UPC’s protocol of action against coronavirus (COVID-19)

Objective
The Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), in the Governing Council held on 27 February 2020, approved the action plan in the event of emergencies that affect the university community.

The plan included setting up an emergency management committee, which is formed by:

The rector
The general manager
The head of the Rector’s Bureau
The head of the Legal Services and Risk Assessment Area
The vice-rectors, directors and members of the Office of the General Manager appointed by the rector and the general manager based on each kind of emergency.

One of the duties of the committee is:

To issue instructions regarding academic activities and the use of spaces and take any other specific measures that are deemed appropriate in accordance with health authorities’ advice.

This protocol describes the actions that the University has taken and plans to take against the current novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The protocol will be kept under permanent review based on the evolution of the outbreak, the latest information on the disease and health authorities’ advice.

General lines of action
The UPC will act in line with health authorities’ advice at all times. It will take any proportionate measures regarding its academic, extra-curricular and work activities with the main objective of protecting the health and safety of its community and potential visitors.

Every person involved in this decision-making process will endeavour not to unnecessarily raise alarm and to keep the members of the university community informed with the highest level of transparency. The UPC has now a dedicated section on its website (https://www.upc.edu/en/sala-de-premsa/noticies/comunicat-en-relacio-al-cov-19) that will be the home for all the latest information and guidance.

Temporarily suspended academic and extra-curricular activities
Given the unique nature of the situation and the risk of infection due to close contact with people from outside the university community, the following activities are hereby suspended:
Academic activities

- Student placements and other curricular activities at hospitals and health centres.
- Placements with external patients at the University Vision Centre. During the period of suspension, the only patients will be students from the School.

Extra-curricular activities

- Student parties, both indoors and outdoors.
- Hackathons and company forums.

These activities are suspended until at least 13 April. Prior to 8 April, based on health authorities’ advice, the University will decide whether to keep the suspension in place or end it on the scheduled date.

Conferences and mass events

Although we do not have explicit health authorities’ advice to suspend conferences and gatherings with people from outside the university community, responsible units and groups are hereby encouraged to consider postponing them whenever such gatherings entail the concentration of people indoors and do not allow for a safety distance of at least 1.5 metres per person.

According to the principles and criteria described in this protocol, the schools must inform the Rector’s Bureau weekly of any extra-curricular activities planned in any school or area of the campuses.

Travel advice for staff and students

The UPC advises all its staff AGAINST travel to the affected areas and countries. Those who deem their travel essential must notify the International Relations Service in advance for monitoring purposes.

UPC students who are away on a mobility programme at a university located in an affected area or country must follow local health authorities’ advice. In the event that the Spanish health authorities advised students on a mobility programme to cancel their mobility stay and immediately return, the UPC school of origin, with the support and coordination of the International Relations Service, would be in charge of helping students return to Spain. Students who return home voluntarily or following health authorities’ advice will be provided support to continue their studies and sit their exams at the UPC schools. Click on the following links for further information:

https://www.mscbs.gob.es/ (in Spanish)


How to act if a COVID-19 case is confirmed among the members of the community
If you suspect you might have coronavirus, you must first contact CatSalut, the Catalan Health Service, by calling 061 and strictly follow their advice. If after following CatSalut advice you are told to self-isolate or diagnosed with coronavirus, contact the University in the first instance through your school director or the head of your service. They will report this to the Rector’s Bureau and the Occupational Health and Safety Service in order to properly monitor the situation with health authorities and discuss with them if special restraint measures should be taken.

**Actions regarding academic activities**

The UPC is in constant contact with the Secretariat for Universities and Research, the Secretariat for Public Health, the other Catalan public universities (through the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia), the Spanish Ministry of Health and the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities.

They will act in a coordinated fashion to agree on which academic activities should be suspended following health authorities’ advice and in accordance with the protection and proportionate measures herein described.

Should any activity need to be suspended, the emergency management committee will meet to make decisions and give instructions. The meeting must be attended by the directors of affected schools and the competent vice-rectors.

**Actions regarding physical presence in the workplace**

Measures to be taken will be determined by the rector and communicated by the vice-rector for Academic Staff or the general manager, as appropriate. When the measures concern university services, they will have to meet the following criteria:

- Service must be guaranteed through alternative forms of work such as remote working.

- Heads of services and management and support units will ensure that, whenever there are more than 10 workers, there is a safety distance of at least 1.5 metres per person. They will also ensure that windows are regularly opened and that staff are reminded to follow strict standards of hygiene and to avoid close contact.

- For pregnant women, arrangements should be made to allow them to work in alternative work spaces or remotely from home.

As long as this situation persists, heads of services and management and support units should exceptionally, if they deem it appropriate, authorise longer periods of remote working provided that this does not interfere with the normal operation of services and that processes for monitoring the fulfilment of tasks are established. To do so, they must first notify and receive the authorisation of the head of the Staff and Organisation Area.

**In the event of building closures**
This measure is not under consideration at the moment given the current situation and in accordance with health authorities’ advice.

In the hypothetical scenario of extraordinary measures, such as closing one or several buildings:

- If such measures affect face-to-face academic activities, the affected school must establish self-learning and assessment alternative methods for students, coordinate this with the Office of the Vice-Rector for Academic Policy and ensure sufficient communication.

- The general manager and the vice-rector for Academic Staff will inform the workers’ representatives and the health and safety committee of any extraordinary measures to be taken to maintain essential services as long as activities are restricted or buildings remain closed.

- The head of Infrastructure and General Services and the head of ICT Services will coordinate any necessary actions with responsible maintenance and security companies to guarantee effective operation.

The rector
9 March 2020