

Continuing Education at the University of Lleida (ES) – Summary

1. History

The university was created in 1300 by the king Jaume II with the idea to increase Catalonia's power in the Mediterranean area. Students from other parts of Spain went to Lleida and the commerce and manufacture (paper and books in particular) increased considerably. Lleida became a center of exchange and diffusion of ideas and scientific innovation.

Wars with other countries and internal issues put the university in a period of decline. The Spanish reform created a new model of university and in 1717 a new university was formed in Cervera which implied the closing down of the University of Lleida as such. In 1991 the Catalan Parliament approved the opening of the University of Lleida again.

Lleida is the most important city in the interior of Catalonia with 120000 inhabitants and about 10000 students. The university has 5 campuses.

2. Continuing Education at the University of Lleida

The Statutes of the university establish the improvement of teaching and the contribution to lifelong learning in order to develop social cohesion, equality of opportunities and quality of life.

One of the university's objectives is the development of continuing education programmes under very strict quality parameters. Continuing education is understood as all those courses that have as main objective to upgrade knowledge in any form as well as the development of personal and professional competences.

The main characteristic of the continuing education at the university is its thematic diversity, that implies a complementary education in the basic education of Bachelor degree and it has been thought in a global way for those interested to improve their professional and cultural qualifications.

The academic and administrative regimen of continuing education at the University of Lleida has a specific normative to achieve the objectives of this kind of studies, always looking for academic excellence.

Types of studies in continuing education at the university of Lleida

It is organised in 3 categories, differentiated by their objectives, academic structure, access requirements and destination.

According to its structure, access requirements, number of credits and level we have:

Post-grade Programmes (PUP)

Are those courses for holders of a Bachelor degree and can have different levels of specialization and contents. They are very practical and are for professionals. This is complementary to the Masters degrees of the university.

Masters. These are studies addressed to specialised professionals in different areas. It takes students to an advanced level in a very specific area and have been thought to cover requests from specific areas. They are structured in basic modules of short length in order to get depth knowledge of professional issues.

Modules for these Masters are from 30 to 120 credits ECTS. The degrees take a maximum of 2 academic years with a final project as a compulsory part of the course.

Courses of Post-grade. The professional orientation is similar like the Masters but their length is shorter. The main objective is to give a high degree of specialised professional knowledge.

Modules for these courses are from 9 to 30 credits ECTS and are taught in one academic year. At the end the university awards a Post-graduate degree (if achieved needed level).

Programmes of specialisation

These are thought to give a specific and professional education in a given theme and are for a more general professional sector.

Courses of specialisation. Addressed to professionals who want to improve their knowledge in very concrete areas (e.g. to know about innovation products/processes, to exchange experiences with other professionals in their same specialisation, etc).

The courses only can carry a maximum of 9 credits. Previous university qualifications are not necessary. The university awards a degree on the specified area.

Programmes of university extension

This includes activities of cultural and scientific divulgation, open to anybody and with the aim to up date knowledge. This is the way the university has to open up to society.

No degree is requested to attend these activities, although in some cases a scientific background is necessary.

3. The role of the Fundacio Unviersitat de Lleida (FUdL) in continuing education

FUdL acts as the interlocutor of the university with society in relation to technology transfer and continuing education. Therefore, FUdL manages a big section of the continuing education offer, but the different departments and institutes of the university do also offer continuing education modules.

FUdL difference with the departments offering CE modules is that FUdL offers an integrated product (i.e. manages all the courses process from the elaboration of the marketing material, to the dissemination of the course, logistics –lecture rooms, technical needs, materials, etc-, economic issues, booking of trips and accommodation when needed, production of the printed awards, etc).

This process is encouraging every time more and more lecturers to ask FUdL to take care of their courses instead of leaving it up to the lecturers' department. One very important issue to remember is that FUdL as foundation has a much agile administrative management and can subcontract third parties if necessary.

FUdL has also a wide offer of its own courses, sometimes requested by institutions but sometimes under the FUdL's own initiative to cover requests from society. This enlarges the university's offer.

Sometimes these courses emerge from an external demand in the social or professional environment. FUdL creates an agreement in order to manage them.

The weak points in the FUdL in general could be:

- There is no one only person responsible for the CE offer, therefore, there is no defined policy when designing the courses.
- There are no studies to analyse the demand.
- There is not internal structure able to manage the CE of the whole university to help lecturers to develop their courses as needed.

The strengths in the FUdL in general could be:

- FUdL and the University of Lleida will very soon sign an agreement so FUdL can manage all the CE at the university. This will simplify processes and the users will have better service.
- FUdL will do the following tasks:
 - Will do the follow up of all the CE courses
 - Will register students and make sure rules are fulfilled
 - Will guarantee dissemination of all CE courses at the university
 - Will guarantee the material resources and necessary spaces to ensure excellency
 - Will keep direct contact with the coordinator of each module to make sure the academic prerequisites are fulfilled
 - Will establish correct mechanisms to ensure (when necessary) periods of training at the university or in institutions collaborating with the university
 - Will make sure the norms of the university are fulfilled
 - Will keep the Vice-Rector informed of the need for any new courses as a result of the evaluation of current courses.

Therefore, the FUdL will undertake the management of any practical and economic issues related to the CE offer at the University of Lleida.