

# Autonomous University of Barcelona - Measuring the impact

## **The case in summary**

The Autonomous University of Barcelona (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, UAB), founded in 1968, is one of seven higher education institutions located in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. It is centred in the heart of Catalonia, one of Spain's most dynamic and entrepreneurial regions. UAB is one of the top three universities in Spain. Within the UAB, entrepreneurship is understood not only as the creation of new business, but also as the attitudes and skills required in professional life. The alumni community has wide access to entrepreneurial services offered by UAB.

## **The HEI assesses the impact of its strategy on entrepreneurship across the institution**

UAB has recognised the relevance of promoting entrepreneurship at all university levels (students, researchers and staff) and has provided mechanisms to support the entrepreneurial process. It has maintained regular connection with agents in the external entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem to involve them in the agenda and ensure its sustainability.

Within UAB entrepreneurship is understood not only as the creation of new business but also includes the attitudes and skills required in professional life. The UAB entrepreneurial agenda has been sponsored by private and public funds including the Catalan government, Spanish government and the European Commission.

Its entrepreneurial agenda has covered several fronts:

- The UAB entrepreneurship network (UABEmprèn) is a central campus programme created by the UAB to promote attitudes generating business ideas and projects for all members of the university community (students, staff, researchers, and alumni). UABEmprèn works as an incubator helping everyone at UAB who wants to start a business or an initiative via trainings, programmes or hosted talks by entrepreneurs
- Within the student community entrepreneurship is implemented by optional courses in undergraduate degrees e.g., business creation course, enterprise economy, and in postgraduate programmes, Master in Organisation, Management and Business Economics. There is also a PhD in Entrepreneurship and Management
- The Research Park provides services to UAB's research departments, as well as centres and institutes located on the Bellaterra campus. It supports (graduate) students and researchers interested in the creation of a company based on their research. In addition, training is provided by the University-Enterprise Unit. The Research Park also provides incubator support and tutorship based on the nascent entrepreneur's requirements e.g., legal advice, networking, and guidance on strategic alliances

- Courses are developed by internal and external experts. Contributors include BioEmprenedorXXI Barcelona Activa, Vallès Technology Park, and ESADE Creápolis
- The Innova Space in Social Entrepreneurship (eines) is a stimulus and support project for social entrepreneurship led by UAB. Eines provides many knowledge transfer initiatives; a part of it is the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation Research (CREIS), established in July 2019 within the Department of Business at the Faculty of Economics and Business. It is a research centre focused on generating and analysing knowledge in the fields of entrepreneurship and social innovation
- The alumni community has access to all services mentioned above.

### **The HEI assesses the level of engagement in entrepreneurship teaching and learning across the institution**

In teaching and learning, entrepreneurial education is present on all levels:

- At undergraduate level, entrepreneurship education is promoted through optional, transversal courses e.g., business creation or enterprise economy are open to all undergraduate students. The approach is practical, supported by theoretical models applied in the form of simulations, cases and the student's own project. Additionally, students from all kinds of bachelor programmes at the UAB can select a minor in Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation. It includes courses in entrepreneurship and provides them with an interdisciplinary perspective
- At graduate level, the degree programmes Applied Research in Economics and Business and Organization, Management and Business Economics leave room for students to specialise in entrepreneurship within their second semester. Moreover, CREIS offers another master's programme, the interdisciplinary Master in Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation (MEINS)
- At postgraduate level, the PhD Entrepreneurship and Management focuses on engagement in entrepreneurial learning. Students are encouraged to disseminate their projects through conferences, research papers, and collaboration with other researchers

Additionally, there are informal courses and initiatives offered by the employment service and university-enterprise unit designed to build students' skills and highlight the importance of developing entrepreneurial expectations. One example is StartUAB, an entrepreneurship club initially guided by UAB but now managed entirely by students themselves to support each other in entrepreneurial activities.

### **The HEI regularly assesses the impact of entrepreneurship teaching and learning**

UAB does not have formal mechanisms to measure the impact of entrepreneurship education. The impact of undergraduate entrepreneurship courses is informally measured through feedback surveys. Students give their opinion about the most relevant contributions and their recommendations. Students typically ask for more practical exercises and more contact with local entrepreneurs.

In 2013, UAB joined the GUESSS project in order to enhance the measurement of the entrepreneurial intentions of its students, its entrepreneurial index, and enable benchmarking against other universities. Reports appear every couple of years; the latest was published in 2023.

### **The HEI carries out regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of start-up support**

UAB publishes an annual report<sup>1</sup> discussing the main indicators of its teaching, research and entrepreneurial agendas. These results help inform their decision-making regarding improvements in each agenda. The Research Park records number of enquiries received and success levels including spin-offs created, financial funds obtained, alliances created, and growth of established spin-offs. Longitudinal studies provide the best way to measure the socioeconomic impact of entrepreneurship. There is a desire to institutionalise the monitoring and evaluation of all entrepreneurship actions developed inside the University. Longitudinal studies provide the best way to measure the socioeconomic impact of entrepreneurship. There is a desire to institutionalise the monitoring and evaluation of all entrepreneurship actions developed inside the University.

### **Results/Achievements**

- The entrepreneurial agenda requires a strong investment of resources; under difficult economic conditions the educational budgets are reduced
- Regular monitoring and evaluating of the economic and social impact needs to be formalised in order for the entrepreneurial agenda to become a mainstream component within the University

### **Source**

This case study was prepared in 2013 and updated by Fiona Bauer from Technopolis Group Germany based on a follow-up-interview with Carolin Maaßen in July 2024.

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### **Links**

<https://www.uab.cat/web/universitat-autonoma-de-barcelona-1345467954774.html>

<https://www.uab.cat/web/about-the-park/uab-research-park-1345674962855.html>

<https://espainnova.uab.cat/en>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uab.cat/web/about-the-uab/the-uab/annual-report-1345667138048.html>