

Report of the External Advisory Committee, Instituto de Estudos Medievais (IEM), Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal)

May 30, 2023

Meeting

The meeting of the advisory committee took place on Tuesday, 30 May 2023, at the premises of the IEM in the Colégio Almada Negreiros of the Campolide Campus of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, in the presence of the new director, Prof. Catarina Tente, and subdirectors, Dr. Sara Prata and Prof. João Luís Inglês Fontes, along with other affiliated faculty members, doctoral students, and post-doctoral students.

Committee members present

Prof. Thomas Barton, University of San Diego
Prof. Manuel A. Castiñeiras González, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (online)
Prof. Laura Fernández Fernández, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Prof. Olivier Poncet, École nationale des chartes-EHESS
Prof. Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo, Universidad del País Vasco
Prof. José Carlos Ribeiro Miranda, Universidade do Porto
Prof. Pere Verdés Pijuan, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

Background

Since July 2022, the date of the last external advisory committee's report, the IEM has reinforced its position as a nationally and internationally recognized hub of research on medieval studies with an impressively active program of interdisciplinary research (in Archaeology, Art History, History, etc.) and a deep commitment to the dissemination of scholarly knowledge among the broader public, including engagement in public history, public archaeology and cultural heritage programs across Portugal. The previous directors have helped to guide the institution to a position of great intellectual prominence and strength.

Between 2019 and 2022, the IEM has experienced considerable growth, especially in its number of collaborators and PhD students. In particular, in recent years, it has achieved notable increases in its number of affiliates involved in various projects (20 in 2021 and 27 in 2022) and fellowships (21 in 2021 and 29 in 2023). At the same time, it has increased the extent of its financial support from competitive grants and research productivity through publications and other modes of dissemination. It should be noted, however, that research output, thus far, has not increased at the same proportion as the IEM's personnel and available resources (see the graphs on production of ppt 2014-2017 vs. 2018-2022).

The IEM remains organized around two research groups (RGs), “Territories and Powers: A Global Perspective” and “Images, Texts, and Representations,” both of which are led by contracted post-doctoral researchers. The Institute continues to be governed by an executive council, a scientific committee for strategic planning, a general assembly, and our external advisory committee.

In advance of the meeting, the management team sent the committee members several reports and communications. Some of the committee members, however, felt that these reports were not always sufficiently detailed. While the presentation on 30 May provided some of the missing information, certain questions nevertheless remained: e.g., the structure of the leadership and staff of the IEM and how they integrate with the general operations of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. This issue of coordinating administrative resources is critical when assessing the capacity of the IEM to confront some of its ambitious goals, such as, for example, the creation of Spin-offs, the preparation of the digital encyclopedia, and the publication of an impactful journal (*Medievalismo*).

We have divided the remainder of the report into three sections: Strengths, Challenges and Areas of Improvement, and Areas for Reflection.

1. Strengths

- The ambition evidenced by opting to undergo a regular review every year by an external committee tasked to evaluate not only areas for improvement but also weaknesses and areas for reflection. Along these same lines, we should underscore the creation of a protocol of auto-evaluation of the units of the IEM, which helps determine their minimum research productivity.
- The growth experienced by the IEM, despite the complexities of the post-pandemic period. This development has focused on hiring personnel and supporting young researchers rather than on investing in infrastructure and other material expenses.
- High number of doctoral theses in progress: 23 students pursuing doctoral theses of which 19 have fellowships.
- Success in using its resources (in particular, grant opportunities) to attract a wide array of foreign researchers: e.g., it currently has personnel from France, Italy, and Spain.
- Researchers undertaking a wide range of new projects in archaeology, literature, art history, and history on local, national, and European topics. The ERC-financed VINCULUM project, directed by Maria de Lurdes Rosa, deserves special recognition for its size and financial contribution. We should also highlight the significant increase in IEM projects and operations funded by the Fundação Para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), which provided almost 60% of the Institute’s budget for 2018-2023 compared with the only 37.5% from the ERC-project funding.

- Heightened involvement in national and international networks: e.g., CARMEN, FIDEM, Ruralia, IN_SCIT, Ménestrel, etc. The IEM also benefits from stable relationships with various Portuguese and foreign universities, such as the Universidade Aberta, Universidade de Évora, Oxford University, Université de Poitiers, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Universitat de Girona, the CSIC, the Casa de Velázquez, the École Nationale des Chartes, and the CNR-ISEM.
- Success in collaborating with an array of organizations to disseminate knowledge amongst the broader public, including foundations, cultural associations, archives, museums, and local Portuguese communities. The Institute has, in particular, succeeded in forging relationships with various local town councils, such as that of Castelo de Vide. Castelo de Vide's council and the IEM collaborate to organize annually an autumn doctoral school as well as a conference with published proceedings. The Institute has also organized numerous workshops and open courses and provided support for tourist-guide training and teacher education.
- Strong commitment to publishing books in Open Access, in line with the policies of the European Union.

2. Challenges and Areas of Improvement

- A major challenge facing the IEM that should influence its strategic planning entails developing new administrative structures in response to its extraordinary recent growth. Despite the IEM's expansion of its resources, personnel, and activities over the past several years, its administration has remained static or has experienced only temporary staffing increases and is consequently arguably now too small to permit the IEM to handle its current situation or to confront adequately future challenges. Creating and coordinating innovative, synergetic units within an institute of this size requires a larger and more sophisticated managerial structure.
- This deficiency in the IEM's administrative framework underscores a further concern: that the current two-year scope of the IEM's strategic planning is too limited and should be extended.
- Another challenge presented by IEM's recent growth is the need to create new spaces for synergy and innovation. An organization as large and complex as the IEM requires sophisticated coordination to enable it to develop as a cohesive unit and not devolve into an assortment of disconnected groups and projects.
- Along those lines, the functions of the two RGs may need further internal reflection. It is currently not clear if the purpose of each RG is managerial or intellectual. We observe also clear asymmetries in the size and composition of the RGs and wonder if these disparities have implications for their respective research agendas. Perhaps it would make sense to have a larger number of better integrated RGs. It might be necessary to define clearer lines

of research that structure the activities of the Institute according to scientific and administrative terms by associating them with the RGs or the IEM's primary investigatory axes. These lines of research need to be regularly reviewed and updated so that they can drive innovation and promote synergy among the different component research initiatives and other activities of the IEM. Perhaps an organizational structure such as that used by the Casa de Velázquez could serve as a useful model.

- The IEM journal *Medievalista* is extremely important for furthering the Institute's objectives, in particular, and medieval studies in Portugal, in general. The first issue appeared in 2005 and its editors have regularly produced two issues a year since 2008. It continues to be the only Portuguese journal dedicated entirely to medieval studies and notably adheres to a rigorous process of double-blind peer review. It offers, as an important regular feature, detailed presentations of completed doctoral theses relevant to the study of medieval Portugal. Despite these accomplishments, the commission nevertheless feels that the journal is urgently in need of a redefinition along three main lines: a) the inclusion in international databases such as Scopus (Elsevier) and the Web of Science (Clarivate) so that it can be involved in the ranks such as the Scimago Journal & Country Rank; b) the restructuring of the editorial team to foster internationalization and support currently non-represented disciplines, such as archaeology; c) the alignment of the monographic issues and general contents of the journal with the Institute's strategic goals. The indications provided by the Scopus evaluation in 2022 should guide the reformulation of the journal's editorial team and directives in order to secure a more positive outcome with the upcoming evaluation in 2025. See Annex.
- Another challenge/opportunity for the IEM is the possibility of obtaining European projects. As mentioned, the ERC-funded VINCULUM project (Consolidator Grant 819734) led by Maria de Lurdes Rosa (www.vinculum.fcsh.unl.pt) is a foundational achievement and has commenced of a "virtuous cycle" that has helped promote the IEM's growth and excellence. The IEM should build on this momentum by making a commitment to obtaining additional major grants, not just highly-competitive ERC projects (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, or Synergy) but also other programs such as COST Action and MSCA Action (Doctoral Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges). IEM members already have experience with some of these programs (e.g., COST), which offer funding opportunities that are easier to obtain than ERC projects. The IEM has sufficient critical mass to obtain more grants of this nature.
- With regard to applying for ERC projects, given the collective experience of IEM members, it would also be advisable to draw on the expertise of these specialists by holding closed exploratory meetings and fostering collaborative networks to support the preparation of proposals.
- Finally, further to this need to establish defined axes of research activity, it would be advisable for the IEM to consider proposing ERC projects on topics that are currently popular among the international medieval community, such as gender, multiculturalism, digitalization, landscapes, and memory.

- The website (<https://iem.fcsh.unl.pt>)—a key instrument for diffusing research, and news—is in the process of being redesigned. It will be important for the IEM (in order to enhance its image) to think about how to organize the site’s contents, especially with regard to clearly representing the Institute’s main goals. The committee encourages the IEM to increase its social-media presence—in particular, via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter—and recommends the creation of a regular blog and a YouTube channel. A priority should be placed on making the website user-friendly to facilitate access to the catalogue of publications. The site should include an updated agenda of activity, direct access to *Medievalista*, and a directory of current IEM members with their research lines and projects in progress prominently indicated in order to facilitate new international collaboration and networks.

3. Areas for further reflection

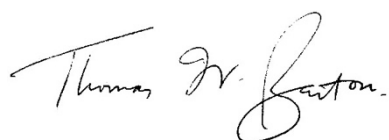
- As we have already pointed out, it is necessary to reflect on what strategic lines of research the IEM should promote to help further reinforce its European reputation. Apart from the existing three research axes (promoting research, sharing knowledge, and supporting researchers), the IEM can and should define and promote new lines of research that will add to the development of the field of medieval studies.
- With these goals in mind, Digital Humanities should to have a higher profile at the IEM and should be more clearly reflected in its Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda. Perhaps the “Inclusive Societies” objective should pay more attention to the social reality and culture of minorities (such as Jews, Muslims, and other groups). This is one of the most important lines of research to be pursued by an institution dedicated to medieval studies.
- Although the IEM already has a high level of internationalization, it should nevertheless reflect further on its positioning within European academia and promote further participation in events taking place abroad as well as collaboration in projects with non-Portuguese universities. Being part of international collaborative networks is essential to improving the IEM’s global reach and reputation.
- The IEM must establish a coherent communication strategy that supports the development of its “academic brand.” It should continue its already well developed practice of hosting events (periodic seminars, doctoral workshops, conferences), high-quality publication, and other activities that are essential to growing the Institute’s reputation. In addition, we again suggest exploring new modes of communication, including podcasts, public history initiatives, and the use of social media, such as Twitter and TikTok. (Facebook now tends to be less widely used by younger groups.)
- It is necessary to develop a publication policy that is more clearly aligned with the IEM’s strategic lines of research, which would, in turn, recommend a more limited number of series/collections. The implementation of these series/collections needs to be undergirded by the creation of corresponding editorial structures and protocols that will ensure that they

are of sufficiently high quality to obtain recognition (especially from certifying organizations).

- Moreover, it would be advisable to publicize the IEM's publications by announcing them to international scholars and research centers and by sending copies of new books to relevant journals in Europe and North America.
- The exchange of IEM publications with those of other organizations could be a further means to broaden the Institute's distribution as well as increase its access to new bibliographic resources.
- The IEM has an important network of collaborations and contacts that support its role as a space for visiting international researchers. Fostering these relationships is important for continuing the growth of the IEM's brand and international academic reputation. Increasing the availability of visiting fellowships would also help facilitate this development.

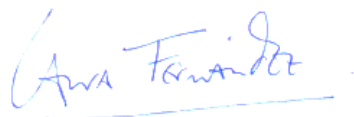
Conclusion

The IEM has achieved maturity as an increasingly recognized institution in the European academic panorama. It has a wealth of human, intellectual, and financial resources that should be sufficient in the coming years to make it even more internationally relevant. The strategic plan for 2023-30 will be an opportunity to taking the IEM to a new level of prominence.



Prof. Thomas Barton, University of San Diego

Prof. Manuel A. Castiñeiras González, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



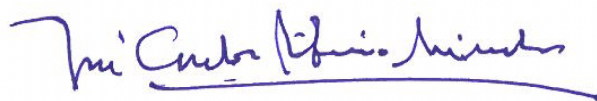
Prof. Laura Fernández Fernández, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

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Prof. Olivier Poncet, École Nationale des Chartes

A blue ink handwritten signature with a complex, overlapping structure of loops and lines.

Prof. Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo, Universidad del País Vasco

A blue ink handwritten signature that appears to read 'José Carlos Ribeiro Miranda' in a cursive style.

Prof. José Carlos Ribeiro Miranda, Universidade do Porto

A blue ink handwritten signature with a large, sweeping 'P' and 'V' shape.

Prof. Pere Verdés Pijuan, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

ANEXO INFORME REVISTA “MEDIEVALISTA”

A la luz de la información presentada en la reunión celebrada el 30 de mayo y de los informes de Scopus enviados a la comisión, hemos tenido la oportunidad de comprobar las dificultades del equipo editorial de la revista para conseguir su inclusión en Scopus y WOS.

En base a dicha información se observa que, en 2018, Scopus solicitó la elaboración de un documento de Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement requirements como paso previo a la evaluación. Tras un intercambio de correos, fruto de algunos malentendidos, la revista fue sometida finalmente a evaluación y esta resultó negativa por las siguientes razones:

- *Despite being published for quite some time, articles in this title have attracted few citations by other titles currently covered by Scopus.*
- *The journal shows an uneven scholarly quality in the articles*
- *Journal title implies that it is international but this is not supported by the stated aims and scope.*

For future resubmission, the journal needs to increase substantially its international scope in terms of authorship and academic impact.

La respuesta del Director de la revista a Scopus a estas críticas se planteó en términos bastante duros y se solicitó una revisión de dicha evaluación por los motivos expuestos en el correo y la inclusión de Medievalista en la plataforma. La demanda no fue atendida.

En 2022, bajo una nueva Dirección, se solicitó de nuevo la inclusión de la revista en Scopus. Tal como se observa en dicha petición, la revista realizó un esfuerzo muy importante para cumplir con los requerimientos expuestos en la anterior evaluación incorporándose, por ejemplo, una herramienta antiplagio, aumentando la internacionalización en todos los ámbitos (incluida la publicación de artículos en inglés) e ingresando en numerosas bases de datos bibliográficas, entre las cuales WOS. Cabe señalar, sin embargo, que algunos de los enlaces de la página web a estas bases de datos no funcionan.

Esta nueva solicitud se acompañó de un nuevo correo, mucho más razonado que el enviado por la anterior Dirección, pero donde persistían numerosos reproches a Scopus.

Pese al esfuerzo y los razonamientos, la evaluación fue de nuevo negativa por las siguientes razones:

- *The geographical reach of authorship and/or content is too limited*
- *The journal does not publish enough good articles each year to warrant inclusion in Scopus.*
- *Low citations in good journals indexed in Scopus*
- *The composition of the Editorial Board is too institution/nationally focused for a global reach.*

- The subject area of the journal is of limited interest to an international academic or professional audience.

- Journal title implies that it is international but this is not supported by the stated aims and scope.

For future resubmission, the journal needs to increase substantially its international scope in terms of authorship and academic impact.

You may consider publishing more papers in English and seeking more high impact authors from outside your existing countries or sources of authorship. It will also help if published papers cover a broader range of research topics and issues that may speak directly to an international audience.

Frente a estas dificultades, tras consultar con expertos en la edición de revistas científicas, la comisión realiza las siguientes consideraciones:

- 1) No cabe duda de que formar parte de plataformas como Scopus sería muy importante para la revista y para el IEM. Sin embargo, ello no debe convertirse en una obsesión y la prioridad debería ser crear una buena revista con contenidos de calidad, que mejore día a día. Debe tenerse en cuenta que Scopus o WOS son empresas, no instituciones académicas, y que por esta razón se guían muchas veces por criterios comerciales, no exentos de discrecionalidad o incluso arbitrariedad. Por tanto, puede solicitarse nuevamente el ingreso, pero armándose de paciencia, sin crear expectativas y sin perder de vista que, actualmente, existen movimientos como la Declaración de San Francisco sobre la evaluación de la investigación (DORA), que precisamente se contraponen a la filosofía de Scopus o WOS.
- 2) Como se ha dicho, Scopus o WOS son empresas y, en consecuencia, no resultan muy pertinentes correos como los enviados hasta el momento en términos poco asertivos. No se trata de ningún organismo público regido por la norma establecida, por lo que consideraciones acerca de la justicia o injusticia de las evaluaciones no llevan a ningún sitio y pueden resultar contraproducentes. Se aconseja seguir las directivas expuestas en los informes de forma proactiva.
- 3) Parece evidente que la actual comisión de expertos de Scopus se ha formado ya una imagen de Medievalista, que puede resultar complicado cambiar. Mientras no haya un relevo en dicha comisión y/o cambie la imagen que tienen de la revista, se aconseja seguir mejorando todavía más la publicación tanto desde el punto de vista formal como de los contenidos.
- 4) Desde el punto de vista formal, se detectan en primer lugar problemas de acceso a la página web de la revista (al menos desde España), con avisos de peligro sobre el sitio. Tal como se ha dicho, también deberían comprobarse los enlaces a las bases de datos indicadas, para asegurarse que están activos y/o llevan a Medievalista. En este sentido, resulta especialmente llamativa la vaga referencia Clarivate Analytics, cuyo enlace lleva a una página general. Se ha comprobado si Medievalista consta en la Master Journal List de

Clarivate (gratuita: <https://mjl.clarivate.com/>) y no aparece. Teniendo en cuenta que WOS es la competencia de Scopus, si se lograra consolidar la presencia en la primera y hacer explícitos los datos de la revista en el Journal Citation Reports y el Journal Citation Indicator de Clarivate, seguramente Scopus se mostraría más receptiva. Téngase en cuenta que WOS está muy pendiente del mercado americano (mientras que Scopus lo está del europeo) y la influencia de Medievalista en el ámbito brasileño puede ser importante.

- 5) Otros aspectos formales. Aunque cumple con los requisitos de calidad, podrían mejorarse algunos aspectos, tomando como referencia, por ejemplo, la estrategia general de Editorial CSIC. Véase, entre otras revistas, Anuario de Estudios Medievales y aspectos tales como:
 - a. Guía de buenas prácticas (la primera elaborada en España y de referencia):
https://revistas.csic.es/public/guia_buenas_practicas_CSIC.pdf
 - b. Formulario de declaración de autoría:
https://revistas.csic.es/public/formulario_declaracion_autoria.pdf
 - c. Pestaña “Acerca de” y apartados que se incluyen:
<https://estudiosmedievales.revistas.csic.es/index.php/estudiosmedievales/index>

- 6) Desde el punto de vista de los contenidos, el IEM debe decidir cuál tiene que ser la línea editorial y los objetivos de la revista con vistas a incrementar la repercusión académica e internacionalización de la revista. Ello puede hacerse de tres maneras: a. continuando la línea iniciada y mejorando tanto la forma como los contenidos de la revista; b. “refundando” la revista y buscando unas nuevas señas de identidad que aumenten su impacto (por ejemplo, centrándose en los ejes de investigación del IEM y/o en temas innovadores dentro del medievalismo, con especial atención a los temas vinculados al medievalismo portugués y sus conexiones con otros territorios y ámbitos culturales); c. introduciendo cambios en la actual línea editorial, con el fin de crear -por ejemplo- secciones originales que tengan mayor repercusión. Un ejemplo de la segunda vía es, por ejemplo, una revista del CSIC que antiguamente se llamaba “Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares” (<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/revista?codigo=1153>) y se convirtió en “Disparidades. Revista de Antropología” (<https://dra.revistas.csic.es/index.php/dra/index>). Esta transformación vino de la mano de un nuevo equipo editorial formado en Estados Unidos e introdujo profundos cambios en la forma y contenidos de la revista como, por ejemplo, la inclusión secciones que conviven con el apartado principal de artículos, tituladas “Temas emergentes”, “En tierra de nadie” o “Cartografía”. En estas secciones se incluyen estudios específicos, dedicados a cuestiones novedosas sobre las que se quiere llamar la atención. En el caso de Medievalista, un cambio tan radical probablemente sería arriesgado, ya que puede perderse el actual nicho de lectores conseguido después de años de trabajo y no siempre resulta fácil conseguir un número suficiente de artículos “innovadores” o dedicados a una determinada cuestión. No obstante, quizás sí que pueda contemplarse la inclusión de alguna sección o secciones que sean un rasgo distintivo del IEM y atraigan la atención del público académico.

- 7) Finalmente, en la línea de lo comentado en el informe general y haciéndonos eco de lo expuesto en la presentación del 30 de mayo, creemos que puede resultar importante aumentar las sinergias con los servicios generales de la Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Ignoramos si la universidad tiene servicios editoriales o contempla una política general en este sentido, pero no cabe duda de que el apoyo, el asesoramiento y la presión que puede ejercerse desde una instancia más elevada ayudarían a conseguir los objetivos de la revista. Por supuesto, también sería de utilidad la existencia de directrices claras desde la FCT o instituciones similares, tal como sucede en otros países (véase, por ejemplo, FECYT en España: <https://calidadrevistas.fecyt.es/>).

A grandes rasgos estas son las consideraciones que puede realizar la comisión, insistiendo en que se observa un claro incremento de la calidad de Medievalista durante los últimos años. Este incremento de calidad, en nuestra opinión, es lo más importante y la inclusión de la revista en Scopus o WOS debería ser un objetivo adicional, que se afronte con la necesaria resiliencia, seguros de que más pronto que tarde se conseguirá.