Studies in Conflictology at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC)

The UOC began offering studies in Conflictology more than ten years ago. Studies began with what was then known as an adaptation course, today an expert course. It was a four-month course with only one professor and enjoyed such great success that it had two classes of sixty students. It followed the structure of the Official Master’s Degree in the Information and Knowledge Society that prepared students for the UOC Doctoral Studies programme, which is still being run under the name of Chaos Management: Initiation to Conflictology and from which several doctoral theses have resulted. In short, more than one thousand students in Conflictology have taken the courses organised by this university.

Conflictology, as taught at the UOC, is the compendium of trends that exist in diverse universities throughout the world consisting of denominations and schools with names such as Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation, Conflict Management, Mediation and Peace Studies, amongst others. It is, then, a multidisciplinary compendium on conflicts, crises and violence, as well as the search for methods of pacification, nonviolence, the peaceful solution of conflicts, methods and techniques for resolving crises and systems for living in peace.

The expert course grew and was transformed into a Postgraduate in Conflictology with high enrolment that resulted in a second postgraduate course and between them they covered the two main applied fields: political and armed conflicts and interpersonal conflicts. The high enrolment for these two postgraduate programmes led to the current offer of two Master’s Degrees and four postgraduate courses in Conflictology (http://www.uoc.edu/masters/cat/web/cooperacio_humanitaria_pau_i_sostenibilitat/conflictologia) to which was added a third Master’s Degree in English (http://www.uoc.edu/masters/eng/master/web/cooperacion_humanitaria_paz_y_sostenibilidad/conflictologia) and the transformation of the first Official Master’s Degree. Correspondingly, we have organised specific courses in Conflictology for the city of Cuautitlán Izcalli in Mexico and, in the near future, for the Mexican Senate in addition to other programmes of international scope currently in preparation.

Conferences and seminars in Conflictology have been held for the Ecuadorian War College, the Mexican Armada, the Security Institute of Catalonia, and police schools in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Chile, as well as courses, seminars and conferences for various European and American universities, among other diffusion initiatives. We have a collaboration agreement with the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies aimed at training military personnel in nonviolent military intervention techniques, as well as training police forces in non-repressive interventions. Conflictology is a pragmatic discipline, applicable for helping and guiding students to develop specific projects to be incorporated in their professional life in all applied fields; family, school, work, mercantile, social and community, political, military, police, environmental conflicts and in personal crises.

We are launching a new Master’s Degree in Conflictology for the 2009-10 academic year. It is in English and has professors from universities in the United States, England, Australia, Singapore, Austria, Denmark, Germany, France, Ecuador and Argentina, as
well as from the universities Jaume I (Castelló), Ramon Llull (Barcelona), Granada, Santiago de Compostela, País Basc and, obviously the UOC. In addition, in collaboration with the University of Loja (UTPL) (Ecuador), we are preparing a Master’s Degree in Environmental Conflicts with work-experience in the Ecuadorian Amazon. We have credit recognition agreements with other universities, joint training and research programmes, as well as work-experience in various applied fields with universities throughout the world, particularly with universities in Africa, India, Europe, United States and Latin America.

The majority of the professors of the Master’s Degrees in Conflictology at the UOC are doctors, have had research published and have field experience, as well teaching experience. Some of them are founders or current directors of centres or university institutes specialising in subjects related to peace and conflict resolution and, like our students, live and work in various countries throughout five continents. This all contributes to the added value of relating to professors and students from all over the world who have consolidated professional activities in NGOs, universities, international organisations and governments. The formative origin of our students also shows notable diversity: attorneys, diplomats, voluntary workers, teachers, psychologists, business people, engineers, doctors, police officers, military personnel, sociologists, physicists, pedagogues...

An International Association of Conflictologists has been established and is made up of students and professionals of Conflictology on five continents. The first issue of the English language university journal Conflictology has been published, and we are preparing the Third International Congress on Conflicts, Conflictology and Peace, which takes place during October. The Edicions de la UOC (publications) are releasing a Conflictology collection and the UOC Library also has a section devoted to this discipline.

In the research and advisory field, we have an applied research programme in Colombia and Ecuador, another in Mexico and Chile and are preparing interventions in various African countries. We have brought together research activities in a Research Center in Conflictology, the Virtual European Research Center in Conflictology (VERCIC). We have established the UNESCO Chair in Sport and Conflict Resolution jointly with the Barcelona Football Club Foundation and the UOC for conflict resolution and pacification through the practice of sports on an international level with applied research programmes and the organisation of international congresses and programmes and training networks. In addition, we have advised the Conference of Justice Ministers of Latin American Countries on nonviolent methodologies for resolving conflicts caused by pandillas, maras (gangs) and criminal organisations.

We belong to international networks, such as the Association for Conflict Resolution, the Peace and Collaborative Development Network and the European Platform for Conflict Transformation, in addition to others. We will continue to organise congresses on Conflictology, in particular one on National Conflicts and another titled Living in Peace, a new effort to work together by all professionals interested in the resolution and

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1 Roberto Luna Salvador, tutor of the Master’s degree in Conflictology and driving force of the association.
2 Conflicts and Conflictology / Human Rights. New realities / Conflictology, EdiUOC.
3 Editorial Tirant lo Blanch, València, 2008
transformation of conflicts, in working to overcome the crisis and in living together satisfactorily.

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