

External Report on CIUHCT
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This report is based on the following six documents supplied to me by CIUHCT:

Progress report 2020
Progress report 2021
Scientific Publications 2020
Scientific Publications 2021
Conferences 2020
Conferences 2021

Executive Summary

Like all academic institutions, CIUHCT has been adversely affected by the global pandemic. But the Centre responded well and has managed to reinstate many of its normal activities, albeit with some understandable delays, reorganisation and shifts of focus. The Centre has established a strong profile both nationally and internationally by publishing widely, initiating and participating in conferences, and running a vibrant outreach program involving lectures, exhibitions and a strong website presence, although some members seem to be more active than others.

Discussion

All these reports were made during limitations imposed by the pandemic, which particularly affected conferences, workshops and regular seminars, but also caused delays in PhD research contracts. Even so, the centre continued functioning and its output remained impressive, although I have not seen any pre-pandemic reports for comparison. The later Progress report shows clear evidence of the Centre's rapid recovery and determination to expand once again.

a) Publications

The publications lists are impressive in terms of quantity, variety, range of subject matter and language (mostly but not exclusively Portuguese and English)

There have been some striking changes in the publication statistics. In particular, the number of chapters in national books increased by 300% from 13 to 39. In addition, the number of articles in peer-review international journals increased from 36 to 48, and the number of papers in the proceedings of international scientific meetings tripled from 6 to 18. Overall, the total number of publications increased from 155 to 211, although the percentage of international publications dropped from 66% to 56% (but I am not completely clear how the division into those 2 groups was determined). Unsurprisingly, much of the published material focuses on the history of Portugal and its former colonies around the world. The multiple other topics include mediaeval French astrology, evolutionary biology, archaeology, climate change and Francoist Spain (to name just a few).

Many of CIUHCT's researchers are involved in its four flagship projects. One major achievement, in May 2020, was the launch of the 4-volume set on *Science, Medicine and Technology in the Construction of Portugal*. Two other substantial productions – a biographical dictionary and a bibliographical guide – are both now on-line and new entries are constantly being added. HoST has maintained its goal of two issues per year, and plans are under way to have it indexed, eg in WoS.

b) People and projects

CIUHCT has expanded considerably, employing more researchers at various stages of their careers, including graduate students. There are currently 84 members, 57 of whom have PhDs. Of those, 49 are integrated research members who count for FCT; 32 are at the Faculty of Sciences, and 17 are at FCT Nova. Three ongoing research projects are based at the Centre, while several members also received funding to participate in external projects. Since last year, the number of prize winners has doubled from 4 to 8; this impressive list includes international awards (eg a medal from SHOT) as well as national ones (eg best thesis prize at the University of Lisbon).

It appears that some members of CIUHCT are far more productive than others: several names in particular reappear frequently on different lists. Of course, everybody's output fluctuates, eg when writing a major book, but I wonder if the Centre has any way of monitoring contributions. For example, instead of classifying by types of publication, perhaps it would be helpful to group them by people, eg level of seniority, gender, departmental affiliation. Perhaps it could be stipulated at the beginning of a contract that a certain level of activity is required, eg in 3 years a postdoc should publish 4-6 articles? This is important not only for the reputation of the Centre, but also for staff morale and individual careers.

CIUHCT has clearly been involved in a great number of conference events, despite the COVID restrictions. As technical points in the conferences documentation: i) much of the alphabetic ordering is by first name rather than surname, which is not the international convention; ii) both lists are divided into two parts, which I assume correspond to the two units within CIUHCT, ie Faculty of Sciences and FCT Nova; iii) I am not clear what the two circles near the top of the 2021 report are showing – why are the national / international ratios so different?

CIUHCT is commendably aware of its responsibilities to reach the wider Portuguese community, even though many of its activities have been forced to go online because of the pandemic. In particular, during 2020 the Centre made important contributions to Lisbon's role as European Green Capital, including collaborating on two public exhibitions about historical gardens. More recently, the Centre has been making positive efforts to open up and initiate more participative events such as hybrid lectures and informal online discussions. It has also expanded its website presence with features such as videos, TV programs and exhibition tours. CIUHCT also offered a 36-hour course on techniques for communicating science to non-specialised audiences.

c) Budgets and funding

Apart from the pandemic-induced reduction in funds being required for travelling abroad and staging local conferences, there were no substantial deviations from anticipated expenditure levels. In 2020, the main event was the Anthropocene Campus Lisboa: Parallax, whose various seminars, field trips etc proved a major success and led to CIUHCT being invited to participate in further related projects. However, the development of STMgram was severely delayed by the pandemic. The project 'Inquisition in Action' was also held back, but was officially launched in June 2022. A third ambitious project, due to be delivered in 2022, comprises 3 documentaries (in English) to disseminate worldwide Portugal's scientific and technological achievements.