


Proposal Evaluation Form

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	EUROPEAN COMMISSION Horizon 2020 - Research and Innovation Framework Programme	Evaluation Summary Report
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Call: H2020-MSCA-IF-2017
Funding scheme: MSCA-IF-EF-ST
Proposal number: 794949
Proposal acronym: AlanUS
Duration (months): 24
Proposal title: Alanus ab Insulis from Untapped Sources
Activity: ST-SOC

N.	Proposer name	Country	Total Cost	%	Grant Requested	%
1	UNIVERSITAT ZURICH	CH	175,419.6	100.00%	175,419.6	100.00%
Total:			175,419.6		175,419.6	

Abstract:

For nearly two hundred years scholars have debated on the biography and the identity of Alanus ab Insulis, the great medieval philosopher and theologian universally known as Alan of Lille, even though he seems to bear little relation (if at all) with the northern French town. The importance of the question goes well beyond the field of medieval studies, since it displays the case of a very disputed identity of an author, whom we know very little about, even in presence of a great variety of sources. Two sets of letters, one generally believed to be the work by Alan of Tewkesbury – the secretary of Saint Thomas Becket repeatedly believed in the past to be the same person as Alanus – and the other written by a mysterious monk from the Bec abbey, could help us solving the mystery. So far, the first set of letters has neither been translated nor deeply studied, while the second, rather implausibly, was ascribed to Alanus by French scholar Françoise Hudry in 2003; as for a direct and thorough comparison between the two letters' collections, it is still missing. The matter asks for a research that systematically taps into the extant sources by means of a new inter-disciplinary methodology that, massively resorting to IT, tries to make a good usage of them and, unlike prominent trends, refuses to decontextualize medieval works from their historical and cultural environment. The research features an innovative approach to humanities as a whole in the sense that on the one hand, in a sort of neo-positivistic turn, it starts from carefully collected empirical evidence to get rid of propositions “deprived of sense”, and, on the other, by submitting such evidence to an inter-disciplinary cross-analysis involving history, literature, and above all philology and philosophy, it tries to shed light on the life and identity of a celebrated medieval master, letting us finally fully comprehend his precious and sometimes obscure works.

Evaluation Summary Report

Evaluation Result

Total score: 72.60% (Threshold: 70/100.00)

Form information

SCORING

Scores must be in the range 0-5.

Interpretation of the score:

- 0–** The **proposal fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1– Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2– Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3– Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4– Very good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5– Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

* - mandatory fields

Criterion 1 - Excellence

Score: **3.40** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 50.00%)

- **Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)**
- **Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host**
- **Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution**
- **Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence**

Strengths:

- The researcher has a deep knowledge in a very technical field and has already published several works (papers in high-ranked journals and a monograph) on these topics, lending credibility to the proposal.
- Transferable skills from the researcher to the host institution are precisely specified and well formulated.

- The qualifications and experience of the supervisor appropriately match the topic of the proposed project, and will certainly provide solid grounds for the development of the researcher's career.
- Hosting arrangements at the host institution are precisely specified and fully in line with the project requirements.
- The host institution would provide key and useful training to the researcher.
- As a member of international networks, the researcher has already a recognized visibility and this project would broaden their recognition.

Weaknesses

- The numerous statements on interdisciplinarity are not sound enough: the proposed project clearly remains within the disciplinary limits of medieval literary studies.
- Originality and innovative aspects are not sufficiently justified. In particular, the proposed methodology, which is described as original and innovative, draws in large part upon existing approaches.
- In this proposal, the researcher does not succeed in presenting the proposed research as a fully independent project, but rather as relying on the supervisor's own research and guidance.
- The proposal does not address sufficiently the networking opportunities offered by the team at the host institution.
- The introduction and objectives are not clearly framed. The proposal draws comparisons between the modern/contemporary and medieval periods but some of the broad comparative themes raised along these lines are barely addressed later in the proposal and it is unclear why the proposed research is framed in this way.
- The fundamental premise is that the researcher seeks to learn about an important medieval writer by studying letters attributed to him; yet clearly the researcher anticipates refuting this attribution, which will limit its usefulness in providing knowledge about the author in question.
- While the use of IT is certainly appropriate, it is insufficiently clear how it would form the basis of a new neo-positivist methodology.
- The claim that the project will generate new findings with the assistance of digital tools is not entirely convincing, since there is insufficient indication about how these tools would be used.
- The researcher's track record is valuable but its breadth is not as impressive since it deals mostly with the same medieval author. In this regard, the level of novelty is questionable.

Criterion 2 - Impact

Score: **3.90** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 30.00%)

- **Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher**
- **Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the action results**
- **Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the action activities to different target audiences**

Strengths:

- The proposal succeeds in identifying different competences that will significantly enhance the researcher's career prospects after the fellowship, prominently textual criticism and philology.
- There is a very clear and well-formulated dissemination plan addressed to specialists at different levels, including various means relevant to the research such as publications, conferences, and specialised seminars. The research dissemination activities planned are appropriate for a 24-month grant.
- The proposal includes innovative and very promising communication activities targeted to multiple audiences: for example, the media, the general public, and students from secondary schools, using diversified means to reach the target audience.

Weaknesses:

- The variety and number of communication activities planned creates the risk of taking too much time away from the core research activities: It is unclear that the researcher could conduct the research program and at the same time have speaking engagements in schools of two different countries, author and create a stage play, and write a mystery novel.
- Since the focus of the study would be on the achievements of the author under investigation, the range of career opportunities that the fellowship would cater is somewhat limited.
- The claim that the proposal could foster a trend change in humanities studies as a whole is rather excessive.

Criterion 3 - implementation

Score: **3.80** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 20.00%)

- **Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan**
- **Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources**
- **Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management**
- **Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)**

Strengths:

- The allocation for some of the work packages is appropriate.
- Work packages are precisely described, and respond to the needs of the objectives of the action.
- The host institution has comprehensive support services that ensure its active contribution to the project's research and training activities.
- The infrastructure, logistics and facilities of the host institution are of a very high standard, particularly the libraries, and promise a highly effective implementation of the project.
- The work packages, illustrated by a Gantt chart, rightly intermingle works on primary sources and outreach activities.
- The researcher shows a full awareness of the risks that could endanger the various work packages, especially the waste of time in translation and text edition. These risks will be managed through a close monitoring of the project with the supervisor. The risk management of the project is well structured. The researcher has envisaged the risks (in terms of access to primary sources or in terms of intellectual disappointment if the starting assumption turned erroneous). In no case would the whole project become infeasible, since the publication of the primary material would go on as a step forward for the academic field.
- The host institution has a long experience in fostering international fellowships and would provide all the support requested (e. g. personal office, full access to libraries).

Weaknesses:

- A five-month preparatory phase seems over-long for a 24-month project.
- Milestones and deliverables are not always correctly identified and differentiated, and they are described as tasks and objectives instead.
- The achievement of the overall objectives and all activities and tasks as described in the proposal, including language learning, is hardly feasible during the fellowship. The person-months allocated for all tasks and activities proposed is not enough credible.
- The section on project organisation and management is inadequate because it addresses progress monitoring mechanisms and allocation of resources only, instead of discussing project organisation structure and management approaches properly.
- Insufficient planning is demonstrated for the allocation of resources to some work packages.

Scope of the proposal

Status: **Yes**

Comments (in case the proposal is out of scope)

Not provided

Operational Capacity

Status: **Operational Capacity: Yes**

If No, please list the concerned partner(s), the reasons for the rejection, and the requested amount.

Not provided

Use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC)

Status: **No**

If yes, please state whether the use of hESC is, or is not, in your opinion, necessary to achieve the scientific objectives of the proposal and the reasons why. Alternatively, please also state if it cannot be assessed whether the use of hESC is necessary or not because of a lack of information.

Not provided

Overall comments

Not provided



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