

Motion #1 in the agenda item “University management report” to declare a state of climate emergency

University Senate Decision CU/2019/01/06, of 7 May 2019, which approves the motion to declare a state of climate emergency

Motion to declare a state of climate emergency

Let us begin by quoting the principles of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya: “There is broad consensus among experts that social responsibility and sustainability should be cornerstones of university activity”¹. This is what we are asking for today, for sustainability and the fight against climate change to be priorities for the UPC. We cannot expect individuals to reduce their ecological footprint on their own. Society, governments, institutions and all social groups need to work towards a sustainable lifestyle, but also to actively fight climate change. This puts the spotlight on universities, which, as representatives of the scientific community and the demands of future generations, have the responsibility to raise the alarm in the climate emergency that we are facing.

According to a report by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we need to reduce CO₂ emissions from 2010 levels by 45% by 2030, and to zero by 2050, if we want to prevent global temperatures from increasing by more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, with all that this involves for biodiversity, climate and society as a whole². This gives us very little time to act as a species. The report highlights a number of possible consequences of global warming of more than 1.5°C, which vary from ocean acidification to a dramatic desertification of the Earth’s surface, global increases in sea temperature and level, changes in seasonal and rainfall cycles, mass extinction of species (the so-called sixth extinction) and the displacement of entire human communities due to these changes.

For these reasons and so many more, following the examples of the universities of Bristol³ and Newcastle⁴ and of Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon⁵, and listening to the demands of the Catalan university community represented in this fight and the global movement Fridays for Future, we believe it is urgent and vital that the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya recognises and declares a state of climate emergency.

This motion mainly seeks to provide the climate debate with a space within Catalan, Spanish, European and global politics, a space that has been denied so far. It also seeks to set an example for governments, universities, institutions and other bodies to do the same, and to encourage future improvements in this sense within the UPC, such as increasing the use of renewable energy, improving resource utilisation and intensifying reuse and recycle campaigns.

¹ <https://www.upc.edu/rsu/ca>

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

³ <https://bristol.ac.uk/news/2019/april/climate-emergency-.html>

⁴ <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainable-campus/about/>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-48077802>

Therefore, we request that the UPC declare a state of climate emergency and prioritise all measures designed to place the UPC at the forefront of the fight for a sustainable society.