

# Opening of the UOC centre in Palma Balearic Islands

President,  
Mayor,  
President of the Board,  
Rector,  
President of the Social Council,  
Mayor of Manacor,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we're opening our new UOC centre in the city of Palma. It's something we've been pursuing for some time and, as with anything you strive for, once you achieve it the satisfaction is huge, absolute.

This new centre will make us better able to reach out to, serve, and communicate with our Majorcan students and alumni, building upon many years' work at the UOC contact point in Manacor – a place where the local authority have always given us support, for which I'd like to stress my thanks.

Furthermore, this new centre represents a new degree of integration for the UOC in the Balearic Islands, at least for its official presence, bearing in mind the UOC has been active here since its very beginnings.

I must also thank both Ciutadella City Council and the Council of Ibiza for welcoming and supporting the new UOC points we have there. In the 23-year-history of our university we've awarded qualifications to 2,612 students from Menorca, Majorca, Ibiza and Formentera. And some of them have done enough to earn more than one, as between them they have 3,167 bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and postgraduate qualifications.

Looking at the data for the 2016/2017 academic year, the UOC had 2,539 active students on these four islands. The student profile is slightly more female than male, and there is a notable presence of students over the age of 40. Seen another way, today's UOC is a place of learning that offers regional integration, equality and opportunities.

Being a distanceless university has allowed us to adapt to the diversity of these islands, including 14 students from Formentera and almost 2,000 from Majorca.

The fact we are a distanceless university has appealed not only to the Sant Llorenç local police force, but indeed to the highest ranking institutions in the Balearics, people at all

administrative levels and from all political parties, all of whom we are proud to welcome on our Virtual Campus.

If my friends from the UIB and our other esteemed guests will allow me, I'd even suggest that the UOC is now firmly consolidated here.



*“If a university is essentially its students, it’s now fair to say that the UOC belongs to these islands.”*

Our desire to be involved in the future of teaching and learning here in the Balearics manifests itself in our commitment to collaboration and partnership with your institutions, and in particular with the UIB. For in order to promote growth, we must waste no resource, we can ignore no talents, and we must leave no one behind.

As such, the UOC throws its doors open not only to young students finishing secondary education, but also to people who were unable to complete their studies first time round, people who want to make more of what they’ve already learned, and people who appreciate that education is not just a stage in our lives, but something to accompany us throughout our careers.

Indeed, our unique methodology makes it possible to configure and adapt the pace of learning to students’ work and family responsibilities. It also teaches students additional skills – besides the obvious example of digital skills – that are prized in the job market and by human resources departments.

This desire for collaboration and partnership can also be seen in 29 agreements we’ve made over these years, signed with 21 different institutions here or directly with the UIB. And 9 of our 48 affiliated teaching staff here also hold teaching roles at the campus on Carretera de Valldemossa.

Others have worked there in the past, for example our friends Isidor Marí, the lifeblood of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities until his recent retirement, and Llorenç Valverde, a vice president at the UOC whose spell as a UIB professor was by all accounts very successful.

And of course it goes a lot further than this. Our joint understanding goes beyond a shared commitment par excellence; it is founded upon the specific geography, history, language and culture we hold in common.

And it’s because of this history that we can meet – islanders and mainlanders – in a street named after Ausiàs March – a poet from yet another part of Catalonia, Valencia – and I can speak in my mainland dialect of Majorcan without any need for translation.

A great example of this joint understanding is the lletrA project, through which we've been promoting opportunities to study and share Catalan literature online for over fifteen years, a collaboration with the Institut Ramon Llull – a revered name that again marks our shared heritage.

The project's website has pages for each author – in Catalan, Spanish and English – with biographies, tasters of their works, and multimedia resources. There are some forty odd authors from the Balearics, from classically renowned figures such as Marià Villangómez, Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel and Gabriel Alomar to more contemporary names such as Guillem Frontera, Valentí Puig and Maria Antònia Oliver. And then there are also the monographs on Mossèn Alcover's *rondaies*, on Llorenç Villalonga's *Bearn*, on Biel Mesquida's *L'adolescent de sal* and, coming soon, one on Blai Bonet's *El mar*.



*“Language and culture, learning and knowledge, partnership and collaboration. These things we share in common have become the founding blocks for the UOC’s presence on these islands.”*

Today this new UOC centre provides material proof of what we already knew and felt: our commitment to the Balearic Islands’ society and educational and business communities and institutions.

Today we mark our desire for a presence here, an active presence, as this new premises will allow us to combine the work we do assisting students and staff with the organization of special events, such as tomorrow’s round table on Antònia Vicens.



*“And so our centre in Palma is born of a need to support learning and education, understood as essential assets for any society that wants to live freely and democratically.”*

This is a project rooted in our country, proud of its heritage but looking to the future; part of the European Higher Education Area, it wants to make its voice heard, in research and in education, in a world now irreversibly engaged in the process of globalization.

And hence the need to innovate, to mobilize talent, to persevere with our strengths and, where our routines are less productive, to seek out new approaches. We need therefore to think, and furthermore rethink, both as individuals and collectively.

We must be aware of how far we have still to go, aware that we must do it and must enjoy doing it together. Or, in the words of our teacher and poet Miquel Àngel Llauger, savouring “that sweetest of adverbs: still...”.<sup>1</sup>

But today it’s time to enjoy the start of what we hope will be a long stay in this new home. At seven this evening the opening will continue at the CaixaFòrum with a celebration open to all current members of our UOC community and those who are *still* thinking about it.

And tomorrow, whether we’re here in Carrer d’Ausiàs March or on the Virtual Campus, we’ll be back to work, to study, to teach and to learn.

Thank you very much

Josep A. Planell

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<sup>1</sup> Miquel Àngel Llauger, “Encara”, in *La gratitud*, Palma, Moll, 2014, p. 15.