

Universitat  
Oberta  
de Catalunya

**Learning. Transforming.**  
Stories of transformation

BOU

**30 years, 30 transformation stories**

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## Àngels Fitó

Rector of the Universitat  
Oberta de Catalunya

## Committed to a mandate that's inclusive, digital and entrepreneurial

The creation of the UOC 30 years ago can be described as a unique event, unlikely to happen again, in which a handful of extraordinary events came together: from the intellectual commitment and vision of the founding team to the political will expressed in the unanimous approval of the Parliament of Catalonia, the availability of disruptive technology, the inspiration to try a different learning model and the design of the university itself. All these elements were necessary for this institution, created by Law 3/1995, to be able to celebrate its three decades of existence today.

In this fortunate coming together of events, there is one feature that has perhaps not been sufficiently emphasized: our public mandate. This hallmark – like a distinctive birthmark – has guided us from the beginning and has set the tone for our entire history. Accordingly, we have striven to be leaders in the generation, recognition and exchange of complex and relevant knowledge; we have adapted to a changing context; we have embraced technological opportunities; and we have maintained constant lines of dialogue and collaboration with other players. In other words, the UOC has made of the public mandate its hallmark and its guide.

The UOC's continued existence has shown the wisdom of its initial approach, as well as the ability of successive teams to adapt and evolve in accordance with global challenges. With the conviction that learning is transforming, we have prioritized the development of a system of lifelong higher education to meet the social needs that are already here, drive business innovation and reduce the digital divide. We can now say that we are systemic, global and inclusive, with genuine constants such as the lack of barriers, lifelong access to education and pathways that lead to employment. Recent examples of these core principles include our commitment to the rural UOC, microcredentials as a way to promote employability, a cultural action plan that involves networking with the community, the adaptation of our educational model to AI, and our new research missions.

Throughout these first 30 years, our journey has been one of highly efficient and productive service, materialized in our daily teaching, research and administration, and embodied in our 134,000 graduates... and those to come. Based on the firm belief that lifelong learning is a vital necessity, our continuity rests on three pillars: research-based credibility; the flexibility provided by technology; and social, civic and business recognition.

Far from paralysing complacency or unproductive agitation, we have striven to transform and evolve the original questions and to innovate and adapt the possible answers. Because we want to honour the legacy we have received and, above all, imagine the UOC of tomorrow. Hence our commitment to an inclusive, digital and entrepreneurial mandate that was as necessary yesterday as it will be tomorrow, and that will now and always manifest itself in a clear desire to have an impact on the lives of people and the society that welcomes us. Our social function necessarily involves mobilizing as much talent as possible, synchronizing university and society, and strengthening the UOC's role as a knowledge hub.

# 30 ACADEMIC YEARS. OUR STORY

Watch the video



**Gabriel Ferraté**  
Founding rector

"We wanted to break down the barriers of space and time"



**Imma Tubella**  
Rector

"The UOC has progressed from being a major project to being a major university, a pioneer receiving wide acclaim"



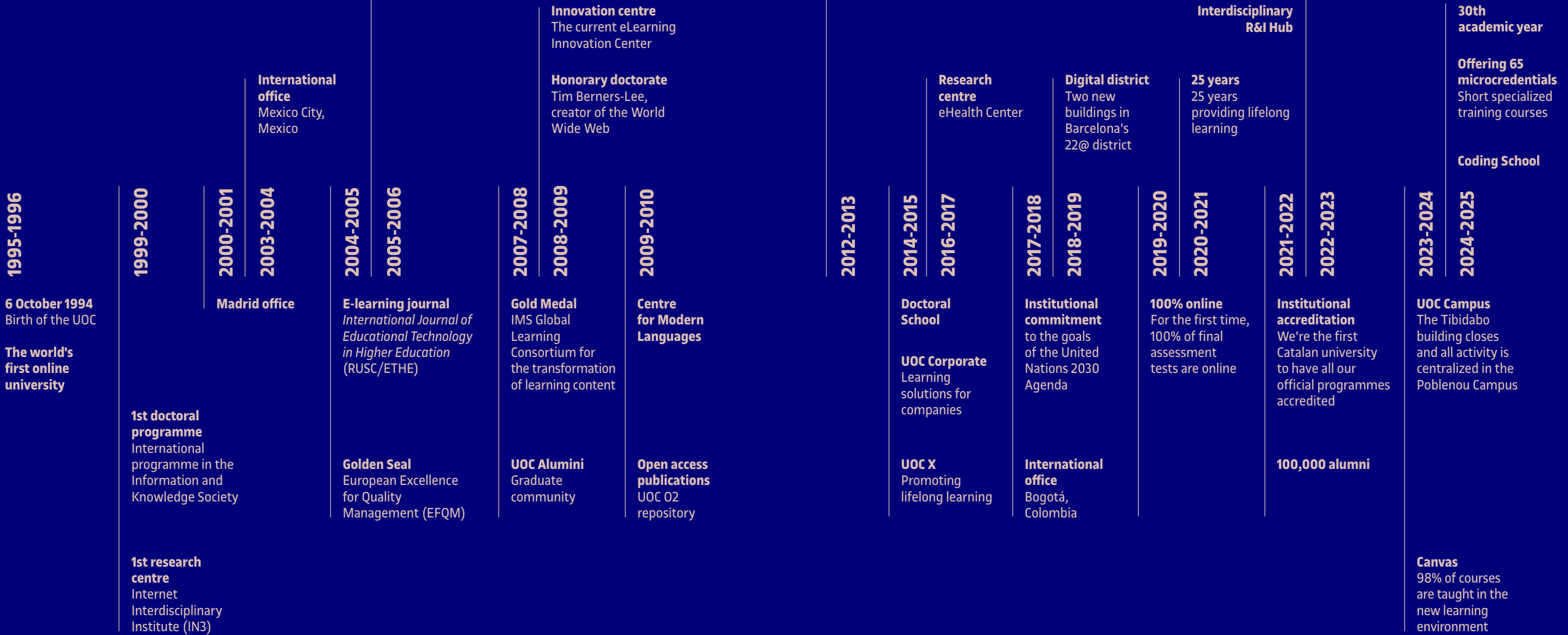
**Josep A. Planell**  
Rector

"The UOC aims to continue in its role as a vector for change and progress, and to continue to play a part in transforming and connecting people, societies and ideas"



**Àngels Fitó**  
Rector

"The UOC has made of the public mandate its hallmark and its guide"



# TRANSFORMING LEARNING

**Estefanía Alonso**  
Student on the Bachelor's Degree in Communication

STUDY ANYWHERE

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**Carlos Manuel Bosch**  
UOC student since 1994 without interruption

CONSTANT LEARNING

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**Maia Llácer**  
Gymnast. Student on the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology

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Specialist in digital education at the eLearning Innovation Center

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Student of the Master's Degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy

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Bachelor's degree in Digital Design and Creation

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Student of the University Master's Degree in Employment and the Labour Market

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Director of the University Master's Degree in Education and ICT (E-learning)

ACQUIRING KEY PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

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## A PERSONAL REVOLUTION

Read more



**Douglas Castro**

01

Douglas is a Nicaraguan student of the Master's Degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy organized by the UOC with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Based in Colombia, he is an activist for democracy and the defence of human rights in Nicaragua.

### What motivated you to keep studying?

Since I was a child, my goal has always been to study. I like studying and investing in my knowledge because I'm quite serious about my academic education and that's always been the main driving force for me. In addition, given the circumstances in my country, the crisis has affected me greatly and limited my opportunities for development, but I believe that part of my resilience lies in being able to study. This is part of my struggle.

### How did you find out about the UOC?

In my search for a quality educational institution, I've researched many academies and spoken to many centres, but without documentation I can't study in person because they always ask for a visa or passport. This led me to look into online education, and the international affairs and diplomacy programme that I'm now studying seemed quite appealing given my interest in international and political matters.

As well as liking the programme, I felt there was care, support and understanding of my situation. When I explained my situation to other institutions, they were not prepared to respond, rejecting me outright or showing no interest, but the UOC was very open. This has allowed me to study what I want at a serious, quality online institution. My decision to study at the UOC was an informed and carefully thought-out decision.

### What stands out most about the master's degree?

To start with, it's interesting to be in a fairly diverse group, since most people are from Southeast Asia or the Middle East, among other countries. Very few of us are from Latin America. So studying a master's degree in international relations with people from other countries is very interesting, because they have a closer view of what's happening in their area. There's a tendency to oversimplify the realities of other countries, so it's good to learn about them from the first-hand experience of those who come from them.

**"Being able to study is part of my struggle"**

## STUDY ANYWHERE

Watch the video

**"I wanted a lifestyle that wasn't possible with an on-site university"**

### What led you to choose the UOC?

I started studying for an on-site bachelor's degree, but as the years went by it became harder and harder to combine it with work, and I wanted a lifestyle, like going to Ireland or working in Scotland, that wasn't possible with an on-site university. I wanted to travel, get to know other places and learn from different environments.

### How do you manage to combine your online studies with travel, work and volunteering?

Being organized is essential, and I've also learned during the process that you must manage your time and emotions efficiently and be aware of them. It's also important to know the exact goal of everything you're doing at any given time and to prioritize; you have to remember that everything is always changing and be open to that.

### What advice would you give to other people who are considering becoming digital nomads?

I think you have to be open to it and give it a try. In this adventure, you can discover another facet of yourself and fill yourself with learning about people and places.

It's interesting to give yourself this opportunity, just as it's also important to understand each person's way of learning and ask yourself what you enjoy. You have to try it! Not everyone enjoys or prioritizes the same things or in the same way.

Estefanía is a student on the Bachelor's Degree in Communication at the UOC. She is also a worker, a digital nomad and a volunteer. She sees herself as a restless young woman with a desire to discover and experience constant change, as this allows her to move forward and learn about other places, people and points of view, as well as about herself.

**Estefanía Alonso**

02



## IMMERSIVE CREATION

**"The use of augmented reality has allowed me to experiment with new forms of interaction between viewers and the work"**

Your exhibition "Don't look: observe" combines photography with augmented reality...

It's a very personal project that's been cathartic for me. During a time of self-discovery and introspection, I began to take self-portraits to express myself through images. After a few years, I realized that there was a thread connecting them, and I decided to take on the project to tell a story.

And now we can see the result!

It's really two exhibitions: on the one hand, a physical exhibition in black and white, and on the other, a digital one in which the works come to life and fill with colour thanks to augmented reality when you focus on them with your smartphone. I wanted to express that there can be colour beyond black and white.

How has the UOC's model helped you to carry out this project?

It's been fundamental to the development of my work. The courses I've taken have given me a solid grounding in key concepts such as the psychology of colour, creativity techniques, animation, semiotics, visual culture, typography, brand storytelling and composition. I've also learned how to use editing software and develop print files through courses such as Graphic and Digital Production. Even seemingly unrelated courses, such as Brand Development, have been very helpful in establishing an aesthetic consistency and appropriate language for the project. Without a doubt, everything is enriching. I've also explored emerging topics in the world of design, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality, thanks to the Design Trends course and my own subsequent research.

Why did you choose digital media and technology to show your work?

Digital media and technology complement my work and my creative process. In my project, I used these media to move the photographs beyond their static state and add the layers of dynamism necessary to make this symbolic step from black and white to life in colour.

The use of augmented reality allowed me to experiment with new forms of interaction between viewers and the work, making the experience more immersive and interactive.

Watch the video

The Andalusian artist Zaida has a bachelor's degree in Digital Design and Creation. She is now working to complete the University Master's Degree in Design, Visual Identity and Brand Building. This has allowed her to develop technical skills to merge graphic design and digital technology with photography in her work.

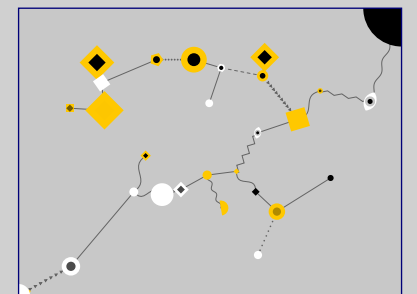
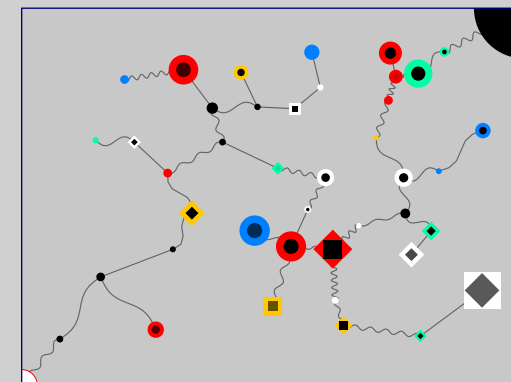
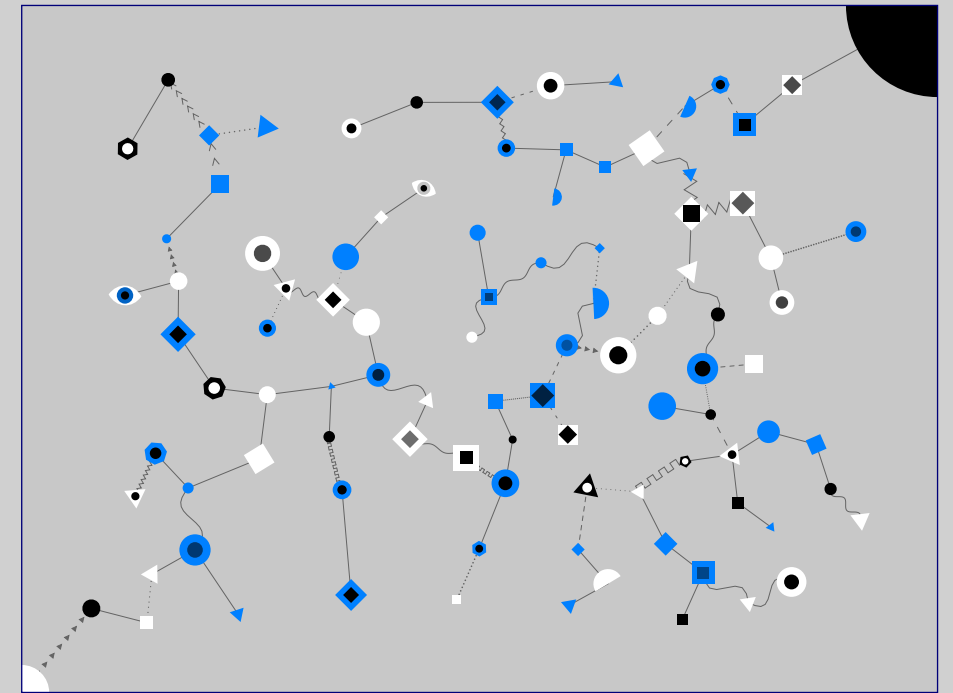
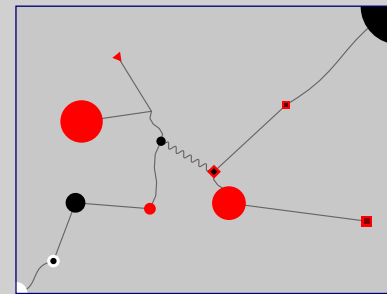
Zaida Vázquez

03



Constel·lacions, sheets created by the artistic collective Playmodes on the occasion of graduation ceremonies of the UOC's 30th anniversary

Find out more



**More than 120,000 people from more than 150 countries have graduated in the UOC during these thirty years**

These are people who have decided to study to get ahead in their careers, to reinvent themselves or simply to grow as people, and they have often been drivers of change in their surroundings.

In addition to gaining knowledge, students at the UOC also acquire skills: learning by doing, self-organization, efficient time management and developing a critical and entrepreneurial vision. In other words, becoming aware of what it means to be a global citizen.

Thirty years have passed since we started on the path of rethinking how technology could become the best ally for a meaningful and relevant learning model. Over the course of these years, we have innovated and supported our students in their personal and professional growth.

Our history fuels our ambition to continue as a leading pioneer of lifelong learning in an inclusive, digital and entrepreneurial society.



## CONSTANT LEARNING

Read more

**What made you start studying computer science at the UOC in 1994?**

I felt it allowed me to study at my own pace. And since then I've been hooked on the UOC. I like it because it allows me to learn new things like computer science or data science, languages, etc., and always at my own pace, without any pre-set schedules.

**Do you remember how you found out about it?**

I must have read it somewhere or seen it on television. At the time, studying online seemed like a crazy idea. I was 40-odd years old.

**What have you studied so far?**

Seven degrees. Some of them I'm still studying, such as the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, the Bachelor's Degree in Applied Data Science and the University Master's Degree in Data Science. I've completed bachelor's degrees in Computer Systems Engineering and Technical Engineering, Computer Science Management, the second cycle of Computer Engineering and the University Master's Degree in Bioinformatics and Biostatistics. I also have a degree in Chemical Sciences from the University of Barcelona and a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

**What has the UOC meant to you?**

There was a gap I needed to fill. I'm like an eternal student, I've always enjoyed learning new things and I like the academic environment. Staying intellectually active is a challenge, and the UOC makes it easy for me.

**Has the university changed much over all these years?**

A lot, like life itself. It is becoming more and more online. Honestly, I miss the feeling of being a big family. In the early days it was less impersonal: they organized a couple of meetings each semester, you could meet your tutors and fellow students, and it allowed you to make new friends. There are students I still meet up with from time to time.

**"30 years ago, studying online seemed like a crazy idea"**



**Carlos Manuel Bosch**

04

Carlos, who has been professionally retired for 8 years, worked for almost all of his career as a secondary school teacher of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computer science. He first became a UOC student in 1994 and has carried on learning ever since. He has been studying continuously for 30 years and is sure that he will go on doing so as long as he can.

## SUPPORTING THE SPORTS ELITE

Read more

Maia is a 20-year-old Mallorcan gymnast and a student on the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. The UOC has a programme to support elite athletes, providing them with a support tutor and adapting the academic side of things to help them combine their studies with their training and competitions.

**Maia Llàcer**

05



**"It's very important to keep studying to prepare for the future and for when your time as an athlete is over"**

**Why would an elite gymnast like you decide to study for a bachelor's degree?**

My sport is not recognized at a national level, so it's very important to keep studying to prepare myself for the future and for when my time as an athlete is over. I train eight hours a day, so the UOC, as a remote university, allows me to organize myself better and combine everything.

**You have started your bachelor's degree in Psychology at the UOC. Do you think the knowledge you'll gain on the degree will help you to manage stress, nerves and pressure in competitions?**

Yes. I decided to study psychology when I started working with a professional and I realized the importance of the mind in everyday life, and even more so in a sport like mine, where you really train for many hours to risk all that work in one minute of competition.

**How important is the role of psychology for elite athletes?**

In my opinion, sport is 80% about the mind. The way you face competitions, take both positive and negative results, endure expectations and uncertainties, and above all adversity... A clear example of this are injuries and the fear when you go back to your sport after recovering, especially in artistic gymnastics, where the risk is high. You need to be able to control your fear, to really want it and to find a balance for your whole life so you can do this sport.

**How are female athletes perceived and treated compared to male athletes within the gymnastics community?**

They're treated similarly, but there's a difference in salaries in international leagues, a fact that I don't quite understand, as women's gymnastics gets more media attention than the men's version.

**Do you think there is pressure on female gymnasts to "look good"?**

Yes, but as the sport has developed you can see different body types within the same sport. Each gymnast has their own style and qualities, and of course you may like one style more than another, but it's no big deal. Within the Spanish team there are more elegant gymnasts and gymnasts who stand out for their strength and power, and this variety also brings many positive things.

## AI FOR BETTER TEACHING

**"AI is a technology that should help teachers do things better"**

### How did this project come about?

At the UOC, we have a database called *datamart* where we store anonymous information on students' progress in bachelor's and master's degree courses, as well as their interactions on the Virtual Campus. As a member of the LIS project, we've studied this data for potential use in teaching. In our initial research, analysing data from 979 courses, we've found that if we take a student's grade from their first activity, which is about two weeks into the course, we can predict with an average accuracy of 60% whether a student will fail the year.

### One of the criticisms of this type of system is that it could eventually replace teachers...

It's designed as a support tool, not as a replacement. The teaching staff are the only ones who know, based on their experience, what a student really needs to continue with a course satisfactorily. Therefore, this symbiosis between automatic detection and the experience of teaching staff makes the LIS system more effective.

### Artificial intelligence has been key to the development of this system. What do you think about the introduction of AI in education?

As in many other business models, artificial intelligence will eventually be everywhere. I think we're very unlikely to be an exception, and it'll soon end up integrated in one way or another.

In education, we have other challenges linked to generative AI tools and their use by teaching staff and students. Times of deliberation and adaptation in this area are coming, and we as teachers will have to learn to live with them. I'd focus on the message that *"artificial intelligence is here to help, and it's a technology that should help us do things better"*.

[Read more](#)

David is a researcher at the SOM Research Lab. He has co-led the LIS project, a system for the early detection of students at risk of failing or dropping out of a course that combines AI and personalized messages. The results have been remarkable: LIS has increased the pass rate for the year by 5% and has improved participants' grades.

## David Bañeres

# 06



## Creation of OpenEU, an alliance coordinated by the UOC and supported by the European Commission to establish the Open European University

The creation of OpenEU was based on one of the main strengths of online universities: the ability to provide a learning environment for diverse students who pursue lifelong learning and find digital education to be more flexible and equitable. Its aim is to address three challenges facing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): the digital transformation of universities, the achievement of more equitable and inclusive higher education, and the need to provide lifelong learning opportunities for everyone.

The alliance, which is coordinated by the UOC, brings together 14 universities and 13 academic, business, rural and municipal associations and non-profit organizations from all over Europe to create a European open university that leads to a stronger European Higher Education Area.

[Go to the OpenEU website](#) →

## STANDING UP FOR THE RURAL WORLD



Enric Guimó

07

Enric, who completed the Bachelor's Degree in History, Geography and Art History and is currently enrolled on the Bachelor's Degree in Tourism, was born and lives in La Pobla de Segur in Lleida, and is very proud of his roots. So much so that he was sure from the start that his bachelor's degree final project would be about an issue of local interest. He firmly believes that it is necessary to stand up for rural history, which has been so badly treated by the passage of time.

[Read more](#)

**You left to study in Lleida, but at the age of 26 you returned to live in La Pobla de Segur. Why did you go back?**

A job opportunity came up at the tourist office in La Pobla de Segur, where I worked from 2019 to 2022. I currently work in Sort Town Council as an administrative assistant. I combined work with my on-line studies in History, Geography and Art History and graduated in February 2023 with a bachelor's degree final project on neighbourhood associations as a factor in economic growth. My study was on the role of the *Comú de Particulars* association in the industrial development of La Pobla de Segur during the 19th century.

**Why is it important for local issues affecting a specific rural area to be worked on and known about?**

There are many reasons. One of them is to help contribute to the knowledge of rural history. The passage of time has often mistreated us a little: many documents have been lost, this reality remains unknown, there are few records... Helping to add another piece of the puzzle to complete it seems to me a task that must be done. One of the things that motivated me the most to do the bachelor's degree final project was to tell people how special this case was: there are many cases of neighbourhood struggle in this period, most of them to achieve these means of agricultural production, but the case of the *Comú* seems significant to me. Firstly, because the members decided to open up to the town even though, as I said, they had no need or obligation to do so. And secondly, because they did so in adverse conditions: they had to face a bigwig of the time, the Duke of Medinaceli, and they won, legally and with every right, in a very unfavourable context. Leaving a written record motivates me: there's an interesting exception in our corner of the world, in the Pallars area. That's why we need to boost the ego of the rural world: we have unique things here too.

**If you were to do another bachelor's degree final project about La Pobla de Segur, do you know what it would be about?**

No. Would it be about La Pobla? Yes. Will I do it? Also yes. I'm doing the Bachelor's Degree in Tourism. After the Bachelor's Degree in History, Geography and Art History, I managed to last six months without studying. I'll have to do another bachelor's degree final project, and it'll be about a tourist resource in La Pobla or the Pallars area. There's a long way to go and plenty of time to think about it. I'm in my first semester; I haven't even taken my first exam.

**"We need to boost the ego of the rural world: we have unique things here too"**

## A pioneering educational model with students at the centre

The UOC's pioneering educational model makes its **students the centre of everything** and has been evolving over the course of 30 years to respond to emerging needs and adapt to new social and technological contexts. Providing a memorable learning experience is the definitive purpose of this model.

Programmes offered by the UOC are delivered through its seven **faculties**, each of which covers different areas of study.

### Creating opportunities, a UOC insignia

By making students the focal point, we empower them to make decisions about their futures and careers that open up new opportunities for:

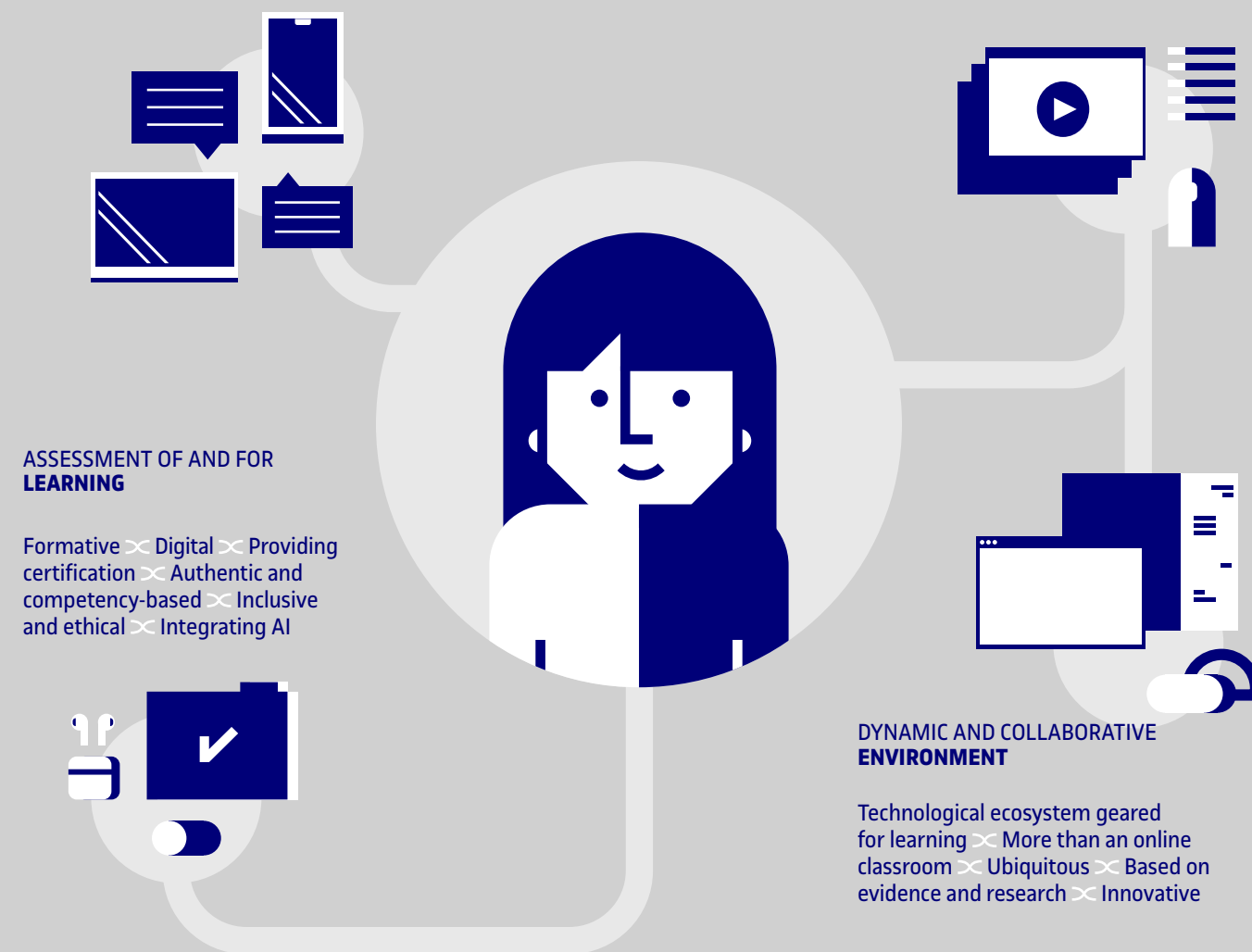
- **Learning** for the long term
- **Self-knowledge**, for employability
- **Understanding of their environment**, for competitiveness
- **Certification**, with macro and microcredentials
- **Building their digital identity**

### COMPREHENSIVE TEACHING SUPPORT

Various teaching figures ✕ Personalized ✕ Flexible ✕ Asynchronous, with key moments synchronous ✕ Networked

### SELECTED LEARNING RESOURCES

Digital ✕ Multi-format ✕ Accessible ✕ Interactive ✕ Multimedia ✕ Global ✕ Adaptable ✕ For active learning



## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Andrea has worked in the field of social integration and career guidance, and is trained in chiromassage and Catalan Sign Language. She has also completed the University Master's Degree in Employment and the Labour Market. She has a hearing impairment (profound bilateral hearing loss) and is one of more than 2,000 people with disabilities studying at the UOC.

Andrea Amouzouvi

08



Read more

**"The education system is not prepared to deal with people with hearing impairments"**

**Education is an international right recognized by UNESCO. Do you think deaf people receive a quality education tailored to their needs?**

There is great diversity in deaf people as a whole in terms of both type and degree of hearing loss. In general, I think the education system is not prepared to deal with people with hearing impairments. The use of technology can greatly facilitate inclusion in the classroom but often, when this is lacking, engagement and empathy are key, as is raising awareness among teachers and classmates.

**What specific resources do you think would be most beneficial for deaf students in educational settings and what measures should be taken to meet their needs?**

At the moment we have hearing loops and/or the FM transmitter, which send the sounds made by the speaker straight to the hearing aid with a clearer result. Subtitling is also necessary for audiovisual and other classroom content, both online and on-site. A note-taking classmate is very important, as well, if a student cannot follow classes normally. Many deaf people read lips to understand, and we need to see the teachers' mouths when they speak at all times so we don't get lost. If we're reading lips, we can't take notes at the same time, so adaptations are necessary.

**How have you seen the situation for deaf people evolve since you started your education until now?**

Looking at my educational journey, in vocational training the experience is always better, because the classrooms are smaller and the teaching staff don't change as much, so it's easier for them to remember your special condition. But at the on-site university, the internal protocol for the care of students with disabilities failed, and that's why I left. It was too distressing not to be able to follow the lessons and to have practically no support. I hope that in ten years' time, thanks to our activism, our struggles and our access to technology, being deaf will not be a problem when it comes to participating in any kind of education or training, with all the rights and accessibility for full and total autonomy.

**Has the UOC adapted to your needs as a student?**

Yes, because I don't have to worry about lip-reading and if there are videos, I ask for subtitles or a transcript. At the UOC, a professor adapted a continuous assessment activity for me, making it accessible and involving all my classmates, something that has rarely happened to me.

## PERMANENT INNOVATION

Read more



Xavier Mas

09

Xavier is a specialist in digital education and training design at the eLearning Innovation Center, the UOC's centre for educational innovation and the transformation of learning. He has a PhD in Education and Society from the University of Barcelona, and has been working as a pedagogical consultant, learning designer and educational innovation manager since 1997.

**When did you start at the UOC and what was your job?**

I started at the UOC on 1 May 1997. From the beginning, my work has been linked to the pedagogical design and development of what we know today as online learning, digital education, etc. Since then I've been involved in everything that has stemmed from it, including the different versions of the educational model, the design of tools, resources and training activities, advising and supporting teachers through the changes that have taken place, etc.

**What do you think are the most significant changes the university has undergone in recent years?**

I've lived through several stages. The first was the most creative and the most intense, since everything had to be invented. There were no other examples to look at and at the same time we had to allow for a literally exponential growth in quantitative terms, maintaining the quality of education and the coherence of our model. And we did it! Now, I'm noticing a new buzz that reminds me of the early years. The world is changing exponentially and the challenges that this poses for the educational ecosystem, especially higher education, are enormous, not only because of technological developments, but also because of the speed of change in society's demands and the requirements of the world of work. We need more creativity and more collective intelligence than ever, and it's an exciting prospect!

**In what way is it still true to its origins?**

In our mission is to support and guide people in their learning and education journey throughout their lives, our commitment to quality and innovation as permanent objectives, and the fact that these three things are not just institutional mandates, but are part of the personal attitude of all of us involved.

**How does the UOC as an institution focus on teaching innovation?**

There has always been innovation at the UOC, both implicitly and explicitly. It is part of the DNA and values of the institution and those who are part of it. Some of us find it hard to work without considering the innovative side of what we are doing, and I would say that this is quite general. It's true that, while sometimes this is the aspect that we want to emphasize, at others we're more focused on cross-disciplinary activities linked to our everyday work. I believe that the two approaches now coexist, one as a multiplier of the other and, without this, we couldn't tackle the challenges we face.

**"The UOC's mission is to support and guide people on their learning and education journey throughout their lives"**

## ACQUIRING KEY PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

[Read more](#)

**"Microcredentials facilitate ongoing learning and enable students to constantly adapt to the skills demanded by the labour market"**

Marcelo is director of the University Master's Degree in Education and ICT (E-learning) at the UOC and an expert in microcredentials, highly specialized short-term thematic certifications that allows students to acquire key professional skills for today's world. In addition, they are stackable, so that, by taking several microcredentials in the same branch, students will be able to increase their knowledge comprehensively.

### Marcelo Maina

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#### How long do microcredential courses normally last?

Microcredential courses usually last from four weeks to six months, and they're designed to facilitate professional progress and enrich the student's personal profile. The European Union supports this initiative and promotes lifelong university-quality learning.

#### What is their educational objective?

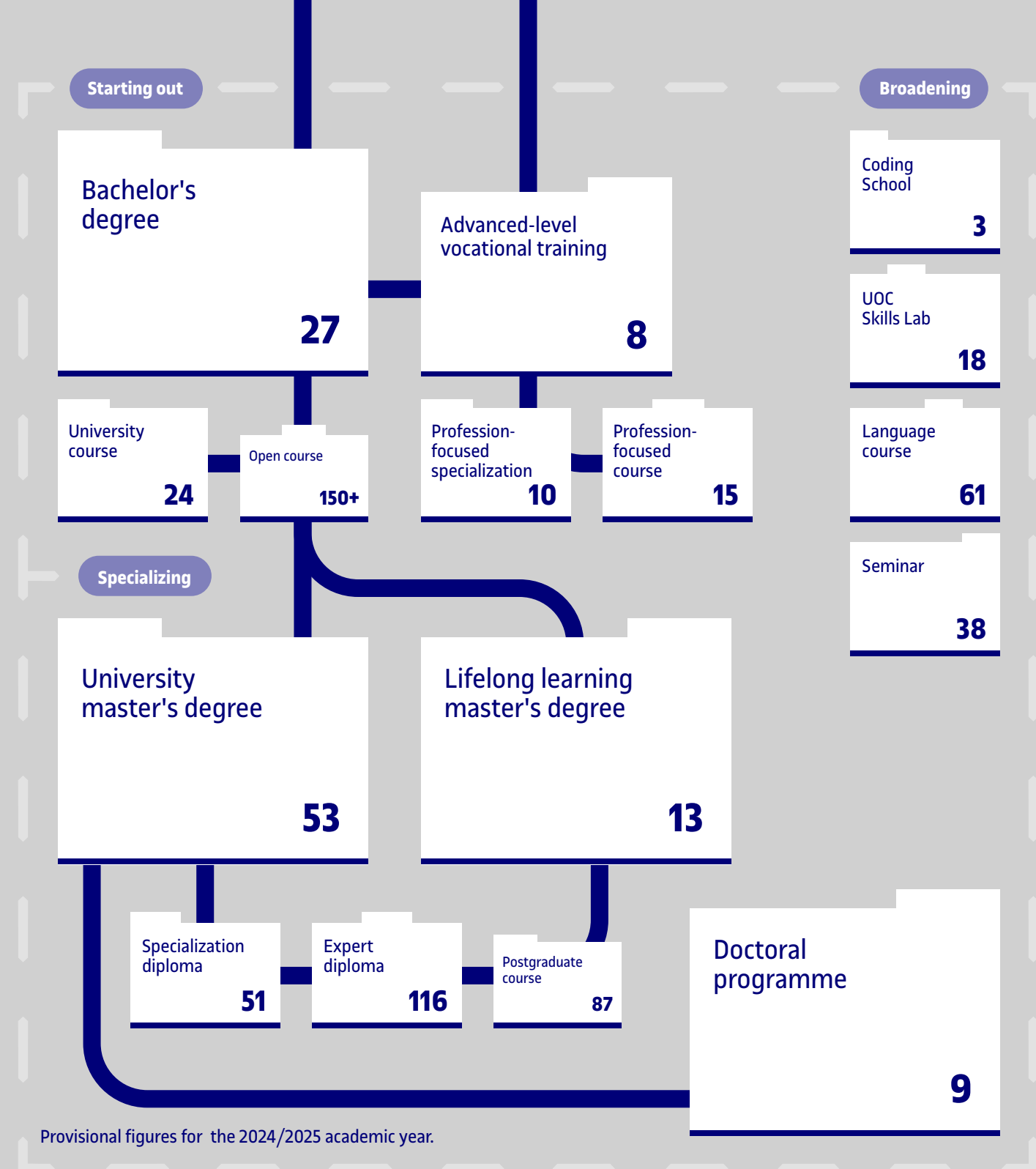
They aim to provide specialized, flexible training that allows people to acquire specific knowledge, skills and competencies in particular areas. Microcredentials are a form of digital certification that encourages students to constantly update their knowledge and helps them adapt to changing market demands.

#### What role will microcredentials play in higher education today and in the future?

I believe that microcredentials meet the training requirements of a constantly changing world, as they facilitate continuous learning and allow students to constantly update their skills. Their specific focus and the fact that they can be obtained quickly make them an excellent choice for those looking to upgrade or change career.

I see them as a valuable tool to complement university degrees. While degrees provide comprehensive training in a discipline, microcredentials allow students to demonstrate additional skills or specialized knowledge within an area. Moreover, close liaison with industry and other organizations ensures that the skills are relevant and sought after in the job market.

As education policies and employers' mindsets evolve, I believe microcredentials will continue to grow in importance and transform higher education. If we look at it from a university perspective, they constitute a strategic opportunity to lead curricular innovation and increase opportunities for lifelong learning.



Provisional figures for the 2024/2025 academic year.

### For an open professional life

[Course offering](#)

### This academic year we're launching microcredentials

These are certifications that validate the learning outcomes of short training courses. They enable students to develop key skills for better job opportunities, to reskill or to upskill, or to acquire skills to address society's current and future challenges.

# EXPLORING THE ANSWERS OF THE FUTURE



**Jesús Martín**  
Alumni. Bachelor's Degree in Law

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Co-founder of the spin-off Smart Classroom

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Coordinates the Global Literary Studies research group

YOUNG RESEARCH

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**Montse Arias**  
Student of the Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology and Human Evolution, and volunteer

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## SECOND CHANCES

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Jesús Martín

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Jesús was working in a small family business in the metallurgical industry when the financial crisis of 2008 left his family broke and drowning in debt. After preparing for some public exams, he decided to enrol in the Bachelor's Degree in Law to continue climbing positions at work. Thanks to his degree, he discovered the law known as the *Second Chance Law*, which changed his life.

### How would you define yourself?

As someone who, after spending many years letting circumstances dictate my life, the crisis of 2008 put me in my place: we closed the family business, lost everything and were broke, and from there I took control of my life. I was 35 years old when I first considered what I wanted to be and do.

### What did you decide you wanted?

To work in local government. At the time I didn't know much about how government worked, but I had to take the safest option, and the local level caught my attention because it was closer to the people than other levels of government. I had little chance of succeeding, but in 2013 I passed a public exam and was given a permanent position at Girona Provincial Council.

### What was the secret?

To study and never stop learning. At the Provincial Council, I realized that the most powerful tool for promotion is education, which is why in 2020 I graduated in Law at the UOC, which has allowed me to progress professionally. I'm now about to finish the University Master's Degree in Legal Practice and Representation, also at the UOC.

### What would you like to highlight about these years of learning?

Getting the position was a great boost to my self-esteem. After a few very difficult years, it seemed that life was beginning to fall into place. I was very happy during the months I studied for the public exam; I had a goal and I was confident I'd achieve it. This changed the paradigm for me. I went from not considering anything to having a purpose.

### Do you think you would be where you are now if the business hadn't gone bankrupt?

Probably not. I've never been ashamed of that failure. It's thanks to going broke that I found my way. I think every person should find where they want to go and have a plan.

### What has university education given you?

What I am now, and knowledge that I would never have gained on my own. I'm a great advocate for the UOC's learning system. When I compare it to that of on-site universities, I feel lucky. I can't imagine education in any other way. At the UOC they don't encourage you to learn legal statutes by heart. On the contrary: they present you with so many cases to solve that you learn to interpret the law and take the best approach.

**"The most powerful tool for promotion is education"**

### Education of the future

Educating and empowering people for contemporary challenges. Generating opportunities for change and improve people's lives.

### Culture for a critical society

Generating narratives and imagery that help develop a world that is fairer and more sustainable, diverse and pluralistic.

### Social transition and sustainability

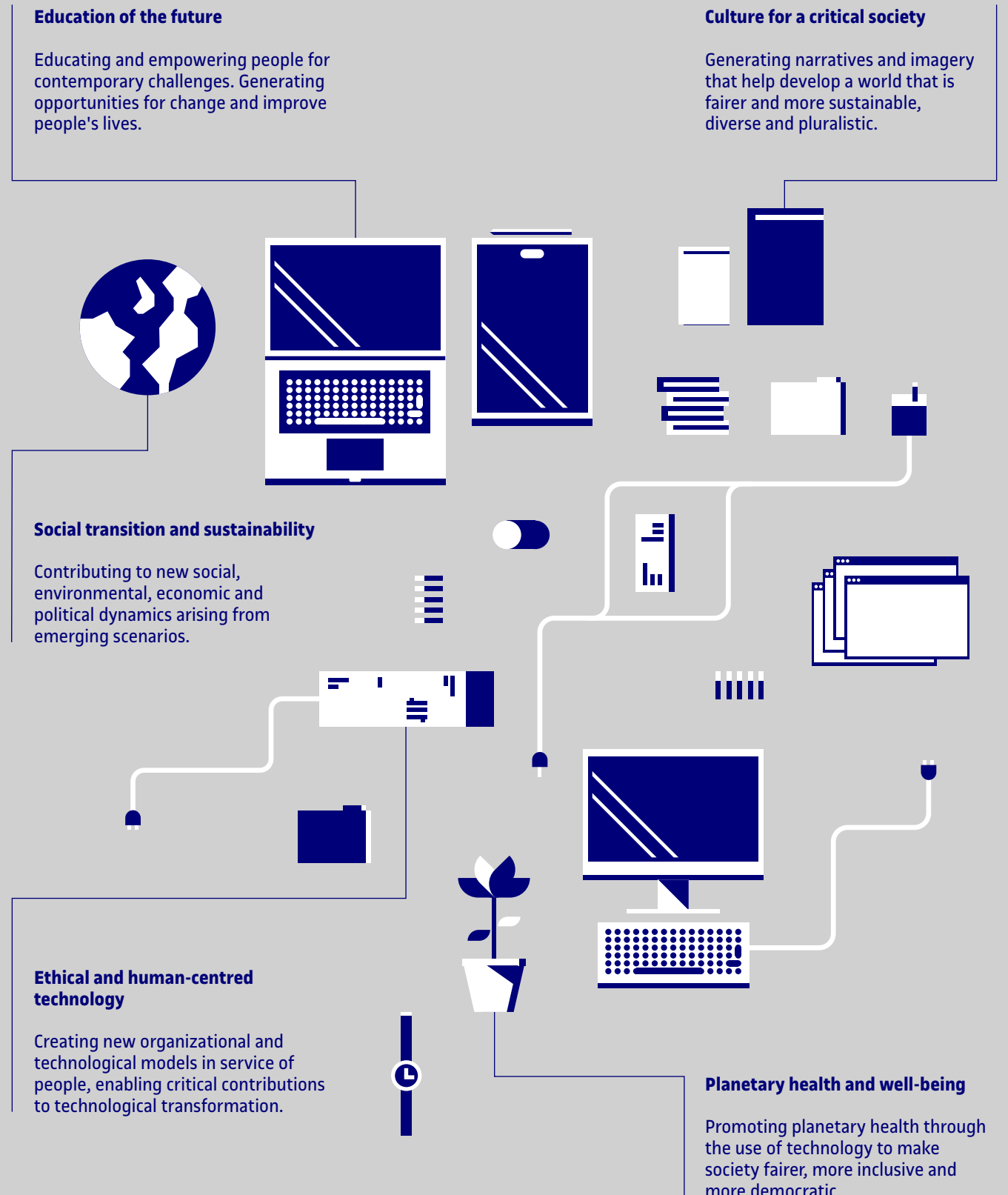
Contributing to new social, environmental, economic and political dynamics arising from emerging scenarios.

### Ethical and human-centred technology

Creating new organizational and technological models in service of people, enabling critical contributions to technological transformation.

### Planetary health and well-being

Promoting planetary health through the use of technology to make society fairer, more inclusive and more democratic.



**What do we research?**

## REINVENTING THE CLASSROOM

Read more

**"There's no single ideal classroom model: it has to be tailored to the school, the students, the school's ideology..."**

What was a classroom like in 1920? What is a classroom like in 2024? Possibly very similar. The main problem is that neither the students and teachers nor the methodology they use are similar. Society poses new challenges and needs. Professionals try to address them through new methodologies and tools and by adapting contents. But what about the spaces?

"There's a clear need to improve learning spaces based on pedagogical needs, which are unique to each community. That's why the development of spaces has a specific result in each case, and it requires a co-design process to achieve this personalization," said Marta López, a teacher and researcher at the UOC and one of the four partners of Smart Classroom Project.

The company was born out of a research project in 2017 and was a finalist at SpinUOC 2020, the UOC's annual entrepreneurship event. The work carried out by the group led to the creation in 2023 of Smart Classroom Project, a spin-off promoted by UOC R&I through Hubbik and by the Bosch i Gimpera Foundation at the University of Barcelona. "Above all, we want to work with the administration to have an impact on as many schools as possible, which have a more obvious need for improvement", said Marta López.

What does the ideal classroom look like? "There's no single ideal model: classrooms must be tailored to the school, students, the school's ideology... but there are some principles that learning spaces should adhere to. For example, they must respect the principle of flexibility. A classroom must allow for group work as well as individual work, it must have different sub-areas, etc. The second principle is the well-being and comfort of students and teachers. Then there's the principle of providing a variety of resources, both paper and digital, to support and aid the process. Of course, classrooms must be safe."

Marta is a partner in the spin-off Smart Classroom Project, which is aimed at schools. The company focuses on research, consultancy, advice and implementation of pedagogical innovations applied to the design, use and assessment of educational and research spaces.

### Marta López Costa

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## YOUNG RESEARCH

Read more



### Diana Roig-Sanz

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Diana studies how literatures and cultures circulate around the world, exploring everything from global dynamics to small-scale local realities, using tools and methods from the digital humanities and adopting a decolonial and gender perspective. She coordinates the Global Literary Studies (GlobalS) research group, and her achievements have also earned her the title of ICREA research professor in Catalonia, a Ramón y Cajal contract and a Leonardo grant from the BBVA Foundation. In 2023 she was named a member of the Spanish Young Academy (AJdE).

**What exactly is the Spanish Young Academy (AJdE)?**

This institution was created to fill a gap in Spanish academia by recognizing the contributions of young researchers across all fields, without the constraints of a specific discipline. It aims to shine a light on leading academics in our country who can serve as role models for young students, from primary school to the early stages of doctoral studies, and to stimulate scientific interest in all areas of knowledge, including the social sciences and humanities, from an early age.

**What proposals did you make to the AJdE?**

My application proposal underscored the need to include the humanities in our country's scientific debates and to give greater visibility and funding to research in this field, which can also benefit other neighbouring fields in the social sciences. My application focused on three priorities: the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, the promotion of decolonial and gender perspectives applied to a global history of translation and literature, and the promotion of sustainable research, from the research topics themselves.

**Three values that stand out at the AJdE are inclusion, parity and sustainability. To what extent has science embraced these values?**

Recent decades have highlighted the growing need to address workplace diversity – in relation to gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic and religious multiculturalism. This has led universities to recruit, retain and appoint more women to positions requiring greater expertise and leadership, although not as quickly as we might like them to.

**What advice would you give to someone starting out in research?**

Resilience is paramount for young researchers, along with passion and enthusiasm for their work, flexibility, and the necessary family and personal circumstances to move to another country if need be. It's also important for them to have a good understanding of the opportunities in each field and of the research that can attract more funding while fulfilling their own interests.

**"Resilience, passion and enthusiasm are key to starting a research career"**



## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Read more

Francisco has pursued a career in the hotel sector from both the public and private sides. He has completed the University Master's Degree in Sustainable Tourism and ICT. His final project, *Resistances and resilience in Mar Menor. A narrative analysis based on the frame alignment theory of social action*, has received the special award for the best master's degree final project by REDINTUR.

Francisco Jerez

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### "The master's degree has given me a new way of looking at tourism through the lens of sustainability"

**What do you value most about everything you have learned on this master's degree?**

I've broadened my knowledge, and it's given me a new way of looking at tourism through the lens of sustainability. It has brought me a new perspective on the management and planning of tourist destinations. Their sustainability depends on caring for the natural environment, minimizing potential negative impacts on local communities and ensuring sustainable and environmentally friendly economic activity. I've been awarded the Special Award for the Best Academic Record of the Master's Degree.

**What is the main goal of the project?**

Mar Menor and La Manga form the main tourist destination in the Murcia region. They share the same biogeographical and geotourism conditions. They form a natural space subjected to many anthropic pressures that have brought it to the limits of its ecological survival. This compromises the sociocultural sustainability of local communities and the economic sustainability of the main business sectors in the area, affecting its reputation as a relevant tourist destination.

**What are the main conclusions of the project?**

The analysis indicates that the case of Mar Menor is unique. It shows that the crisis of the failing ecosystem has led a group of people to self-organize into locally based resistance movements, as a resilient response, and to connect with international ecological justice movements through digital activism forums on social media. The research has also brought to light important findings on the composition of these social resistance movements. They're movements that come from a population made up mainly of local people, with a significant proportion of women and eco-feminist values.

**Where do you see the tourism industry in ten years' time?**

Tourism will have to adapt to climate change in the next few years. This means that the protection, preservation and care of natural and cultural heritage is a priority, because it's this maintenance that most tourist activities are based on. Without nature, without heritage, there can hardly be an economy or tourism, and much less sustainable tourism.

Likewise, digitalization and tourism intelligence are a priority that must lead to knowledge transfer at every level of tourism. Finally, tourism must respect cultural heritage and care for the natural environment of host communities, so as not to trivialize or undervalue their legacy and customs.

## TAKING FLIGHT

Read more

Mental health remains a major taboo, despite the fact that, according to the WHO, one in four people will suffer from a mental disorder during their lifetime, and that these problems are one of the main reasons why people take time off work. Aiming to improve diagnosis and early intervention, start-up Aimentia Health has developed a platform that harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to more quickly identify cases in crisis, personalize diagnoses and monitor therapies for patients with anxiety, depression, phobias, bipolar disorders or suicidal tendencies. In 2020, the start-up won the Ramon Molinas Foundation Award for Social Impact and the SpinUOC Audience Award. "The UOC and the Hubbik team have been a key pillar in our development", said Jorba.

Aimentia Health has implemented its platform not only in Spain but also in Argentina, Mexico and Chile, and it already boasts more than 31,000 registered users, including both patients and professionals, at more than 120 schools. "Mental health is unfortunately still surrounded by stigma", said Edgar Jorba, who is also studying for an online MBA at the UOC. "That's why we seek to democratize access to this care model, based on research and smart clinical tools that go far beyond a mere video call".

Designed with a flexible structure and a proprietary programming language that integrates a variety of data sources to create customized solutions flexibly and quickly, Aimentia Health is a cloud-based platform that provides mental health tools and emergency services to all types of users, including patients (adults, children and adolescents) and professionals (specialists, school representatives and other workers).

The platform equips professionals with technology to quickly identify cases in crisis, personalize diagnoses and monitor therapies for patients with anxiety, depression, phobias, bipolar disorders or suicidal tendencies. "Aimentia Health's future applications will also include substance abuse and eating disorders", added Jorba.

### "Mental disorders are becoming a silent global epidemic that must be tackled with innovation and the development of new technologies"



Edgar Jorba

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Edgar is CEO and co-founder of Aimentia Health, a start-up that seeks to contribute to early diagnosis and provide personalized care to patients with mental health problems. According to Jorbas, mental disorders are becoming a "silent global epidemic that must be tackled with innovation and the development of new technologies".

## MAKING AN IMPACT ON E-HEALTH

[Read more](#)



**Liv Raphael**

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Liv is the director of the International Association of Universities (IAU) cluster for SDG 3, good health and well-being. It is made up of seven higher education institutions and coordinated by the UOC under the leadership of the eHealth Center. Together they are helping to bridge the gap between science, knowledge and policy.

### Most countries and health systems continue to grapple with the consequences of the Covid pandemic. How has the pandemic affected health?

We're halfway to the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and the pandemic, together with the other crises combined, has slowed down progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. It has also unequivocally highlighted the importance of the social determinants of health.

### And what about mental health?

According to the WHO, the global prevalence of mental health problems involving anxiety and depression increased by around 25% during the first year of the pandemic. And in the current situation, with a combination of multiple economic, social, political and environmental crises and transitions, it'll be important to support people in developing skills to cope with this uncertain, volatile and rapidly changing environment.

### How can e-health tools help overcome these challenges?

E-health solutions can help manage information, improve access, enhance existing support and tailor interventions to people's specific characteristics and needs.

### And how can higher education and research contribute to improving the delivery of e-health services in mental health?

Universities have multiple roles to play as places of work, study, research and training for health professionals. They're a privileged place to work in many fields. They're actively involved at global, regional, national and local levels through research, and they also interact directly with local communities through their community engagement programmes. As key members of the health community, they can help connect and promote exchange between researchers, faculty members, NGOs, governments, the private sector and communities.

### Covid has also taught us a lot about the link between our health and that of the planet.

Yes. To put it simply, the health of the planet determines the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the living environment we share. So there can be no human health without planetary health. Our health systems also have an environmental impact and use the Earth's renewable and non-renewable resources.

**"There can be no human health without planetary health"**

## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION HUB

### Research

50+ Research groups

1 Doctoral School

500+ Researchers

8 UOC Labs

319 Doctoral theses read

€26.7m Funding for ongoing projects

### Knowledge transfer

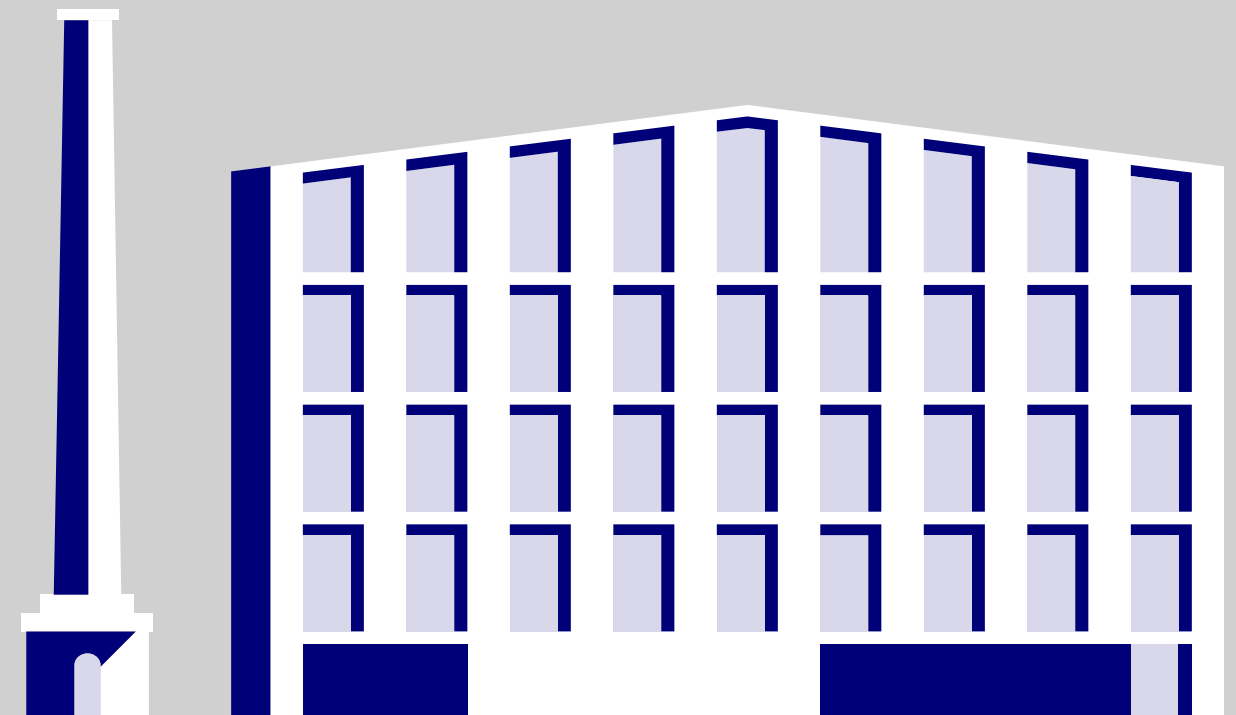
30 Patents

3 Spin-offs

32 Industrial doctorates

€8m+ Income from university-company contracts (since 2010)

Figures from the academic year 2023/2024



## How do we do research?

We focus on interdisciplinary projects in human and social sciences, education, health and technology. We are committed to open knowledge, interdisciplinarity and networked cooperation, promoting research into technology and the use of ICTs to bring about transformations in education and social equality.

## BREAKING PARADIGMS

A trained social worker specializing in public policy, with a master's degree in Disability and Social Inclusion and experience as a university instructor, Lucía and her mother were determined that blindness would not be another impediment towards achieving her goals. For Lucía, her cane is another way of navigating the world, a tool rather than an extension of her body.

As for her experience at the UOC, without hesitation and thanks to another faculty member, she became a course instructor at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences in 2021. She defines her time at the UOC as a challenge and a wonderful experience, highlighting the intercultural and multicultural dimension that pushes her to reinvent herself as an instructor and to reflect on her teaching, which involves disability and social contexts. She also believes that this role contributes to her work as a civil servant through two key elements: the first is recognizing that everyone's circumstances are different, and the second is constantly updating her theoretical and practical knowledge of these circumstances, which allows her to give herself to others and to understand them fully.

Speaking about the advances and gaps in achieving a more inclusive society that provides guarantees for people with different abilities, she recognized that more progress needs to be made in relation to accessible technologies, not only for people with disabilities, but for the wider population to ensure access to information and knowledge. However, she noted that the UOC has done a great job in providing alternative options for interaction through IT, reducing these barriers.

**"My time at the UOC is a challenge and a wonderful experience"**

Watch the video



**Lucía Lozada**

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Lucía is a course instructor in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences. She also coordinates the Technical Secretariat for Disability, which is part of the Undersecretariat for Governance and Guarantee of Rights of the District Secretariat of the Government of Bogotá, Colombia. From here, she has worked to change paradigms and include an issue as important as disability in the public, academic and social agendas.

## BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES

Read more

**"The empowerment they achieve is crucial; for them, seeing a girl coding is completely normal"**

**What impact have you seen on the girls in the programme, both in terms of their personal development and their technological skills?**

From a technological point of view, they learn block coding or video editing, but most importantly they develop computational thinking, which they can then apply to many other areas. There's also a component of entrepreneurship, project planning, competitor analysis, marketing and communication. However, I think the most important impact is on skills such as teamwork, motivation and commitment, as well as fun, because they approach technology through play and leisure.

Finally, the empowerment they achieve is crucial. For them, seeing a girl coding is completely normal, and they're surprised to discover that there are fewer girls than boys in computer science or engineering at university, which makes no sense to them. For me, this is the main aspect of the programme.

**How do you think programmes such as Technovation Girls are helping to close the digital gender gap and encourage girls' interest in STEAM?**

Closing the gender gap starts with the premise that it's normal for girls to think about a problem in their community and find a technological solution for it. Stereotypes and unconscious biases are broken down, and girls see other girls or young women proposing different solutions, or professionals of their gender working in STEAM, as role models. With regard to the digital divide, the characteristic that most accurately predicts students' digital abilities is their families' socioeconomic status.

This programme breaks down these barriers and provides a technological grounding, not just in coding, but in computational thinking for girls and young women, many of whom would not otherwise have access to it. Sixty per cent of Technovation girls go on to study STEAM courses, and a comparison with similar cohorts who have not taken part in the programme shows an increase of over 40% in the number of girls pursuing further study in STEAM.

Francina is a graduate, tutor of the Master's Degree in Philosophy for Contemporary Challenges and mentor of the Technovation Girls Catalonia programme, which encourages girls and young women to develop mobile applications to solve problems in their community.

**Francina Sole**

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## SOCIAL COMMITMENT

Montse is 52 years old and the mother of two children. She is a social worker, a student of the Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology and Human Evolution and a volunteer with the Catalan Refugee Programme. She provides socio-inclusive group mentoring for families of refugees and people granted asylum or international protection.

### Montse Arias

# 19



[Read more](#)

## "The arrival of people that we classify as refugees also creates stigmas that I'd like to leave behind"

**What made you sign up for the Catalan Refugee Programme?**  
Working in social work, I see many realities and all the shortcomings every day. I think we can all do something every day for both privileged and disadvantaged people. So one day I saw that the UOC had a huge list of programmes, and I signed up for the refugee programme and the suicide prevention and support programme. I did the training for both. I couldn't commit to many hours or days, but I could give, say, one afternoon a week and a bit more if I needed to. So that's what happened.

**Why did you choose this rather than another programme?**  
Probably because of the social aspect, because I know people who have worked on programmes such as the Red Cross programme, and because we were – and are - in the midst of the Russian-Ukrainian and Palestinian-Israeli wars. I put faces and names to them. I know people from these countries, which makes me feel that I understand their feelings even better. The arrival of people that we classify as refugees also creates stigmas that I'd like to leave behind. It's not easy for them, just as it wouldn't be easy for us, and it's extremely difficult for anyone over 70, for example, to arrive in a new country where the language and customs are completely different from their old reality. As an anthropologist, it's natural for me to fight against this stigmatized otherness.

**What has the Catalan Refugee Programme given you, both personally and academically?**  
Academically, I suppose it's the fact that I'm once again sharing in the otherness of customs, of ways of thinking or acting. It shakes you up to see that any of us could have our lives suddenly upended, and it makes you even more accepting of the diversity of cultures and understanding that in reality, difference is only created by ourselves.

Personally, it brings me love, which turns into a wonderful energy. It may sound idyllic, but it really is like going to a human humility and learning session that makes you understand the importance of human relationships and that, despite being only a small cog in a big wheel, it's very important and healthy.

As for the work aspect, I recommend the programme because of what you can contribute in terms of support and what it can give you as a social and personal tool. Social experiences offer a range of opportunities and growth that not only bring experience to your career and customer service, but also help with conflict resolution, emotional tools and empathy.

## GENERATING SYNERGIES

[Read more](#)



### Nella Escala

# 20

One of the tools to combat school dropout (often due to lack of motivation) is the use of the arts as a learning vehicle, as well as ICT (e-learning). These strategies have been shown to provide a better educational experience and to increase student participation and enthusiasm. This is the basis of the research carried out by Nella, a student on the doctoral programme in Education and ICT (E-learning), who was previously a master's degree student and tutor at the UOC.

**Why did you decide to do your doctoral degree at the UOC?**  
Initially for three reasons: the chance to continue with the Education and ICT programme, the flexibility of doing it online and part-time, and the positive reception I received from one of my supervisors, who encouraged me to submit my project proposal.

I knew how the UOC works and was very happy with my experience as a master's degree student and as a tutor. It seemed a good time and a good place to continue my doctoral studies. In addition, the opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences at conferences, seminars and workshops, as well as the chance to do research stays in other countries, made it all the more enriching.

**The Hub has become a magnet for talent from abroad. Why do you think that is?**  
The Hub itself is attractive because of the concept and the possibilities it provides to researchers. It is a modern research space where you can work calmly and interact with researchers from other programmes and disciplines to exchange opinions and create synergies, thus adding to each other's ideas and learning together. This collaboration significantly enriches the research process.

There's also the possibility of experimenting with the UOC Labs, which are laboratories equipped for applied research. In addition, the possibility of starting a business with your research project, with the support of a knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship platform, makes it even more appealing.

**What surprised you most about the research carried out at the UOC?**  
I'm surprised by the number of research groups there are and the amount of knowledge and knowledge transfer that's generated here. It's interesting to see what other groups are doing and how our research can fit together in a more interdisciplinary way of working.

I'm fascinated by the Doctoral School's enthusiasm for creating learning spaces on different topical issues, as well as the meetings that allow us to learn more about what researchers on the various doctoral programmes are doing. I'd also like to highlight the support of the staff, who are always there to help you, listen to you, answer your questions and guide you on your journey as a researcher.

**"The Hub is a space where you can interact with researchers to exchange opinions and create synergies, thus adding to each other's ideas and learning together"**

# SHARING KNOWLEDGE

**Mark Farid**  
Resident artist of the  
Science, Technology  
and the Arts programme

CONTEMPORARY  
CHALLENGES

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**Esther Méndez**  
Anesthesiologist at Bellvitge  
University Hospital. Alumni  
of the Master's Degree in  
Digital Health (E-Health) and  
promoter of El Meu Quiròfan

IMPACTING  
CITIZENS

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**Joan Arnedo**  
Director of the Master's  
Degree in Video Game  
Design and Development  
and researcher

PROFESSIONS  
OF TODAY

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**Cristina Agustín**  
IT talent acquisition  
leader at NTT Data  
Europe & Latam

STRATEGIC  
ALLIANCES

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**Mirela Fiori**  
Urban planner,  
teacher and researcher.  
Director of the University  
Master's Degree in  
Cities and Urbanism

TEAMWORK

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**Rachel Palmén**  
Senior researcher in  
the Gender and ICT group

BRIDGING  
THE GAP

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**Olga Merino**  
Student of the University  
Master's Degree in  
Corporate Communication,  
Protocol and Events

PROFESSIONAL  
EMPOWERMENT

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**Joaquín Jiménez**  
Alumni. Co-founder  
of Steam4all

GLOCAL  
IMPACT

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**Miquel Martorell Vicens**  
Director of the Teatre  
Principal de Palma. Member  
of the Alumni Council

PROFESSIONAL  
TRANSFORMATION

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**Georgina Matamoros**  
Alumni. World vice-  
president of the Junior  
Chamber International

PERMANENT  
ENTREPRENEUR

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## BRIDGING THE GAP

Watch the video



Rachel Palmén

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The INSPIRE project aims to improve equality research and provide practical support to institutions that are implementing equality plans and actions. The ultimate aim is to help reduce the gender gap in research and innovation. At the helm is Rachel Palmén, senior researcher in the Gender and ICT (GenTIC) group.

**Are we closing the gender gap in the world of research?**  
The proportion of people with a doctoral degree in the European Union is almost gender-balanced, according to 2019 data from the *She Figures 2021* report. However, only 41.3% of employed scientists and engineers are women. Women are significantly underrepresented in technology-oriented fields, accounting for less than a quarter of freelancers in science and engineering and in the ICT sector.

The data show that women make up more than 40% of academic staff, but there are considerable differences depending on the grade and level. Although they make up almost half of staff at grades C and D, they only account for around a quarter of staff at grade A, which is equivalent to full professor.

**And what are the challenges when it comes to building a more inclusive and equitable research system?**

The most significant threat to gender equality today is the attitude of right-wing ideologies against gender studies and equal rights. The advances of recent years are now being questioned. In Canada, for example, equality, diversity and inclusion provisions have been removed from research funding policies, while in the United States a bill has been passed that will ban diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) offices and initiatives throughout higher education. Perhaps one of the main barriers to change is institutional resistance. This can be more explicit, as in the case of individuals advocating to protect their own gender privileges, or less explicit, as in the case of people or organizations that theoretically support equality but do not take clear steps in its favour. The latter is much more difficult to identify.

**Against this backdrop, how does the INSPIRE project fit in?**

INSPIRE aims to build an empirical basis for gender equality plans and policies. These need to take an intersectional approach, but there's a general lack of knowledge and experience on how to do it right. In addition to developing scientific evidence, INSPIRE seeks to provide practical support to research organizations and companies involved in the process of change.

**"The biggest threat to equality is the attitude of some ideologies against gender studies"**

## CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Watch the video

**"I look at how external things mediated through technology influence one's sense of self"**

Can digital technologies change the narrative around the climate crisis? How can the dialogue between art, academia and activism help combat this global emergency? These are some of the questions posed by Mark Farid, artist in residence at the UOC, in his project *Invisible Voice*, part of a residency sponsored by Hac Te, Barcelona's Art, Science and Technology Hub, within the European project S+T+ARTS in the City.

"*Invisible Voice* is looking at how external things mediated through technology influence one's sense of self. This residency at the UOC fits perfectly with the project I'm currently working on; it has given me access to researchers at the University, NGOs, artists groups and activists," said Farid.

Farid's project initially aims to explore the challenge of how digital narratives can help Barcelona face the current climate crisis. The artist has worked at the campus research hub: "It's about artists, researchers and NGOs working together with an interdisciplinary approach, which the 21st century really is. And that's what the UOC is standing for. So how can we take that ethos and apply it to *Invisible Voice*?", summarized the artist and researcher.

The nine-month residency is coordinated by Hac Te, a hub that explores the intersections between art, science and technology to tackle complex contemporary challenges. The UOC is one of the hub's founding partners, together with a dozen leading organizations in the cultural, scientific, academic and technological fields.

Mark is a digital artist, researcher and lecturer in Fine Arts at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. He is one of the 11 artists selected for the S+T+ARTS (Science, Technology and the Arts) residencies, a European Commission programme that invites artists to combine creativity and technology to address the challenges facing European regions.

Mark Farid

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## PROFESSIONAL EMPOWERMENT



**Olga Merino**

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Olga graduated from the UOC with a bachelor's degree in Communication last January. Her internship in a public relations firm has led to a job in two areas that she is passionate about: the bridal sector and digital marketing. She is now also studying for the University Master's Degree in Corporate Communication, Protocol and Events.

[Read more](#)

**How was your experience doing the Bachelor's Degree in Communication?**

Doing this bachelor's degree allowed me to study what I'm passionate about without leaving behind my work and social spheres. I was a bit worried at the start, because studying online requires a high personal commitment. You're the one who has to manage your own time to read materials, do assignments, participate in discussions... But once you get used to it, I think it's a very positive experience.

**What advantages and challenges did you encounter during your degree?**

The UOC allows you to study from anywhere in the world, with flexible hours. The only time constraint is the obligation to submit continuous assessment activities by the deadlines. The personalized support provided by the tutors in each course helped me to clear up doubts and solve problems.

The main challenge was the order, organization and self-discipline you need to deliver your work. Added to this is self-access learning, because you rely on learning resources and documents. In any case, you have to be proactive with the information, and there's no one to explain the syllabus to you by voice.

**You did your curricular internship at the Cloud Factory communication firm. How was it?**

Although I wasn't sure about doing an internship at the beginning of the first semester of 2022, I ended up looking for companies in the field of public relations. When I saw Barcelona Sky's advert for a wedding and event planner with digital marketing and PR skills, I didn't think twice about applying. I'd always been interested in the bridal sector, and this was an opportunity to get involved in it through digital marketing, two areas that I'm passionate about. Three weeks later, I was already doing a non-curricular internship, and I extended my stay to make it curricular. My internship opened up the door to the world of work and, thanks to this experience, I work on what I like.

**Did you ever imagine that the internship would lead to a job?**

I didn't think so at first, but after four months I saw that the management team was interested in me. This made me change my mindset from being an intern to doing my job as if I were already a professional, with greater engagement and without fear of expressing my ideas. This way, they saw that I wanted to continue in the company, and so I did.

**"My internship opened up the door to the world of work: I work on what I like"**

## IMPACTING CITIZENS

[Watch the video](#)

**"Digital solutions will make our lives easier"**

Since July 2023, Bellvitge University Hospital (HUB) has been successfully using El Meu Quiròfan (My Operating Room), a web app designed by Esther to improve the experience of patients and their families during surgical procedures.

**Esther Méndez**

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"Patients often asked me: 'What are they going to do to me in surgery today?' Although this information is provided in the preoperative consultation, patients often forget it. It's been shown that less than 20% of patients remember this information. That's why I came up with the idea of putting it all together in an app so that patients could look at it calmly at home", said Esther Méndez. She is an anaesthesiologist at Bellvitge University Hospital (HUB) and a graduate of the University Master's Degree in E-Health, as well as the doctor behind this application. The web app seeks to both increase patient satisfaction and achieve health benefits. "Digital solutions will make our lives easier", said Dr Méndez.

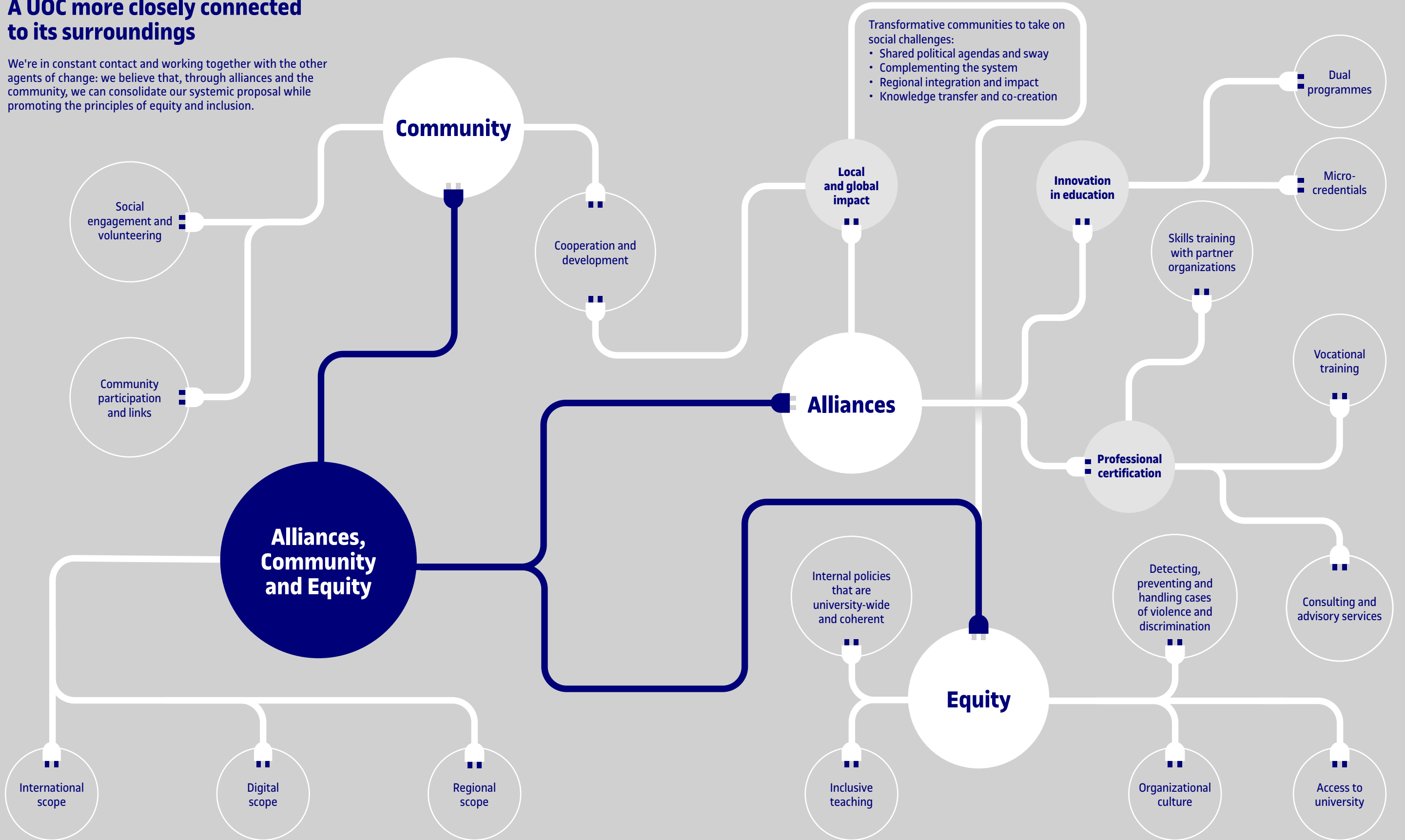
El Meu Quiròfan was the result of her master's degree final project, and in 2020 she was awarded a grant under the first call for applications for the From Idea to Project grants of the UOC's eHealth Center. The grant included a financial endowment and mentoring to carry out the project. She also received a PECT Innovation Call 2021 grant from the Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBELL), with EU funding.

"Having developed the app while I was doing the master's degree has helped me to implement it in a more academic way, with more polished content", said Méndez. This is a success story for the UOC, as it achieves the ultimate goal of the master's degree, which is to have a social impact with a direct effect on the public.



## A UOC more closely connected to its surroundings

We're in constant contact and working together with the other agents of change: we believe that, through alliances and the community, we can consolidate our systemic proposal while promoting the principles of equity and inclusion.





## PROFESSIONS OF TODAY

Joan is a computer engineer and director of the UOC Master's Degree in Video Game Design and Development. He is also a researcher.

Joan Arnedo

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**"The specialization covered by our master's degree is for the industry's most in-demand profile"**

### Where is the video game industry at?

It's become a mainstream sector. If you get on the bus, you can see an older person playing Candy Crush. Though many people don't think about it in these terms, they're playing a video game. Almost everyone, in one way or another, is involved. The industry right now is capable of reaching the vast majority of the population: it's in full swing. The Government of Catalonia's Innovation and Digital Culture Department has placed great emphasis on Catalonia becoming the main hub for this sector in Spain, or even in the world. There's huge demand for professionals, because you need a lot of people to code, and to do it well.

### So it's at a good point.

It must be made clear that it has great potential in terms of both industry and research, and that it still has a very strong artistic and professional component, which makes it even more attractive. However, this also means that it has a lot of competition: it's a very diverse industry, where you don't have to be at the top of the pyramid to earn a living and do work that is personally fulfilling.

### And what does the master's degree entail?

One of the differences compared to other master's degrees is the two sides of the academic plan that we offer: design and coding. Most programmes try to address all facets of video game development, but ours aims to stand out in the specific field of coding.

My decision to give the master's degree this narrower focus was based on the idea that it's better to know a lot about something specific than very little about many other things. So the master's degree produces graduates with the most sought-after profiles in the industry, and the result is high employment.

### What are the strengths of the UOC Master's Degree in Video Game Design and Development?

It's a university master's degree at a public price that offers a high degree of choice of courses and personalization. And all this from your own home. Anyone can access the master's degree: it's not necessary to have a technological background to be admitted. In addition, a lot of emphasis is placed on the continuous creation of a personal work portfolio, which ends up having a very positive impact on students' subsequent job search. In addition, the teachers are industry professionals with extensive experience, and there's the possibility of going on to do doctoral studies.

## GLOCAL IMPACT

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### What do you want to contribute to society?

Knowledge. We're channelling it through two non-profit organizations: Steam4all, which supports teachers in the rural world who come to us for help, and Moianès Sostenible, where we work for a fair energy transition so that the management of energy, currently in the hands of oligopolies, passes into the hands of the people.

**In 2020 you co-founded Steam4all, which promotes STEAM disciplines in schools in rural areas by incorporating the gender perspective. What are the reasons for carrying out the project?** Rural areas and women. At one point we had a staff of almost 650 people, and the projects led by women achieved their goals within the established deadlines. Men, on the other hand, often had excuses for not meeting deadlines. The problem was that it was difficult to find female engineers.

**Your first contact with the university world was as a student of physics in the early 1970s, and you returned in 2009 to do the Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering at the UOC. What brought you back to university?**

It was because of a positive experience with the UOC. My company held an event in which we considered whether the services we offered should be local and global. We asked several institutions to collaborate, and it was the UOC that agreed to do it. From this contact with the university world, I saw many positive things and decided to enrol in order to acquire the UOC's know-how.

### What was the last discovery you made?

Knowing how to work remotely and connect with people by video conference. This is normal since the pandemic, but I learned it at the UOC long before 2020.

**"I want to give back to society what I have received during my professional life: knowledge"**



Joaquín Jiménez

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Joaquín is a UOC graduate. A neo-rural retiree living in the Moianès region, he is a co-founder of Steam4all, a STEAM communicator in schools and a promoter of energy communities.

## STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Watch the video

**Why has NTT DATA decided to collaborate with the UOC?**  
Together with the UOC, we've offered 25 scholarships to women to attend the Coding School, with the aim of encouraging and facilitating their entry into the technology sector and helping them to find jobs.

**What is the aim of this university-business collaboration?**  
With this partnership, we seek to help women join an innovative, competitive sector and allow them to participate in a hybrid training and job promotion project.

**How is the lack of programmers perceived?**  
We see the shortage of programmers in the sector as an opportunity to encourage interest in STEM, so that people currently enrolled on these courses can act as role models in the future and gradually help us to increase talent in the sector.

**Why is it important for NTT DATA to promote talent?**  
Promoting and supporting female talent isn't just a responsibility of ours, but a commitment to making the technological future more innovative and equitable. With these small actions, we want the future technology sector to have all the available diversity and talent.



**Cristina Agustín**

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Cristina is an IT talent acquisition leader at NTT DATA Europe & Latam, a company that has offered 25 scholarships to women who want to study at the UOC's Coding School. They seek to close the gender gap in the technology sector by offering opportunities to more women to train as programmers.

**"Promoting and supporting female talent is a commitment to making the technological future more innovative and equitable"**

## PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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**"The UOC has changed my professional life"**

**What does it mean to lead the most important theatre in the Balearic Islands?**

It's a significant professional challenge. My background is in production, and I've wanted to make this change and commit to this for a long time. It's a double challenge: I want to live up to the expectations of both my colleagues and the institution, as well as those of the audience. I'm very excited.

**Education has been a constant in your career. You started out studying Design, then Business Sciences at the UOC, and you have two master's degrees in Cultural Management and Organization Management.**

I've been fine-tuning my career. Everything I've done is very connected and I always liked the programmes offered by the UOC. It's helped me complete my professional profile, which has always been focused on having responsibility within organizations.

**What would you say to someone who wants to work in the cultural sector?**

I'd recommend that they get a broad formal and academic education beyond their natural talents and intuition.

**You also collaborate with the UOC as a graduate. What has the UOC meant for your career?**

It's opened up a whole new world for me. I've had a great time. I'm a bit of a fan of the UOC. The UOC isn't a front. It's a very large team with a lot of responsibility. My time as secretary of the Student Council has taught me the values of the University. I'm still in contact with some of my peers from the Student Council, and we want to do a ten-year reunion. Thanks to the UOC, our professional lives have changed for all four of us. Getting to know the organization from the inside has also enriched me professionally.

Miquel is a cultural manager and designer who took over as director of the Teatre Principal de Palma a few months ago. He has been a student at the UOC and a representative of its Student Council, and he is currently a member of the Alumni Council.

**Miquel Martorell Vicens**

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## TEAMWORK

Read more



Mirela Fiori

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Mirela is an urban planner, as well as a teaching staff member and researcher. She directs the University Master's Degree in Cities and Urbanism. She is also part of the Nodes research group, which explores contemporary social challenges from a transdisciplinary perspective and based on three main focuses of interest: communication, education and urban planning.

The community project #SomiaLaPau, carried out in collaboration with students of the University Master's Degree in Cities and Urbanism, has given the residents of La Pau, in Barcelona, the opportunity to express their opinions in order to collectively rethink the spaces of this part of the city according to their experiences and daily uses.

It was suggested to Mirela Fiori, urban planner and director of the master's degree, to propose a collaboration and launch a project to remodel Plaça de Conxita Badia. "A job like this required a multidisciplinary team of professionals, and that is what we at the UOC brought to the table," said Fiori, who selected a group of students with very different profiles to start the collaboration, following a call for applications open to all students on the master's degree. The team included an architect, a social worker, a geographer, a bachelor of philosophy, political science and economics, a sociologist and a civil engineer.

The result of the first phase of #SomiaLaPau is an urban agenda for community action at neighbourhood level that brings together the various initiatives identified as priority actions. The aim of the second phase will be to assess which of the actions identified as priorities can be carried out in a self-managed way and which can lead to viable technical projects to be presented to the administration and further defined. "We work hand in hand with social entities and organizations to promote this social impact, which for us is a priority", said Fiori.

After a year of work, the local residents feel that they have "an amazing neighbourhood but one that has been abandoned by the administration: it's unsafe, public areas are not maintained, young people have no suitable places to socialize, etc.", said the director of the master's degree.

**"We work hand in hand with social entities and organizations to promote this social impact"**

## PERMANENT ENTREPRENEUR

Read more

Georgina is the founder and director of the marketing firm Et Volià! and world vice-president of one of the largest youth organizations in the world, Junior Chamber International (JCI). She is also a UOC graduate.

Georgina Matamoros

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**"You can always reinvent yourself. You can live many lives in one"**

**How would you define yourself?**

As an entrepreneur. When I was at university, I founded the Entrepreneurs' Club, and as a child I used to say that when I grew up I'd be the boss. I liked the business world and the idea of entrepreneurship, and I played at working in a bank. I've always been very restless and determined, which is why I studied at the UOC, because it allowed me to continue doing things.

**Did it meet your expectations?**

Absolutely. Doing the Master's Degree in Marketing and Communication Management allowed me to continue living in Germany and accept the job offer from the company where I was doing my internship. Before that, I studied a double bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Management and International Management, with the particularity that one of the bachelor's degrees was done in an EU country.

**Which one did you choose?**

Germany. Ever since I was a child I've been obsessed with that country. That's where I came into contact with the world of marketing, a big discovery. The UOC's 100% online training allowed me to spend the first year of my master's degree in Germany and the second in Taiwan.

**Was it hard to come home?**

At first yes, very. I'd been living abroad for years, in Barcelona, Munich, Taipei... I signed up for everything I could. I'd signed up to an entrepreneurs' newsletter where they offered a course by JCI, a non-profit association that operates in 117 countries and has 200,000 members. My restlessness led me to set up the JCI office in Terres de l'Ebre. We're a fairly forgotten territory: either you make things happen yourself or no one will.

**And now you are the second Spanish woman and the first Catalan woman to occupy the world vice-presidency.**

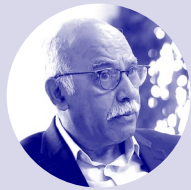
I gradually climbed the ladder. As a European ambassador, I'm assigned six countries: France, Monaco, Luxembourg, Czechia, Serbia and Cyprus. We use learning by doing to develop leadership skills.

**Where do you see yourself in the near future?**

I think you can always reinvent yourself. You can live many lives. Maybe in a few years I'll go back to my village and run rice farms, become a teacher or open a bookshop. But for now I'd love for my marketing firm to grow and for my work to enable me to keep travelling. I'd like to be able to keep doing things that fulfil me. It really fulfils me to meet people. People inspire you, and you can inspire them too. They're the spice of life.

## WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT THE UOC

More information



### Vijay Kumar



Vijay Kumar is a prominent professional in the field of education and technology. He has been director of the Office of Innovation and Technology and associate dean of Open Learning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In a career spanning 27 years, he has become a key figure in educational innovation.

**"The UOC was doing open learning, online learning, before it got fashionable."**



### Mariana Mazzucato



Recognized as one of the most influential economists in the world, Mariana Mazzucato is a professor of Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London, where she is the founding director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP). She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the UOC in 2022.

**"It is an honour to receive an honorary doctorate from a university that's designed to include everyone. A university that sees being online not just as a technological thing, but also as a social thing, in relation to human rights."**



### Mary Beard



Mary Beard is a professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge. She is renowned for her work in making the classics more accessible and bringing ancient Rome to life through the eyes of its inhabitants. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the UOC in 2019.

**"We have to find ways, and the UOC clearly has, of really harnessing the power of new technology to enhance the experience of new generations of students."**



### Sanjay Sarma



Born in India in 1968, Sanjay Sarma is vice president for Open Learning at MIT, where he leads online education projects and collaborates with institutions such as the UOC. With a solid background in Mechanical Engineering, he has been key in the development of innovative educational models and the integration of technology in teaching.

**"An online lecture can be paused, fast-forwarded, consumed slowly, interrupted, speeded up. And all the cognitive tricks, you can actually apply online: retrieval effects, spaced repetition... And online does it better than the lecture. And this is where the UOC comes in. You were designed from the beginning to go this route. You were visionary."**



### William J. Mitchell



William J. Mitchell (1944-2010) was a prominent architect, urban planner and researcher, professor at MIT and leader of the MIT Media Lab. He was recognized for his contributions to smart cities, digital urban design and new technologies applied to architecture and urbanism. His work transformed the understanding and design of the urban environment in the digital age.

**"The UOC has taken the much more radical step of creating a genuine virtual campus to serve students wherever they may be, whenever they can find time."**



### Francesca Bria



Francesca Bria is a renowned expert and advisor in IT and digitalization policies. She has held prominent roles in the public and private sectors, working to drive technological innovation with a particular focus on democratic and sustainable needs.

**"We fight the gender pay gap and we also find a way to fight precarization of women in the labour market, and just make visible the talent of women in tech and make sure that this conversation happens. And I think you are some of the best groups here at UOC, with your work that is doing that."**



### Wendy Hall



Wendy Hall has a PhD in Mathematics. She is a regius professor of Computer Science and associate vice-president for International Engagement at the University of Southampton, director of the Web Science Institute and managing director of the Web Science Trust. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the UOC in 2023.

**"We desperately need diversity. We need interdisciplinary skills and expertise, and those are two of the things that I see flourishing here at the UOC."**



### Martin Carnoy



Martin Carnoy has been a professor of Education and Economics at Stanford University since 1969. He is an economist and has specialized in the relationship between the economy and the education system. He opened academic year 2004/2005 at the UOC with an inaugural lecture on the possibilities and challenges of ICT in education.

**"The UOC, which is entirely web-based, is the most recent and the most purely ICT. It represents the greatest change in the definition of a university."**

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