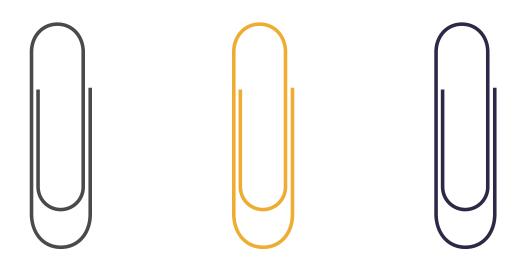


# **Press pack**

Academic year 2014/2015



# Contents

1.	The UOC today	3
2.	The educational model	6
3.	Courses, students and teaching staff	8
4.	Research	13
5.	Open knowledge	14
	Annex. Services for journalists	16

# **Press pack**

# 1. The UOC today

The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC) is an innovative, prestigious institution, internationally renowned for its educational model and use of technology.

Founded in 1994 with the backing of the Government of Catalonia, the UOC is an institution that grew out of the knowledge society. It offers top-quality distance education and is a world leader in research and the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) to education.

Two decades after its founding, the UOC will inaugurate the celebration of its 20th anniversary this academic year at the University's annual graduation ceremonies, which will be held on 15 November at L'Auditori in Barcelona and 29 November at the National Auditorium of Music in Madrid.

The UOC was launched in the 1995/1996 academic year, with 200 students enrolled in officially recognized courses in Educational Psychology and Business Studies. Today it is Spain's leading online university by number of alumni and ranks second among Catalan universities in terms of enrolment.

The University's institutional centres are located in Barcelona. It also has an extensive regional network to support and energize the university community and ensure seamless interaction with the social environment. This network – made up of 17 regional centres and 51 UOC points – extends throughout Catalonia and also includes locations in Madrid, Seville and Valencia.

Internationally, the UOC has two points, in Andorra and Alghero, and a regional centre in Mexico that handles work related to the strong presence the University has achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Internationalization is one of the UOC's key strategic priorities: over 600 agreements have been signed with universities, educational institutions and companies worldwide. Since April 2013, when the UOC's new president, Josep A. Planell, took office, 36 new international agreements have been signed or are currently under negotiation: 20 in Latin America, three in Europe, three in Asia, four with intergovernmental organizations, two in Africa, one in the United States, and one in Australia.

The UOC also belongs to many educational networks. At the local level, it is a member of the Inter-University Council of Catalonia (CIC), the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP), the Vives University Network, and the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE).

#### The UOC in figures

- > 20 years leading ICT-based learning
- > 54 official qualifications
- > 40.703 students studying official qualifications
- > 49.943 graduates
- > 3.666 teaching staff
- > 7.100 virtual classrooms
- > 2,5 million annual users of the Virtual Campus

# > 600

agreements with companies and institutions worldwide

# > 310

companies and institutions in the UOC associate company network

\* 2103-2014 academic year

At the international level, the University is a member of leading distance education and e-learning networks (35 in total).

As an innovative institution, the UOC has received many awards and accolades in recognition of its achievements, including three Learning Impact Awards given by the IMS Global Learning Consortium (in 2008, 2009 and 2011).

In turn, since the 2003/2004 academic year, the University has awarded a number of honorary doctorates to distinguished Catalan and international figures. To mark its 15th anniversary, the UOC bestowed this degree on Sir Timothy Berners-Lee, the father of the World Wide Web.

The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya was the first university in the world to be born on the web and to give its lectures solely on the internet.

When it was founded in 1994, in Spain there was only the National Distance Education University (UNED), which offered off-site teaching but not online. It would not be until more than a decade later, in the 2007-2008 academic year, that the second online university in Spain would be created, the Valencian International University (VIU), later followed by the Madrid Distance University (UDIMA) and the La Rioja International University (UNIR).

### **Governing bodies**

The UOC was founded in 1994 with the backing of the Government of Catalonia to provide university-level e-learning services in Catalan. Since the start of this year, when the UOC Statutes were amended and the number of members of the Board of Trustees was cut from 23 to 11, with the majority from the private sector, the University once again has the status of a non-public sector foundation, a change that has allowed it to regain management autonomy.

The UOC's organizational structure is built around the Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Foundation for the Open University of Catalonia, FUOC) and establishes two types of governing bodies: single-member bodies and mixed-membership bodies.

### **FUOC** bodies

Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is the highest representative, governing and administrative body of the FUOC. It is responsible for appointing and dismissing the president and the general manager, approving the University's budget and accounts, approving the action plan presented by the president and evaluating results. The current Board of Trustees, formed on 22 July of this year, is made up of 11 members. Six are representatives or important figures appointed by the Catalan Federation of Savings Banks, the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping, and the Institute for Catalan Studies; and five are members appointed by the Government of Catalonia. The The UOC community includes

- > 52.233 students in more than 100 countries
- > 49.943

graduates

- > 3.666 teaching staff
- > 491 administrative staff

# > 400

research staff

Over **100.000** people Board is chaired by Andreu Mas-Colell, the current Catalan Minister of Economy and Knowledge.

- Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is the permanent body responsible for the administration and management of the UOC. It also conducts the regular business of the FUOC.
- Council. The Council is an advisory body made up of the chair of the Board of Trustees, the president of the UOC, and representatives appointed by the Catalan Parliament, the Inter-University Council of Catalonia, and business and trade union organizations.

### **UOC single-member bodies**

- > President: Josep A. Planell i Estany
- > Vice Presidents: Marta Aymerich Martínez and Carles Sigalés Conde
- > General Secretary: Carles Cortada Hortalà
- > General Manager: Mireia Armengol Almaraz

### **UOC mixed-membership bodies**

- Soverning Council. The Governing Council is responsible for ensuring compliance with current legal and statutory regulations, and proposes strategies and programmes to the UOC's Board of Trustees. It is made up of the president, vice presidents, general manager and the general secretary, as well as a faculty representative, a student representative and an administrative staff representative.
- Executive Management Committee. The Executive Management Committee, the University's permanent administrative and management body, is made up of the president, vice presidents, general manager, director of the Office of the President and Institutional Relations, director of Global Development, and director of Operations.

The UOC also has a number of other coordinating and representative bodies, including the Faculty Council, the Strategic Committee and the Academic Committee, among others. The Student Council is the highest representative body for students, and the *Sindic de Greuges* (Ombudsman) is responsible for protecting the rights and overseeing the duties of all members of the university community. The position is currently held by Pere Fabra i Abat.

# 2. The educational model

The UOC, launched on the internet two decades ago in the context of the knowledge society, has become a leader in research and the application of ICT to education.

The University's educational model is the main feature that sets it apart from other higher education institutions. The focus is on learning activity that is adapted to each student's needs, and the approach combines a range of resources and work dynamics based on accompaniment by teaching staff and interaction with classmates.

The model is network-oriented, web-based, dynamic, flexible and constantly evolving.

Students are at the centre of the learning process: they manage their time, plan their pace of study, and construct their own academic path based on a personalized model. They can study when and how they like, and wherever they want, using a computer, mobile phone or tablet.

The UOC encourages students to work independently but also fosters teamwork, and learners are supported throughout their studies by lecturers and counsellors. Students must be able to manage complex activities and situations and produce knowledge based on a collective, collaborative approach. This involves using problem-solving methods, doing project work, jointly creating products, and engaging in discussion and inquiry. Assessment is continuous, formative and integrated in the learning process: students are assessed as they learn and acquire competences.

The model is highly flexible and requires a mix of dynamics and resources suited to a broad range of learning situations and needs. This is why the UOC has made the latest technology and communication tools an integral part of the learning activity students engage in. These elements include:

- social tools that facilitate interaction and sharing of knowledge (blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, etc.);
- multimedia content that makes it possible to present knowledge in an interactive, motivating way, using a combination of audiovisual and written elements;
- advanced communication systems, both synchronous and asynchronous, that facilitate flexible, clear communication that meets the needs of each situation (video chats, forums, video blogs, etc.);
- immersive environments that make it possible to interact with people and objects in a way that simulates real situations, and games that motivate learning;
- > mobile devices that provide students with quick access to content and learning activities.

#### The Virtual Campus in figures

- > 2.463.709 users a year
- > 7.100 virtual classrooms
- > 6.000 work groups
- > 2.011 subjects in Catalan
- > 1.957 subjects in Spanish
- > 19 subjects in French
- > 12 subjects in English

#### > 609 counsellor classrooms

 UDC Universitat Oberta de Catalunya The **Virtual Campus** is the main learning environment and the place where members of the UOC community meet and interact. It is where students engage with the educational process and have access to virtual classrooms, learning resources and content, and spaces for cooperation and exchange.

MY UOC, the Virtual Campus home page, is a modular space that students can organize as they wish.

The Virtual Campus also includes administrative and information areas, such as the **Virtual Secretary's Office**, where students can take care of any academic matters, and the **Virtual Library**, which is part of the UOC's pedagogical model and one of the key support elements for learning, teaching and research.

#### w.uoc.edu/educational-model

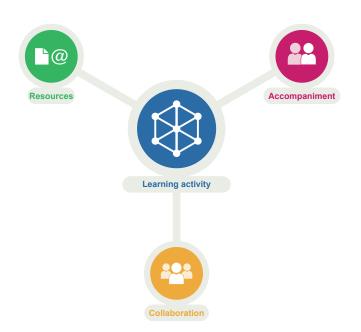
Learning activity is at the heart of the UOC's educational model. Resources include the spaces, content and tools required for learning and assessment. Collaboration is understood as the set of communicative and participatory dynamics that facilitate joint construction of knowledge between classmates and teachers. Accompaniment refers to the actions carried out by teachers and counsellors to monitor students, support them in the learning process, and assess their progress. Assessment is continuous, formative, and integrated in the learning process.

# Open-source educational innovation: Open Apps

The UOC is a multi-device, multi-channel university that responds to the needs of students. From its inception, the University has developed and tested methodologies and technologies aimed at successfully tackling the educational and management challenges facing its students, lecturers and management staff.

To disseminate its educational model and share the results of applied innovation, the UOC has created the Open Apps portal, a virtual, collaborative, open repository that brings together innovative, successful experiences in education and management.

Open Apps includes a wide range of innovative products, from applications and procedures related to teaching practice and the learning process, to solutions for improving university management processes. Under this conceptual umbrella, the UOC has coordinated a European project known as Speak Apps, a virtual open-source platform that brings together applications, tools and materials for oral language learning.



## 3. Courses, students and teaching staff

The UOC's course offering includes a range of undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, open education, and in-company training programmes that expands each year.

Courses are organized in seven areas of knowledge: Arts and Humanities; Health Sciences; Information and Communication Sciences; Law and Political Science; Economics and Business Studies; IT, Multimedia and Telecommunications; and Psychology and Educational Sciences.

For the 2014/2015 academic year, the course offering includes 17 bachelor's degrees and 37 master's degrees, all of which are officially recognized.

The following official programmes are being introduced this year:

- > Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences
- University master's degree in Communication and Entertainment
- > University master's degree in Corporate Social Responsibility
- > University master's degree in Tourism, Sustainability and ICT
- University master's degree in Cultural Management (UOC-UdG)
- University master's degree in General Health Psychology (UdG-UOC)
- University master's degree in Criminology and Penal Enforcement (UPF-UAB-UdG-UOC)

In addition, 86 new UOC-specific programmes have been introduced (12 master's degrees, 27 postgraduate diplomas, 44 specialization courses, and three courses), bringing the total number to 500.

Psychology is the most popular bachelor's degree, followed by Business Administration and Management, and Law; and the university master's degrees with the highest enrolment are Learning Difficulties and Language Disorders, Health and Safety, and Education and ICT (e-learning).

The UOC offers three pioneering and highly-regarded doctoral programmes in its areas of specialization, in Information and Knowledge Society, Education and ICT (e-learning), and Network and Information Technologies. These programmes are run by the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3), the eLearn Center, and the IT, Multimedia and Telecommunications Department respectively. The three programmes are offered within the framework of the **Doctoral School**, which was set up last year and includes around 300 doctoral students.

In addition to officially recognized qualifications, within the framework of its **Seminar** programme and the **Summer Open University** (UOd'E), the University offers short courses that allow students to combine learning and professional development. The University **@thenaeum** allows learners to

#### **Course offering**

# > 17

bachelor's degrees

> 234 specializations, micro-courses & seminars

> **132** 

postgraduate diplomas

# > 37

university master's degrees

> 35 UOC-certified master's degrees

> 9

international master's degrees

### > 3

doctoral programmes

take subjects in any area of study or from postgraduate programmes without meeting admission requirements.

The UOC also has a **School of Languages** that provides language training for over 600 learners, with courses in English, German, Chinese, French, Japanese and Catalan. All courses are adapted to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, an internationally recognized framework for describing language ability.

The **Cooperation Area** brings together educational and research programmes related to development

#### studies.uoc.edu

The UOC has the second-most **students** of any Catalan university: over 52,000 learners are enrolled in official and UOC-specific programmes.

In the 2013/2014 academic year, 40,703 learners pursued studies leading to officially recognized qualifications, and 11,530 studied in UOC-specific programmes. Residents of Catalonia make up 75% of the student population; 21% are from the rest of Spain, and 4% from abroad (105 different countries).

Over half of the students enrolled in official degree programmes were women, and one in four were aged 40 or over. Nearly 5,000 students graduated.

In this **first semester of the 2014/2015 academic year**, almost 25,000 students have begun one of the 17 degrees offered by the UOC, 13.6% higher than a year ago. Of these, nearly 20% are new students.

The two degree courses with the highest number of enrolments are Psychology, with almost 20% of the total, and Business Management and Administration, with 17%. In turn, the most popular university master's degree courses are in Education and Information Technologies, IT Security, Health and Safety, and Legal Practice, which boast over 300 students each.

As regards the profiles of the enrolled students, some 52% are women and 60% are over the age of 30. The vast majority live in Catalonia, followed by the Valencian Community (almost 1,500 students), the Balearic Islands (almost 1,400) and the Community of Madrid (1,100). Around one thousand live in some seventy countries worldwide, most notably Andorra, Germany, the United Kingdom and Colombia, followed by France, the United States and Switzerland.

The UOC's **academic results** confirm the effectiveness of its educational model. The **success rate** achieved by students (i.e. the pass rate for the subjects in which they are assessed) is over 90% every year. In the first semester of the 2013/2014 academic year, this rate was 91.5% for EHEA degrees, 93.2% for pre-EHEA degrees, and 96.7% for university master's degrees.

Moreover, the **performance rate** (the percentage of subjects students pass out of the total number in which they enrol) is above 70% every academic year. In the first semester of the 2013/2014 academic year, the performance rate was 73% for EHEA degrees, 75.2% for pre-EHEA degrees, and 82.6% for university master's degrees.

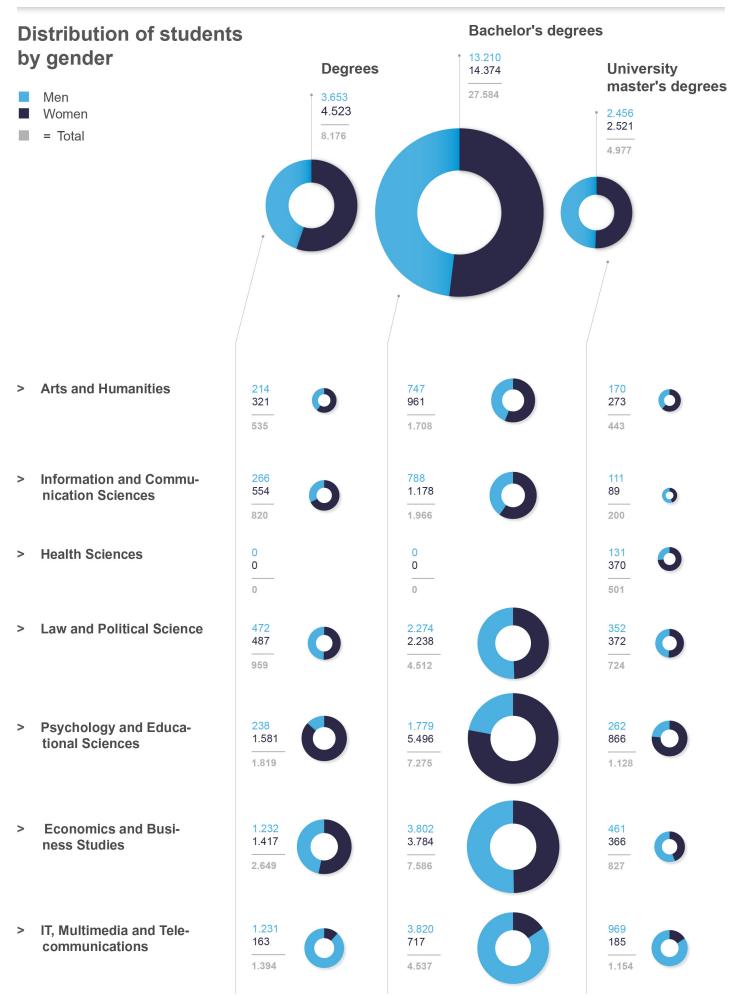
### **UOC Alumni**

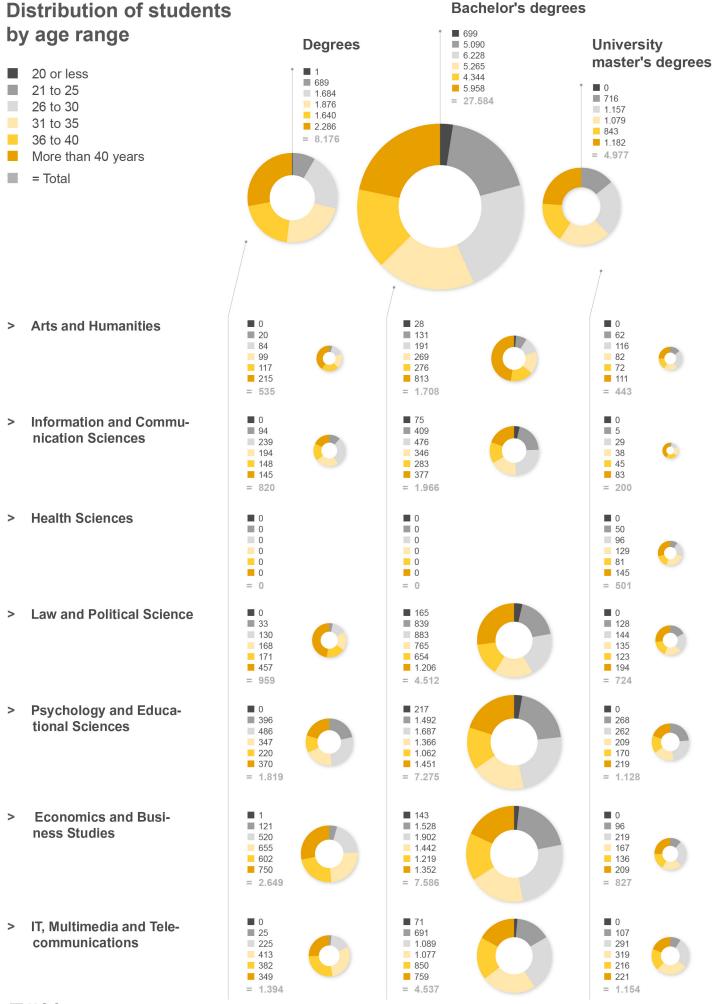
The UOC has more alumni than any other online university based in Spain. The UOC Alumni community now includes 49,943 graduates in 80 countries worldwide. The Alumni Network includes a number of sectoral, territorial, international and advocacy groups that promote networking activities such as UOCmeet and Infocom. UOC Alumni has its own representative bodies and regional branches: Alumni Madrid, Alumni Sevilla, Alumni Balears and Alumni Canarias. The spring of 2014 saw the launch of UOC ON, a social app for iOS and Android devices that connects the entire university community, promotes online social exchanges and collaboration, and facilitates interaction with companies and society as a whole.

The **UOC's academic staff** is made up of 260 faculty members and 3,406 teaching collaborators who support students throughout the learning process. All members of the academic staff are leaders in their field of knowledge and experts in e-learning and the strategic use of digital technology.

UOC teaching staff play an important role in building a university that is quality-oriented, committed and effective. Their activities include teaching; research, innovation and transfer; and dissemination of knowledge. The UOC distinguishes between three types of teacher: **the lecturer in charge of the subject**, who is responsible for designing and coordinating the training process, defining resources and activities, and quality assurance; the **tutor**, whose role is to accompany students, facilitate learning, and guide and assess learners in a personalized way; and the **counsellor**, who acts as an institutional contact for students over the course of their studies.

Teaching collaborators are mainly professionals from various companies and organizations, freelancers, and university and secondary school teachers. Eighty per cent of teaching collaborators formalize their relationship with the University through a contract for the provision of services, and 20% work for the UOC under agreements with their home universities. Over half of these teachers (55%) are men; one in four is aged between 41 and 45, and four out of five are Catalan.





Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

## 4. Research

The UOC is a research and innovation leader in its areas of expertise and specialization: the information society and e-learning.

Research, one of the pillars of the University's activity, is organized in relation to academic programmes and two prestigious research centres: the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3) and the eLearn Center (eLC). Over 400 professionals, organized in over 40 RDI groups, are involved in research. In addition to groups focusing on the UOC's areas of expertise, the University now has research groups that specialize in the arts and humanities, social sciences, health sciences, and technology and communication.

In the 2013/2014 academic year, the number of research groups officially recognized by the Government of Catalonia as "emerging" or "consolidated" practically doubled (from 14 to 26).

Six UOC projects have received approval this year under a national framework RDI programme run by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. The projects focus on diverse fields of research, from language comprehension and learning in virtual environments, to ways of improving ICT training, and gender and ICT.

The IN3 (directed by sociologist Manuel Castells until 2013 and currently by Josep Lladós Masllorens) focuses on studying the internet, the network society, and the effects of the interaction of digital technologies with human activity.

Its research activity is organized in nine programmes and 18 groups, 11 of which have been officially recognized by the Government of Catalonia. The Institute is staffed by 92 researchers, who work with visiting lecturers, postdoctoral researchers and visiting scholars on temporary stays. The eLearn Center, directed by Christine Appel since February 2014, specializes in applied research, experimentation, innovation, and training in e-learning at the UOC. The eLC currently has 11 research groups, five of which have been officially recognized by the Government of Catalonia. It is staffed by 136 researchers, who work with visiting lecturers and students on predoctoral and postdoctoral stays.

The eLC's mission is to safeguard the University's educational model, ensure its continued development and excellence, promote good practices, and deliver training in its area of expertise: teaching and learning processes; organization, management and policy in education; and technological resources for learning.

There are two other focal points for applied research at the eLC: the Education and ICT programme, which trains teachers and professionals working at universities, schools and in business in the use of ICT for education and training, and the experimentation laboratory, a virtual network based on cloud computing for designing, carrying out and analysing experiments in the field of e-learning.

research.uoc.edu

# 5. Open knowledge

The UOC lives on the internet and shares knowledge freely online through serial publications, special projects, blogs, social networks, the library and document repository, Open-CourseWare and Open Apps.

The University currently publishes eight journals and three magazines aimed at a wider audience. These publications, impelled by UOC programmes and academic staff, focus on a range of areas, from how ICT are changing the humanities, to culture, economics, communication, education, law, politics and conflictology.

Two new publications were launched in the 2013/2014 academic year: *Oikonomics*, a biannual magazine put together by the Economics and Business Studies Department that analyses intersections between economics, business and society, and the annual journal *Franquisme & Transició* [Francoism & Transition], an initiative of the Arts and Humanities Department under a co-publishing agreement with the Study Group on Contemporary Catalan Literature (UAB), the Centre for Studies on the Franco and Democratic Eras (UAB), and the Carles Pi i Sunyer Foundation.

The UOC also disseminates knowledge through two special projects: LletrA, a space for showcasing Catalan literature online, set up in cooperation with the Ramon Llull Institute; and Debates on Education, a project run in cooperation with the Jaume Bofill Foundation that provides a forum for face-to-face and online debate on the future of education in Catalonia.

O2 – The "Oberta" in Open Access is the UOC's institutional repository, a service provided by the UOC Library. The repository currently contains over 2,400 digital resources related to research, teaching and university management. Open-CourseWare is a website where the UOC openly shares its teaching materials, and Open Apps is an online environment for sharing experiences, resources and applications aimed at optimizing teaching and management processes.

To disseminate knowledge in audiovisual format, this academic year the UOC has launched channels on YouTube and iTunes U, an educational platform that uses Apple's iTunes technology to distribute free audiovisual content of an educational and institutional nature to any device.

The UOC also has open, active channels and digital spaces for social interaction on Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn.

w.uoc.edu/open-knowledge

#### **Open data**

Knowledge spaces:

> 18.588 subscribers to

the UOC's digital publications

> 3.624.870 documents downloaded from the O2 repository

Spaces for interaction:

> 4.053 subscribers

> 1.799.999 views for the UOC YouTube channel

> 23.181 followers of the UOC Facebook page

> 45.649 followers of the UOC's institutional Twitter account

> 4.479 members of LinkedIn – UOC Alumni

### **UOC Business**

The UOC also disseminates the knowledge generated by its academic and research staff through business and institutional channels with the aim of contributing to the knowledge economy, promoting entrepreneurial spirit, and addressing needs related to training, entrepreneurship, and competitive growth of the socioeconomic fabric.

In this context, the University works with companies and institutions to carry out joint projects that promote lifelong learning and the use of new technologies. The UOC provides its partners with high-quality training and knowledge services and carries out initiatives related to skill-building, consulting, applied research, entrepreneurship, and innovation for competitiveness.

The relationship between the UOC and the business community is based on cooperation for mutual benefit. The UOC's contributes innovation and research; companies offer the expertise of their professionals and environments where theory can be put into practice. The University offers training, content and methodology; companies provide opportunities for students to complete internships and carry out bachelor's degree final projects.

The UOC has concluded 310 collaboration agreements with organizations in various sectors through the UOC Associate Institutions and Companies link.

Joint projects focus on multiple lines of action and include in-company training programmes designed to meet the specific needs of companies and reflect the nature of their business; cooperation with corporate universities; advice on developing company training plans; participation in UOC training programmes; and participation in research and innovation projects of mutual interest.

w.uoc.edu/companies

# Annex

# Services for journalists

The UOC Press Office offers journalists a wide range of resources.

In addition to this press pack, which is updated every academic year, since 2010 the Media Office has published an annual UOC Experts Guide to make it easy for media organizations to contact members of the University's teaching and research staff.

The experts identified in the guide are listed by area of knowledge and in an alphabetical directory. The entry for each expert indicates his or her area of knowledge and fields of expertise, email address, phone number, and profile on social networks. You can download the guide in PDF format or search by area of expertise or surname in the UOC's virtual press room. Alternatively, you can request a printed copy of the guide by writing to **gpremsa@uoc.edu**.

The press office also offers media organizations a number of other useful resources:

- > Subscription to the UOC email alert service.
- RSS subscriptions to the press room (news, interviews and events), academic e-journals, networked knowledge spaces, and UOC blogs.
- > Photo gallery of events and holders of UOC posts.
- > Videos reports and interviews showcasing distinguished figures and academic events, on the UOC YouTube channel.

The following resources are also available on request:

- > specific information and data on the UOC's activity, including academic and institutional events, student profiles, etc.;
- > contact with members of the Governing Council, lecturers, researchers and experts working at the University for interviews, articles, opinion pieces, discussions, etc.;
- > photos and images related to specific events and other items not available under an open content licence (provided via a private Flickr group or FTP server);
- > video and audio recordings of important events organized by the UOC.

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