Press kit

Inauguration of the UOC's Interdisciplinary R&I Hub

Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya

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Research at the UOC

The UOC is a university that focuses its research activity on **the interaction between technology and the human and social sciences.** The UOC is committed to **open knowledge**, **interdisciplinarity** and **networked cooperation**, and it promotes research on technology and the use of ICTs for **social transformation.**

Who conducts research at the UOC?

The UOC has two research centres – the **Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3)**, led by David Megías, and the **eHealth Center (eHC)**, whose president is Marta Aymerich, UOC Vice President for Strategic Planning and Research –, an eLearning Research programme (eLR) led by Santi Caballé and Albert Sangrà, and seven faculties with associate deans for research.

Currently, there are **51** research groups carrying out research in the faculties, IN3 and eHealth Center. The UOC has **577** people working on research.

The UOC also has a **Doctoral School**, led by David Masip, with **382 predoctoral researchers**.

132 research projects in 2021.

€6.6 million from competitive funding programmes.

642 articles were published

44 % of which with international partners.

90 % indexed in Scopus, the largest database of article abstracts and citations.

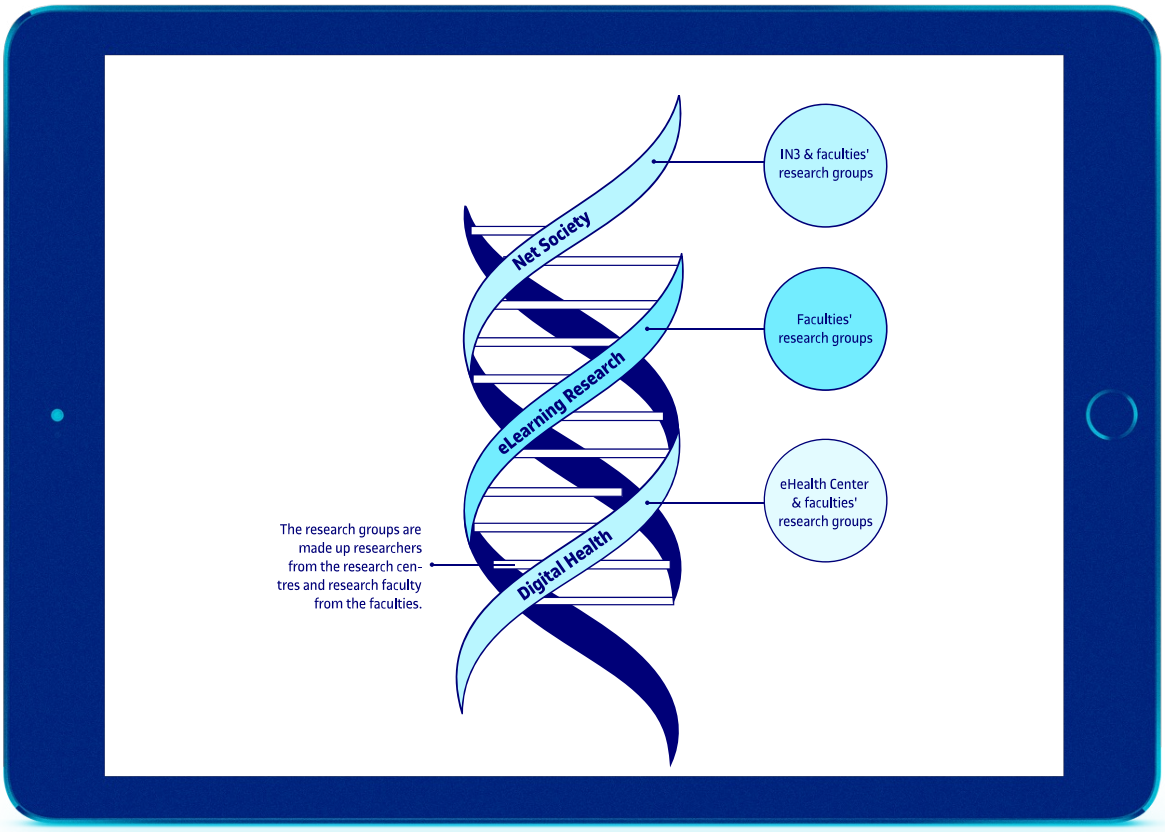
The university also has seven chairs, which develop training, research, and tech and expertise transfer projects with the aim of generating and sharing knowledge in specific fields.

- **UNESCO Chair in Education and Technology for Social Change**
- **UNESCO Chair on Food, Culture and Development**
- **Randstad Foundation-UOC Chair in Disability, Employment and Social Innovation**
- **COCEMFE- UOC Chair in Personal Autonomy and Digital Health**
- **Barcelona UOC Chair in Digital Economy**
- **Pau Casals Chair in Music and the Defence of Peace and Human Rights**
- **Chair in Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Digital Transformation**

What sets the UOC's research apart?

Research at the UOC specializes in the **study of the interaction between human activity and technology, focusing specifically on the network society, e-learning and digital health**.

We approach science from a **digital perspective** and ensure that the knowledge generated through research is **open to everyone**. We conduct research with a **transdisciplinary approach** and with the aim of generating new knowledge thanks to the fusion of the **combined disciplines** (interdisciplinarity).



A research ecosystem with three missions:

E-learning

In terms of **e-learning research**, the UOC is a pioneer and expert, covering education sciences, engineering, the latest technological developments and evidence-based pedagogical research that can be applied to specific disciplines. The goal is to develop an **interdisciplinary approach to the current challenges in e-learning**.

In 25 years of research in e-learning, the UOC has accumulated more **than 800 indexed publications**. Research in this field is led by some **twenty research groups**, twelve of which have a specific focus on e-learning. This activity has led to a total of **225 research projects**.

News related to e-learning research:

- The European Patent Office funds a UOC project for personalization of the teaching of intellectual property [October 2022]
- A new institutional culture for the successful digital training of university teaching staff [September 2022]
- UOC technology generates indications that automatically guide students and teaching staff [May 2022]
- Some of the keys to improving learning through feedback [May 2022]

Digital health

The UOC also conducts research on digital health and the impact of ICTs on health.

We look into how technologies can contribute to improving the health and well-being of individuals and groups; how digital health can help us gain knowledge and make better decisions about our health, and how we can use technology, communication and data to bolster health systems and health professionals. Our work is interdisciplinary and collaborative, involving the stakeholders in the health ecosystem. We're connected internationally to generate and contribute scientific evidence, and to promote solutions that contribute to overcoming current and future challenges for health and well-being. The research in digital health is developed at the **eHealth Center**, and in collaboration with the UOC's faculties. The UOC has been a **WHO Collaborating Centre in digital health** since 2018. There are currently **16 research groups** working in the field of digital health at the UOC.

News related to digital health research:

- Online psychotherapy is on the rise [October 2022]
- A pioneering clinical trial will test psychotherapy that uses virtual reality for young people with depression [October 2022]
- Past, present and future of the WHO collaborating centre in digital health [May 2022]
- Health, equity and gender: can digitization narrow the gaps in access to healthcare? [July 2022]

Network society

The UOC is working to understand and build the society of the future. We carry out **pioneering research focused on the study of the internet**, we investigate the digital transformation of society and we design new social and technological solutions to address the challenges of the future.

Most of the network society research is developed at the IN3, which is linked and connected to the UOC's 7 faculties, and the Faculty of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunications, in particular. The **IN3** celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2020. The centre diagnoses, analyses and detects the needs, problems and challenges at the intersection of engineering, technology and the human and social sciences, in what we call the **network society**. It designs, creates, builds, produces and defines social and technological solutions. There are **10 research groups at the IN3, and many others in the seven faculties, working on topics linked to the network society**.

News related to network society research:

- How does Airbnb contribute to projecting the image of tourist destinations? [October 2022]
- A European project involving the UOC aims to improve urban spaces to help children with autism [September 2022]
- A rise in unfair online commercial practices in the European Union [August 2022]
- Smart algorithms to transform Barcelona's shared mobility systems [August 2022]

The new UOC Interdisciplinary R&I Hub

The aim of the UOC's new interdisciplinary research hub – the new, refurbished building on the Can Jaumandreu campus in Barcelona's 22@ district – is to **promote the growth of the university's research over the coming years**. The hub is a fundamental part of the research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem. It **allows research and support staff, labs, international collaborators, doctoral students and all the other agents and assets of research at the UOC to be brought together under the same roof** to aid and maximize interactions between different people and different disciplines.

The hub was created with **the aim of interlinking all these assets and providing an optimal environment to carry out more research, to make it more interdisciplinary and to generate a greater social impact**. It will house the **UOC Labs**, a **space for experimentation and specialized services that are open to society**. The labs are designed to promote and facilitate interdisciplinary research, innovation and teaching.

There will be labs dedicated to **immersive technologies** (virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality), research and **development of cyber-physical systems**, research in the field of **neuropsychology and neuroscience**, experimentation for **design and digital fabrication**, and **practical research on social networks and digital socialization environments**. There will also be a **multidisciplinary visual and sound space**, where the research team can produce and experiment with audio and video content adapted to the new scenarios sparked by the internet and interact with new audiovisual formats and the latest, contemporary audiences.

Committed to open science and open knowledge

In 2019, the UOC rolled out its Open Knowledge Action Plan to ensure that the knowledge generated through research is open to all, has the greatest possible impact and enables faster progress towards sustainable development.

The UOC is committed to open science. It is essential for everyone around the world to be able to access knowledge, broadening not only the horizons of the work being researched, but also the possibilities for collaboration. The network for collaboration is worldwide, and must not only involve those with economic power. Making knowledge open does not mean ceasing to be rigorous when it comes to publishing; it means sharing science fairly.

The **UOC's commitment to open knowledge** includes open-access publications, FAIR data, open innovation (which includes participatory bachelor's and master's degree final projects), and an open-access institutional research repository (O2) with more than **17,000 publications**. We also support projects designed to engage society at large, offering forums and building knowledge co-creation processes based on social needs and with a special emphasis on citizen science.

Academic journals

The UOC also has seven academic journals (*Artnodes, BiD, Dictatorships & Democracies, Digithum, ETHE, IDP* and *Internet Policy Review*) and three general-interest journals (*COMeIN, Mosaic* and *Oikonomics*) covering the university's areas of knowledge and interest. They are all open-access publications.

The ***International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*** **(ETHE)**, which is co-edited by the UOC and which has been published since it began in 2004 as open access, has consolidated its position as a **leading publication worldwide in its area of expertise**.

Advocating for a new form of research assessment

The UOC believes in the value of knowledge, in research that makes an impact, in the promotion of knowledge open to all and for all, and in responsible research and innovation (RRI). That is why we support **a research assessment model based on the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)**.

In 2019, the university signed DORA, showing our commitment to the transformation of research assessment towards a more qualitative, transparent and fair, diverse and inclusive approach, which incorporates learning and constant transformation through assessment as its aim.

The UOC defends the need to rethink research assessment systems, where the number of published articles and the journals in which they appear still carry too much weight. The number of publications should not be as important as the contribution that each publication makes to knowledge and society. In addition, other parameters should also be considered in the assessment of research, such as the ability to train future researchers, open science, the development of the team itself (in terms of the research and the human component) and the social impact of the research carried out.

We are working with many other higher education and research institutions, in Europe and internationally, to reform research assessment – reforms that some systems are already implementing. Internally at the UOC, we are preparing to address this with specific actions in the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

The future of the research ecosystem

In the future, in accordance with the UOC's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, we will also work to **structure the governance** of the ecosystem and **make the R&I hub more dynamic** to boost scientific communication, increase the professionalization of support for the research activity and establish the coordination and management of the experimental laboratories.

We will also define the **research intensification strategy** for teaching staff, look to **capture emerging talent** through new research collaborations between early-stage and more established researchers, and develop **alliances** with different centres and laboratories to carry out pioneering research.

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