

Presentation

On other occasions, I have referred to the role of research in our universities, and specifically to its near-foundational importance for a young university seeking to realise its potential, such as the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC). To a large extent, it is, in fact, a university's research that determines the quality of teaching and the usefulness to society of the knowledge generated – both, of course, being essential functions of a university.

In last year's report I referred to the *raison d'être* of research at the UOC – the content – and focussed on an important piece of work – the Projecte Internet Catalunya (PIC). This started in 2001 and the first delivery of the sectorial results and conclusions will occur between 2003 and 2004. Allow me today to make a reference to where the research is carried out – the site.

Research at the UOC is of a multidisciplinary and on-line nature, and the Parc Mediterrani de la Tecnologia, situated in Castelldefels on the outskirts of Barcelona provides a place of excellence conducive to research of this nature. It is here that our university builds up its own research infrastructure. This research centre represents and specifies the resulting efforts of various institutions and organisations, such as the Catalanian Ministry of Universities, Research and the Information Society (DURSI) itself, the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology, and the European Union, all intent on the same purpose – ongoing research, development, and innovation in Catalonia.

This review of the academic year 2002-2003 would not be complete if the University did not recognise Dr Josep Laporte i Salas, former Catalanian Minister of Health and Education, currently presiding over the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. In March 2003, he became the first Doctor honoris causa at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. The current status and vigorous productivity of the UOC during the last eight years, are owed, to a large extent, to the motivations and beliefs of Dr Laporte.

Andreu Mas-Colell

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Minister of Universities, Research and the Information Society, Catalanian Autonomous Government (Generalitat de Catalunya)*

This eighth academic year at our university has been one of continuity. Let me explain myself. Once again it has been a year in which the UOC's dynamism and the capacity for work of its teaching and management staff has allowed us to continue moving forward decisively and confidently along the three lines that define us as a university institution: teaching, research and the spread of knowledge in society.

It has been a year in which new courses have been developed, to be rolled out fully in the academic year 2003-2004, which I like to think are a sign of our "open" and international profile. A profile that looks to meet the social and economic needs of our environment and which consists of our know-how and expertise in the field of distance education and the use of information and communications technologies in learning. The actual results, thus, can be seen in the agreement with Casa Àsia to start up the first university studies into eastern Asia, the decision to offer the first international master of freeware and preliminary work into the launching of the international master of e-learning.

In terms of research I feel I have to mention, for its symbolic value and for its being one of the UOC's strategic *raisons d'être*, the first meeting of the UOC's research institute's, the IN3, Scientific Committee. Its members coming from all over the world, from MIT to Madrid's Universidad Complutense, or the LSE, the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and the University of British Columbia, their academic and professional careers and the fact that they are internationally renowned and points of reference in their field are signs of the ambition of our project and research.

It has also been a year of consolidation for our organisation and the legal framework that governs us. In this way, the Regulations for organisation and operation, or NOF, at the university have been updated and approved by the board of trustees. These regulations have been adapted specifically at the university to the new legislation, the Law on universities in Catalonia, or LUC, passed on February 19 2003 and the Organic law on universities 6/2001, or LOU. Another milestone reached, and due to the importance of which I do not wish to leave out, is the Teaching Staff Charter, which, following the consolidation of the UOC's university model, is to regulate and standardise the professional and academic development of our professors at the university.

This eighth year, as I said at the start, has been one of continuity in terms of the dynamic of growth, innovation and consolidation that is the hallmark of the character of the UOC and the team of people that make it possible.

Gabriel Ferraté
Rector of the UOC

One aspect I have always wished to highlight when talking about the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), in its role as an academic and research institution, is that it represents and promotes Catalanian culture everywhere, both here and internationally.

The UOC's Doctoral Programme on the Information and Knowledge Society has two defining characteristics. Firstly, that it is interdisciplinary, in that it shares the knowledge of participants from various disciplines and it points researchers to the specific area of the impacts and transforming effects of ICTs on society. Secondly, that it is international.

Ever since its first edition in the academic year 2000-2001, there are already 190 graduates and researchers who have taken part, with nearly 50% being from foreign countries. Of them, forty obtained the Diploma of Advanced Studies, eight are working on their doctoral thesis, and one of them has already read it.

In this sense, the Doctoral Programme integrates a number of elements that define what one can expect from the UOC: The promotion of initiatives, channels and programmes to encourage networking and on-line work by researchers and professionals who are from various disciplines and countries.

Thus, the Information and Knowledge Society provides the facility for study and research and the UOC's doctoral programme allows this research to be internationally recognised.

Josep Vilarasau

Chairman of the Council, Foundation for the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (FUOC)