlap among the research lines, among others.

Keywords: Evaluation; Graduate Programs; Capes; Sociology.

Resumo: O presente artigo examina os procedimentos adotados pela Capes para atribuição das notas 6 e 7 aos Programas da Área de Sociologia, com o objetivo de identificar quais são os cursos que estão nesse patamar e realizar um mapeamento das experiências exitosas dos Programas de excelência acadêmica. A metodologia utilizada foi a Análise de Conteúdo do Relatório de Avaliação da Área de Sociologia, das Fichas Individuais de Avaliação dos Programas de Pós-Graduação, entre outros documentos. Os resultados apontam que, de forma recorrente, as respectivas Comissões de Avaliação destacam que esses programas possuem as seguintes práticas: elevada quantidade de publicações, coordenação e/ou participação em projetos de pesquisa internacional, em especial, com financiamentos; envolvimento do corpo discente em projetos dos docentes; produção intelectual em patamar superior; sintonia entre os projetos de pesquisas desenvolvidos e as linhas de pesquisa; inexistência de sobreposição temática entre as linhas, entre outros.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação; Pós-Graduação; Capes; Sociologia.

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1 Introduction

This article examines, based on the quadrennial evaluation of Capes – Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (2017-2020), what are the reasons that lead or maintain the Graduate Programs in the Sociology Field at an academic excellence level and, with this, presents how they differ from other programs that are not in this evaluation status. As specific objectives, it is intended to identify the parameters used by Capes and the Sociology Field to define the standards of academic excellence, present the procedures adopted for assigning grades 6 and 7, identify which programs are at this level, and map the successful practices that these programs have adopted.

For the discussion of the parameters for assigning grades 6 and 7 to programs, it is essential to understand the logic that underlies the functioning of the Brazilian Graduate evaluation model, which operates on a scale of 1 to 7, currently regulated by Capes Ordinance No. 122/2021 (Capes, 2021a). In item 27 of this regulation, the meanings of the concepts attributed are established. It is, therefore, the document that defines what is conventionally designated as a standard of excellence and/or standard of international excellence for grades 6 and 7 programs.

According to Capes Ordinance No. 122/2021 (Capes, 2021a), the noun “excellence” is used to attest that such programs, grades 6 and 7, have differentiated performance, equivalent to International Centers of Excellence. Given the scope of this study, the focus will fall exclusively on grades 6 and 7 programs. The methodology adopted was Content Analysis, from the perspective of Bauer (2002), who defines it as follows:

It is a technique for producing inferences from a focal text to its social context in an objectified manner. This context may be temporarily, or in principle, inaccessible to the researcher. CA often implies a statistical treatment of text units. Objectified manner refers to systematic, methodically explicit, and replicable procedures: it does not suggest a singular valid reading of the texts. On the contrary, the irreversible codification of a text transforms it. To create new information from this text. [...] The CA validity should not be judged against a ‘true reading’ of the text, but in terms of its grounding in the researched materials and its congruence with the researcher’s theory and considering its research objective. A corpus of text offers different readings, depending on the biases it contains (Bauer, 2002, p. 191).

From this methodological perspective, the research documentary corpus was composed of Capes Ordinance No. 122/2021 (Capes, 2021a), Sociology Field Evaluation Report (Capes, 2021b), Field Document: Sociology (Capes, 2016, 2019), Guiding



Document for the Evaluation of Proposals for New Programs (Capes, 2023), and Individual Graduate Program Evaluation Forms grades 6 and 7 in the Sociology Field.

Theoretically, the research is based on authors who have been engaged in the task of deepening the discussion about “where graduate studies in Sociology and/or Social Sciences are heading”. Among them, the following stands out: Martins (2005), who promotes debates on Graduate Programs in the Social Sciences and the directions that the area intended/intends to follow; Neves (2022), who problematizes initiatives led by the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS), the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA), the Brazilian Association of Political Science (ABCP), and the Brazilian Society of Sociology (SBS); Adorno and Ramalho (2018), who report some experiences of evaluating Sociology Programs, carried out by Capes, in the 2004-2006 and 2007-2009 trienniums; Barreira, Côrtes and Lima (2018), who historicize the moment when graduate education ceased to be concentrated in the São Paulo – Rio de Janeiro axis, and moved to the interior of the country; Neves and Cavalcanti (2018), Scalón and Miskolci (2018), who discuss the internationalization process of the area, among others.

Although the discussion above is already well advanced, the literature review showed that there is a lack of studies similar to the one proposed here. In this sense, the research that we present here, while complementing the existing ones, also differs as it proposes to contribute to the production of knowledge around an existing gap, namely: publications that focus on mapping the strategies adopted by Graduate Programs with academic excellence.

The results of this research present practices, suggestions, guidelines, and strategies adopted by Graduate Programs in the Sociology Field, which, except for its peculiarities, are useful both to Graduate Programs in the same field and to others, that are interested in understanding the path grades 6 and 7 programs, here analyzed, have taken in the search of academic excellence.

For this purpose, the text is structured as follows: first, it shows the theoretical framework of the research, in addition to portraying how the Sociology Field currently stands. Second, it discusses the procedures and criteria adopted by Capes for assigning grades 6 and 7. At the end, it presents the mapping of the successful experiences that these programs have adopted.



2 Where is the Graduate Education in Sociology heading in Brazil?

In 2005, Carlos Benedito Martins published the book “Where the graduate education in Social Sciences in Brazil is headed”. In collaboration with other distinguished scholars in the field of Sociology, Anthropology, and Political Science, such as Maria Hermínia Tavares Almeida, Lília Moritz Schwarcz, Mariza Corrêa, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Eunice Ribeiro Durham, Maria Stela Grossi Porto, José Vicente Tavares dos Santos, Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda, among others, a broad debate was promoted about the Graduate Programs in the Social Sciences of that period, and about the directions that were intended to be followed in the medium and long term (Martins, 2005, p. 9).

Almost two decades after this publication (Martins, 2005), it is imperative to reexamine the questions raised at that time, especially regarding the evaluation of the Brazilian Graduate Programs in Sociology. The social, political, and academic dynamics have undergone significant transformations throughout this period, which requires an in-depth reflection on the current state and possible future directions of the area. Revisiting the questions raised by these scholars allows not only to diagnose its status but also contributes to a better understanding of the complex logic of evaluating Graduate Programs in Sociology.

Considering the challenging moment that the Brazilian Graduate Studies have gone through, especially in the years of 2021 and 2022, driven by transformations in power structures and the emergence of new social challenges, the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS), the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA), the Brazilian Association of Political Science (ABCP), and the Brazilian Society of Sociology (SBS) took the initiative to collectively launch a call for submissions on the theme “Social Sciences and Graduate Studies in Brazil”, which resulted in the recent book organized by Hochman (2022).

Neves (2022) argues that the initiative of these four scientific entities, proposing a collective construction of reflection, diagnoses, and knowledge about the challenges of Graduate Studies in Social Sciences, shows that we are living in a moment of effervescence and transition in graduate education. This period requires a broad analytical effort capable of contributing to the understanding of the current reality, as well as to the construction of the foundations that will enable a greater capacity for the graduate



programs to respond to the problems, the demands of the academic community, and the society in general (Neves, 2022).

The academic literature shows that publications regarding the Capes evaluation in the Sociology Field are not new, which demonstrates, therefore, the relevance of this type of research, especially in a scenario of constant cuts in scientific funding in Brazil. Martins (2018) historicizes the understanding of the trajectory of the institutional creation of Graduate Education in the 1960s, in the context of the university reform; Adorno and Ramalho (2018), Sociology Field former coordinators at Capes, report the experience of the evaluation of Sociology programs, carried out by Capes, in the triennium of 2004-2006 and 2007-2009, which evidenced the evaluation criteria, the profile of graduate studies, and results achieved in that period; Barreira, Côrtes and Lima (2018) argue that, while until the 1960s *stricto sensu* graduate training in sociology was concentrated in the São Paulo – Rio de Janeiro axis, from the following decade onwards, there was a process of decentralization that “nationalized” and “internalized” it.

Neves and Cavalcanti (2018) highlight the internationalization process of the Graduate Programs in Sociology, which demonstrates the conditions of knowledge production, the requirements of the world education, and research system; in addition, they analyze the achievements and relevance of the Graduate Programs in Sociology performance.

Within the field of internationalization of Graduate Programs in Sociology, Scalón and Miskolci (2018), also Sociology Field former coordinators at Capes, present the challenges for Brazil to become, in fact, a country integrated into the international academic scenario, given the low international production compared to other countries. In this context, the authors highlight suggestions and strategies to achieve greater consolidation in the international scenario.

Lima (2019) outlines the evaluation process of the area, in a way that demonstrates some conflicts, clashes, and principles of competitiveness established. This was possible based on his experience while coordinator of Graduate Programs, his participation in evaluation committees, as well as Sociology Field coordinator at Capes.

When making some considerations about the portrait of the State of the Art, the Field coordination (Capes, 2019) highlights that the result of the latest evaluations shows two characteristics: consolidation and maturation of the Sociology Field.

Adorno and Ramalho (2018), when reporting the experience of the period in which they were responsible for the Field coordination at Capes, clarify that:



regarding the evolution of courses and Graduate Programs in the country, it indicates that the Sociology Field has shown a substantial growth. In 1996, there were 22 programs; in 2009, there were 42 programs, so a growth of 90.9%. From 1996 to 2008, the number of professors grew 92.66%, as well as the number of students enrolled and graduated. The expansion also had an impact on the growth in the number of doctorates, although the number of programs with only master's degrees is still higher (Adorno; Ramalho, 2018, p. 44).

As a result of this strengthening, the area has Graduate Programs considered international excellence (grades 6 and 7) in four of the five regions of the country. For a Graduate Program in the Sociology to receive grades 6 or 7, it is mandatory to have a doctoral program, to have obtained grade 5, and “Very Good” concepts in all criteria of the evaluation form. According to Scalón and Miskolci (2018, 132), Sociology Field former coordinators at Capes, the programs that achieve these grades must present a level of qualification, production, and performance equivalent to international centers of excellence in human resources training, as well as have the following characteristics: insertion in the international scientific community, international recognition of scientific production, recognition of international leadership, intensity of international mobility of faculty and students, national leadership, and nucleation.

3 Procedures adopted by Capes for assigning grades 6 and 7

Returning to the definition of academic excellence, grade 6 and 7 programs are, essentially, grade 5 programs that present significant differences in relation to other grade 5 programs in the country. As recommended by Capes (2021a), the work of the Program Evaluation Committees is organized in 3 stages.

After the first stage of the evaluation (assignment of grades 1 to 5), the second stage begins, in which the objective is to select, among the grade 5 programs, those eligible for grades 6 and 7. To do this, the following parameter applies:

- a) it will be eligible for grade 6 (six) the program that has a doctoral program that has worked in the last two quadrennials and that has received three “Very Good” concepts in the three evaluation criteria, and may have received up to two “Good” concepts in the sub-item criteria; and
- b) it will be eligible for grade 7 (seven) the program that has a doctoral program that has been in operation in the last two quadrennials and that has received three “Very Good” concepts in the three evaluation criteria and in all sub-items from 1 to 3 (Capes, 2021a, p. 15).

Therefore, it can be highlighted that: a) programs that offer only master's degrees are ineligible for grades 6 and 7; b) grade 6 programs are expected to obtain “Very Good” concepts in all criteria, namely: 1 – Program, 2 – Training, and 3 – Impact, being allowed



to, within each criterion, receive up to two “Good” concepts in their sub-items. This tolerance of two “Good” concepts makes it possible for programs that have had slight variations in some details, but that, in general, demonstrate excellence, to be eligible for grade 6; c) grade 7 programs need to obtain “Very Good” concepts in all criteria. Consequently, such programs must demonstrate excellence and superior performance in all evaluation dimensions.

Finally, in the third and final evaluation stage, that is, still in the context of which program will receive grades 6 and 7, due to Capes Ordinance No. 122/2021, the Evaluation Committee needs to consider the following parameters:

- a) in criterion 2 (Training): present a clear distinction from the other programs that received grade 5, considering the indicators of excellence in training and intellectual production of the Area and level of superior performance; and
- b) in criterion 3 (Impact): present a notorious demonstration of excellence in the qualitative indicators of impact of intellectual production; clear leadership, insertion and recognition in the national scenario, and demonstrate a standard of international action in the following dimensions, without prejudice to others that the Areas deem pertinent (Capes, 2021a, p. 15).

Also in the third evaluation stage, but on a complementary and non-mandatory basis, Capes (2021a) informs that the Evaluation Committee may consider the following optional requirements:

- a) **Research**: research activities developed by groups and/or individuals linked to programs that have an **international cooperation** nature (international funding, international team, and/or period abroad);
- b) **Intellectual production**: intellectual production activities developed by professors, students, and/or graduates linked to programs that reveal the establishment of **international cooperation** (disseminated in international circulation vehicles, in co-authorship with researchers based in a **foreign institution** and/or resulting from **collaborative international research projects**);
- c) **Academic mobility**: mobility initiatives for students, graduates, and professors of the programs, establishing **exchanges with foreign institutions**, sending and receiving people, fostering partnership work and interactions between institutions; and
- d) **Institutional performance**: inclusion of **internationalization actions** in the program’s objectives, **international selection process**, **foreign language courses**, co-supervision programs, international visibility of the program (foreign language website) (Capes, 2021a, p. 16 – emphasis added).

The Sociology Field considered the above aspects as the four pillars of internationalization for assigning grades 6 and 7, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Internationalization pillars
QUATRO PILARES DA
INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO



Source: prepared by the authors, based on Capes (2021a).

In this context, the area emphasizes that internationalization is not limited, nor is defined by participation in events abroad or publication in another language. In other words, it is not just about publishing in another language or participating in an international event to ensure the program internationalization. In addition to participation in congresses or publication in another language, the internationalization of the area is carried out through: i) agreements; ii) joint projects with foreign institutions; iii) post-doctorate abroad; iv) senior internship and sabbatical research in other countries; v) exchanges; among others, in which publication in journals from another country or participation in an event is a natural result of an internationalized teaching and research practice (Capes, 2019, p. 8).

Seeking to increase the visibility and impact of the work of national researchers, in addition to the traditional forms of internationalization (tripod: visit, exchange, and agreement), in the 2017-2020 quadrennial evaluation, the Sociology Field valued the following internationalization practices: i) international research projects; ii) publication of the results of such research abroad, with national and foreign researchers involved in the research development as authors; iii) participation of Brazilian professors in activities abroad; iv) participation in examination committees in foreign institutions; v) international evaluation commissions (Capes, 2019, p. 9).

It is evident that internationalization is established as the main identity for grades 6 and 7, either transversally or directly. These Graduate Programs are responsible for evidencing how their articulations, networks, connections, cooperation, and dialogues are internationalized and, above all, the results/impacts of such actions. It should be noted



that it is not recommended for internationalization to be a consequence of individualized activities of professors or students. The Capes evaluation model increasingly leads to perspectives in networks in which internationalization appears integrated into the objectives and goals of the programs, in an institutionalized way and not just individualized. To this end, one of the many ways to demonstrate this institutionalization of internationalization is through the university's institutional development plan and the Graduate Program strategic planning.

The Sociology Field “for the 2017-2020 quadrennium sought to consolidate and adapt the parameters in the previous evaluations of grades 6 and 7 to meet the requirements of the new form in force” (Capes, 2021b, p. 14). To define, fundamentally, the level of excellence, the area considered two central requirements, namely: 1) excellence in the internationalization sub-items (3.3.1 – evaluation form), and 2) excellence in the intellectual production of books and articles (Capes, 2021b, p. 13).

With these requirements as a parameter, the Field divided the work of assigning grades 6 and 7 into three rounds. In the first,

all programs that met the minimum conditions provided for in the regulation were taken into consideration by the committee: having been evaluated VERY GOOD in the three criteria of the evaluation form and, at most, with two GOOD in the sub-item criteria. A minimum evaluation of grade 5 in the previous quadrennium was also considered a condition for these levels (Capes, 2021b, p. 13).

At the end of this first round of evaluation, it was found that 11 (eleven) Graduate Programs met the requirements. In the second round of evaluation, two programs were excluded because they received a “Good” concept, instead of a “Very Good” “in the evaluation of the combined intellectual production in books and journals and their impact (3.1) and/or in the specific sub-item on internationalization (3.3.1)” (Capes, 2021b, p. 14).

On the third round of evaluation, the 9 (nine) Graduate Programs that remained were analyzed to verify their respective framework. That is, if they should be assigned grade 6 or 7.

In the third round, the remaining 9 programs were analyzed to be classified as grades 6 and 7. At this time, the 6 programs that received VERY GOOD in intellectual production and in the internationalization sub-item, with up to two GOOD concepts, were classified as grade 6. The 3 programs that obtained a VERY GOOD concept in all criteria and in the internationalization sub-item were classified as grade 7 (Capes, 2021b, p. 14).

On the last evaluation round, the Evaluation Committee focused on two central aspects: intellectual production and internationalization, in which, to receive grade 7, it was not allowed to receive any “Good” concept, only “Very Good”. With this, the area

demonstrates to the academic community what are the pillars that differentiate assigning grades 6 and 7, and what are the central elements for receiving the seal of excellence.

With the adoption of these criteria, initially, 3 (three) Graduate Programs were classified as grade 7, namely: Sociology/UERJ; Sociology/UFRGS; Sociology and Anthropology/UFRJ. Subsequently, the PPGS/UNB was added, since, in the appeal phase, it maintained grade 7; and 5 (five) Graduate Programs were classified as grade 6, namely: Social Sciences/PUCRS³; Sociology/UFMG; Sociology/UFSCAR; Sociology/Unicamp; Sociology/USP.

Table 1: Grade 6 programs

HEI	Program
PUCRS	Sociology and Political Science
UFMG	Sociology
UFSCAR	Sociology
UNICAMP	Sociology
USP	Sociology

Source: Adapted by the authors from (Capes, 2021b, p. 15).

Table 2: Grade 7 programs

HEI	Program
UERJ	Sociology
UFRGS	Sociology
UFRJ	Sociology and Anthropology
UNB	Sociology

Source: Adapted by the authors from (Capes, 2021b, p. 15).

Given this scenario, we will analyze what are the successful practices and strategies that grades 6 and 7 programs have adopted, and which have led or maintained them to the level of international excellence. To do this, we will start with grade 7 programs.

4 Mapping of academic excellence practices

To facilitate the mapping understanding, we present below the tables that illustrate the individual performance of each program in the three criteria of the quadrennial evaluation.

Table 3: Performance of grade 7 programs

CRITERION	ITEMS/ WEIGHT	GRADUATE PROGRAM/HEI			
		Sociology UERJ	Sociology UFRGS	Soc. Anthropol. UFRJ	Sociology UNB
1 Program	1.1 (40%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	1.2 (40%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

³ The Graduate Program in Social Sciences at PUCRS had the nomenclature of the program changed to Graduate Program in Sociology and Political Science PUCRS.

	1.3 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	1.4 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
2. Training	2.1 (15%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.2 (35%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.3 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.4 (20%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.5 (20%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.6 (20%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
3. Impact in society	3.1 (50%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	3.2 (25%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	3.3 (25%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Source: prepared by the authors from Capes (2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d).

Table 4: Performance of grade 6 programs

CRITERION	ITEMS/WEIGHT	GRADUATE PROGRAM/HEI				
		Sociology UFMG	Sociology USP	Sociology UFSCAR	Sociology UNICAMP	Sociol. & Polit. Sci. PUCRS
1 Program	1.1 (40%)	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good
	1.2 (40%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	1.3 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	1.4 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
2. Training	2.1 (15%)	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good
	2.2 (35%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.3 (10%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.4 (20%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	2.5 (20%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
3. Impact in society	3.1 (50%)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
	3.2 (25%)	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good
	3.3 (25%)	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Source: prepared by the authors from Capes (2022e, 2022f, 2022g, 2022h, 2022i).

Below, we will see which actions allowed grade 7 programs to stand out with “Very Good” concepts in all criteria and, for grade 6 programs to receive “Very Good” or “Good” concepts.

The Committee that evaluated the Graduate Program in Sociology at UERJ recommended grade 7 to the program and, through the evaluation form (Capes, 2022a), highlighted the following characteristics of excellence that distinguish this program from others that are not yet in this stage: a) 60% of the faculty are coordinators of cooperation projects with international institutions; b) 71% of the faculty has publications in books or periodicals of international circulation; c) 64% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; d) The project entitled “International Network for Comparative Analysis of Social Inequality funded by the European Commission: Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation” received a special recognition in the evaluation; e) 87% of permanent faculty members have funded research projects; f) Most students participate in research projects coordinated by permanent faculty members; g) Intellectual production of core faculty is at a higher level (170.46 points); and h) High level of intellectual production of students and graduates (Capes, 2022a).



The Graduate Program in Sociology at UFRGS had the following successful and differentiating practices, highlighted at the time of the evaluation (Capes, 2022b): a) 75 publications in books or journals of international circulation; b) 45% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Agroecological Transitions at the scale of Territorial food systems. National University of Laos (Indonesia), Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences, University of the Western Cape (South Africa), University of Social Sciences, and Management of Bamako (Mali), CIRAD (France)” received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Develops research commissioned by important agencies, such as: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (MMFDH), which attests the program’s leadership; e) Intellectual production of core faculty is at a higher level (153.33 points); f) Most students (96.77%) participate in research projects coordinated by core faculty; and g) High level of intellectual production of students and graduates (Capes, 2022b).

In turn, the Evaluation Committee (Capes, 2022c) highlighted that the Graduate Program in Sociology and Anthropology at UFRJ lives up to grade 7, because, among other reasons, it has: a) 123 publications in books or journals of international circulation; b) 75% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Environmental Justice, Belief Systems, and Aesthetic Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean involving funding and researchers from Columbia University, United States” received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Intellectual production of core faculty is at a higher level (112.44 points); e) 89% of the core faculty have funded research projects; f) Most students participate in research projects coordinated by permanent faculty members (Capes, 2022c).

In this perspective, the Graduate Program in Sociology at UNB had the following merits recognized by the Evaluation Committee (Capes, 2022d): a) 66% of the faculty has publications in books or journals of international circulation; b) 72% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Strategies and Practices of Deracialization in Brazil, United Kingdom, Sweden, and South Africa involving researchers from Sodertörn University (Sweden), Leeds University (England), Leeds University (England), and Alberta University (Canada)” received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Most students (87.50%) participate in research projects coordinated by core faculty; e) 89% of the permanent faculty members have funded research projects; f) ANPOCS award for best doctoral thesis; g) Capes award



for the best doctoral thesis in Sociology; g) two Jabutis awards for book of the year category and humanities category (Capes, 2022d).

So far, we have described the successful practices of grade 7 programs. We will now examine the key factors of grade 6 programs.

The Graduate Program in Social Sciences at PUCRS, which had its nome changed to Graduate Program in Sociology and Political Science, according to the Capes Evaluation Committee (2022e), obtained the following performance, which justified the change from grade 5, in the previous evaluation, to 6, in the 2017-2020 quadrennial: a) 87% of the professors participated in some type of publication in books or journals of international circulation; b) 83% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “The emancipatory potential of income transfer and political participation for women in contexts of poverty and violence” received a special recognition in the evaluation, it was funded by and involved the participation of researchers from *Justus-LiebigUniversität GießenInstitut für Erziehungswissenschaft*; d) the documentary “World of Life – The Sociology of Alfred Schütz”, produced by the program, reached more than 2,200 people when aired in Brazil and abroad, at Universität Fulda, Universität Konstanz, Universität Göttingen, Universität Augsburg, Universität Bonn, Universität Tübingen and Alice Salomon Berlin, Pompeu Fabra University, Newcastle University, European Congress of Sociology (Manchester), and International Congress of Sociology (Toronto) (Capes, 2022e).

The Graduate Program in Sociology at UFMG had the following merits recognized by the Evaluation Committee (Capes, 2022f): a) 94% of the professors participated in some type of publication in books or journals of international circulation; b) 75% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Social activities, gender, markets and mobilities from below (Latin America) – SAGEM” funded by the *Institut de Recherches pour le Développement* (IRD-France), received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Almost all students participate in research projects coordinated by core faculty; e) There was a high percentage of projects that were financed by development agencies; f) the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Project regarding the collapse of the Mine Dam of Córrego do Feijão, developed by the program, in partnership with the 2nd Public Treasury Court of Belo Horizonte, was seen by the Evaluation Committee as a product that highlights the leadership, impact, and quality of it (Capes, 2022f).



The Graduate Program in Sociology at UFSCAR had the following successful practices, highlighted by the Evaluation Committee (Capes, 2022g): a) 100% of the professors participated in some type of publication in books or journals of international circulation; b) 86% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Social activities, gender, market and mobilities from below (Latin America) – International Joint Laboratories – SAGEM” funded by the *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement* (France), which involves researchers from Brazil and France, received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) There was a high percentage of projects that were funded by development agencies; e) The technical report “Ostensive policing and race relations: a comparative study on contemporary forms of crime control”, a network research, developed in São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and the Federal District, was seen by the Evaluation Commission as a product that highlights the leadership, impact, and quality of it (Capes, 2022g).

The Graduate Program in Sociology at Unicamp has the following key factors, which keep it on the list of Programs of International Excellence Standards (Capes, 2022h): a) 71% of the professors participated in some type of publication in books or journals of international circulation; b) 66% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “BRICS Sociology: Development, Inequality and Dialogue”, developed in a network with researchers from Russia, India, and South Africa and funded by CASS (China), received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Most students participate in research projects coordinated by core faculty; e) There was a high percentage of projects that were funded by development agencies; f) The Sociology Textbook Guide of the National Textbook Program was seen by the Evaluation Committee as a product that highlights the leadership, impact, and quality of it (Capes, 2022h).

The Graduate Program in Sociology at USP had the following merits recognized by the Evaluation Committee (Capes, 2022i): a) 74 publications in books or journals of international circulation; b) 88% of the faculty has research projects with international funding and teams; c) The project entitled “Latin American Anti-Racism in a Post-Racial Era – LAPORA”, developed in network with researchers from the University of Cambridge; University of Manchester; National University of Colombia; Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador; and the Autonomous University of Mexico received a special recognition in the evaluation; d) Most students participate in research projects coordinated by core faculty; e) There was a high percentage of projects that were financed



by development agencies; f) The “PPGS/USP Student Seminar” event was seen by the Evaluation Committee as a product that highlights the leadership, impact, and quality of it, since the event is consolidated as an important space for training and exchange of students (Capes, 2022i).

5 Final considerations

This article aimed to examine, based on the 2017-2020 Capes quadrennial evaluation, what are the reasons that lead or maintain the Graduate Programs in the Sociology Field at an academic excellence level, as well as to map some of the practices adopted by such programs.

The results indicated that grades 6 and 7 programs have several similarities. Among them, recurrently, the respective Evaluation Committees highlighted that the following successful practices lead or maintain them at a level of academic excellence: high number of publications, coordination and/or participation in international research projects, especially with foreign funding and participants; involvement of the student body in faculty projects; intellectual production at a higher level; harmony between the research projects developed and the research lines; absence of thematic overlap among the research lines; bibliography of courses according to its research lines; high number of academic leaders among permanent faculty members; research productivity scholarship holders; strategic planning and institutionalized self-assessment mechanisms; the role of the faculty in the development and implementation of public policies, projects focused on Basic Education and outreach activities; development of projects in (interinstitutional) networks; adoption of affirmative action policies; balance of intellectual production among teachers, among others.

At the same time, the results of the research indicate that academic excellence does not result from the isolated performance of professors and students in these indicators, but rather from the ability of such programs to transform individual practices (internationalization, for example) into permanent institutional policies articulated with the program’s strategic objectives. The same dynamic, of integrating characteristic, occurs with the research developed, student training, social insertion, among others.

This research focused exclusively on analyzing official Capes documents, which, in turn, raised, among others, the following questions that future research may problematize: how did excellence programs build their trajectories over time? What were



the main challenges encountered and strategies mobilized that made such achievements possible?

In this sense, listening to different actors involved in the daily life of Graduate Studies, such as coordinators, professors, students, staff, among others, can be presented as an important methodological alternative, as it makes it possible to understand the behind-the-scenes aspects of creating an excellence program.

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⁴ In compliance with CNPq Ordinance No. 2664/2026, we inform that in the drafting phase, ChatGPT was used to improve the clarity and fluidity of certain paragraphs. All content was reviewed by the authors who assume full responsibility.



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