
University of Coimbra (Portugal) No 1387bis

1 Identification

State Party
Portugal

Name of the property
University of Coimbra – Alta and Sofia

Location
Beira Litoral, Baixo Mondego

Inscription
2013

Brief description

Situated on a hill overlooking the city, the University of Coimbra with its colleges grew and evolved over more than seven centuries within the old town. Notable university buildings include the 12th century Cathedral of Santa Cruz and a number of 16th century colleges, the Royal Palace of Alcáçova, which has housed the University since 1537, the Joane Library with its rich baroque decor, the 18th century Botanical Garden and the University Press, as well as the large “University City” created during the 1940s. The University’s edifices became a reference in the development of other institutions of higher education in the Portuguese-speaking world, where it also exerted a major influence on learning and literature. Coimbra offers an outstanding example of an integrated university city with a specific urban typology as well as its own ceremonial and cultural traditions that have been kept alive through the ages.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
13 March 2019

2 Issues raised

Background

The University of Coimbra — Alta and Sofia was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2013 on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi).

After the inscription of the property, the city of Coimbra suffered damage from two natural disasters: the flooding of the Mondego River in February 2016 and Cyclone Leslie in October 2018. The two disasters caused damage to buildings within the boundaries of the inscribed property and its buffer zone. The State Party set up emergency

plans and created a compensation fund. Work to repair damage caused by Cyclone Leslie is still under way.

Modification

The State Party proposes adding to the inscribed property the Machado de Castro National Museum, with an area of 0.7 ha, located in what is currently the buffer zone. The proposed minor modification concerns the southern and western boundaries of the Alta component. The boundaries of the Sofia component will not be modified, and there will be no modification to the external boundaries of the buffer zone. The State Party argues that bringing this monument within the boundaries of the property is necessary to strengthen the property’s Outstanding Universal Value and will help maintain its integrity.

The Machado de Castro National Museum, which has enjoyed protected status as a national monument since 1910, is situated in the former archbishop’s palace, where the Roman forum of Aeminium once stood. The museum, inaugurated in 1911 and recently renovated, houses more than a hundred works of art with national interest or national treasure status. Most of the collections originate from the Coimbra region, and its monasteries, convents and churches, university colleges and dioceses.

During the inscription procedure, the museum building was undergoing renovation (2004-2012). A new building, which won the Piranesi/ Prix de Rome Award in 2014, has now been added. The renovation involved a programme of archaeological, architectural and museographic interventions. The collections, and particularly those relating to the history of the University of Coimbra, are now displayed in a new permanent exhibition area. A project for the conservation and restoration of the Church of São João de Almedina, approved in 2017, has also been included in the Machado de Castro Museum renovation.

The State Party points out that the University of Coimbra and the Machado de Castro Museum have maintained a close relationship for centuries. This has led to the sharing of certain assets, and some of the collections are jointly managed. The building was not only the bishops’ residence, but also formed an integral part of the university’s teaching activity, although teaching in the bishops’ palace has not been continuous down the centuries. Today, courses in archaeology, architecture and history are taught in the building, reflecting the importance both of the remains discovered and the collections displayed there.

The Machado de Castro Museum comes under the responsibility of the Cultural Heritage Directorate of the Portuguese Ministry of Culture. The property is managed by the association RUAS [Recreating the Univers(c)ity – Alta and Sofia] created for this purpose, whose founder members are the University of Coimbra (UC), the Coimbra Municipal Council (CMC), the Regional Delegation of the Ministry of Culture (DRCC), and Coimbra Viva (an urban

renovation company, SRU). The RUAS association is governed by a presidency (exercised alternately by the University of Coimbra and Coimbra Municipal Council) and by a board of directors charged with implementing the management plan. The Machado de Castro Museum already forms part of the RUAS association, and is joining its annual general meeting and its consultative forum. All proposed projects and interventions inside the boundaries of the inscribed property are presented in advance to the consultative forum of the RUAS association.

The State Party indicates that a master plan will be drawn up for the Machado de Castro Museum based on the same parameters and principles established for the other buildings in the inscribed property. Collaboration between the Machado de Castro Museum and the University of Coimbra, which has a range of university faculties and highly qualified departments and facilities, has been developed with an approach based on complementarity, articulation and sharing of resources, participation in international thematic networks and the definition of cultural and social programmes.

The legal protection of the proposed modification, as regards the boundaries of the property and buffer zone, is provided by the Decree-Law n° 107/2001 on the cultural heritage protection and enhancement policy and regime; announcement n° 14917/2013, published in the *Diário da República*, concerning the publication of the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the protection of the property as a national monument and the definition of the special protection zone; announcement n° 2129/2012, published in the *Diário da República*, on the municipal regulations for the building, and the restoration and repurposing of the urban area covered by the application of the University of Coimbra for UNESCO World Heritage listing, including the buffer zone; announcement n° 7635/2014, published in the *Diário da República*, relating to the master plan for Coimbra Municipal Council; and the Coimbra Strategic Plan, approved in 2010.

The proposed modification does not alter the existing legal protection in any way, as the whole zone is protected by the same laws and regulations. The various components of the property are protected by their status as national monuments, in accordance with Law 107/2001, no. 7, article 15.

The Museum was reopened to the public in 2012 on completion of the extension. The new volumes, though decidedly modern in appearance, do not detract from the heterogeneous architectural whole which they help to form. Like the other components of the inscribed property, the Machado de Castro Museum is representative of the historic, artistic and ideological periods during which it was built. The conservation, restoration and rehabilitation interventions were conducted on the basis of the theories that held sway in each successive period.

ICOMOS considers that the governing body of the Machado de Castro Museum must be made an integral part of the management structure of the inscribed property, and that agreements must be put in place for the management and upkeep of the building and its collection.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed modifications of boundaries for the University of Coimbra and its buffer zone contribute to a strengthening of the property's integrity, and its management and visitor presentation.

3 ICOMOS recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription




ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundaries of the University of Coimbra – Alta and Sofia, Portugal, be **approved**.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS also recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following points:

- a) Drawing up a master plan for the Machado de Castro Museum,
- b) Submitting the management plan, once finalised, to the World Heritage Centre for examination.

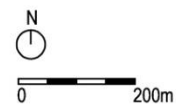
Map showing both delimitations of the Property

-  Original World Heritage Area boundaries
-  Proposed addition to World Heritage Area boundary
-  Original Buffer Zone boundary (without changes)

World Heritage Areas

1 - Alta Universitária

2 - Rua da Sofia



Map showing the revised boundaries of the property