

Dear members of the ESCI-UPF community,

We are now in the third week of a new academic year quite unlike any other, dominated by the health, safety and hygiene measures designed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

We would like to thank everyone for their time, effort and cooperation in making it possible for us to deliver classes smoothly. However, we cannot stress enough our shared obligation to keep our social contacts to a minimum at all times and, above all, to stay at home if we have to self-isolate. Face coverings must be worn by everyone at all times without exception. Remember: this is not a recommendation but an obligation.

The terrace is a focal point in our building that has always been at the heart of university life. But it will not remain so unless we all adapt to the new circumstances that affect many aspects of our lives. It makes no sense whatsoever to dutifully cover your face in class for five or six hours a day only to sit down for over an hour on the terrace without a facemask while failing to keep a safe distance from others.

Another point to bear in mind is that the new health and safety measures require us to thoroughly ventilate classrooms and offices, which means keeping windows open. As a result, any noise from the terrace quickly reaches lecturers and students in class and other members of ESCI-UPF staff.

As an institution, we took the firm decision to do everything we could to keep offering in-person classes, while at the same time planning for a range of possible scenarios in our Contingency Plan. If we are to avoid some of these worst-case scenarios—entailing reduced onsite teaching or no onsite teaching at all—we need each and every one of us to do our bit. It is a matter of individual and collective responsibility.

At this start of term, we would like to once again give a very warm welcome to all of our newly arrived students on our GNMI and BDBI bachelor degree programmes. The preparatory week was extremely profitable for all teaching staff and students alike. We are also very pleased with how things went during the second week, with students behaving very responsibly in class and the whole team at the school eager to help in any way required.

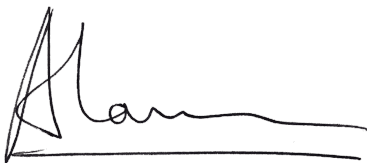
This year, for the first time, we have set up a mentoring programme to help new students settle in at the school. We were delighted to see so many current GNMI and BDBI students put themselves forward as mentors. These volunteers are now giving new students a helping hand as we speak. We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that your tutors are there for you at any time. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with them if you have any queries or problems, no matter how large or small. They will be more than willing to help: that's what they're there for.

We have also made a series of changes to the GNMI syllabus. Students may now choose to study Arabic as a foreign language, and, thanks to support from the European Commission, you will find several new elective subjects in the Jean Monnet module. We have also introduced additional elective subjects, such as *Programming and Big Data Analysis*, in response to the needs of many companies where Year Three and Year Four students do their internship. Likewise, the new third-term subject *Corporate Branding and Communication* available to Year One students is the result of changes made partly in response to student feedback received through the teaching questionnaires we carry out or passed on to your delegates on the Student Committee.

The biggest change to the BDBI is that students starting this year are now taking a degree officially offered by all four major Catalan universities (UPC, UB, UAB and UPF). While UAB teaching staff have always taught subjects on this programme, it is only now that the university authorities have officially signed and sealed this four-way interuniversity partnership.

Finally, given the quite exceptional nature of the current state of affairs, we cannot end without once again insisting on the importance of obeying the health and safety rules and regulations that are there for the benefit of us all. We will not tolerate a repeat of the inconsiderate behaviour seen in recent days. We are relying on your cooperation.

Best wishes,



Albert Carreras
Director d'ESCI-UPF



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Barcelona, 5 October 2020