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MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT MODEL TO TEACHING ACTIVITY AT THE POMPEU FABRA UNIVERSITY

An initial approach to UPF Academic Management Organization

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1. **ABSTRACT IN YOUR PAPER'S LANGUAGE** (if not English): 500-700 characters
2. **ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH:** 500-700 characters

From the beginning, Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) has aimed for quality in all aspects of its activities: teaching, research and management, specifically academic management and administration.

From different models implemented in the Spanish university system, a specific model implemented at UPF is presented in this paper in order to provide better service to users (students, lecturers and administrative staff).

This paper intends to highlight various key topics of academic management, including the use of support tools to Centre and Department secretary's offices, and how teaching quality is supported by the UPF academic management model. Finally, new projects are outlined to be put in place in the future.

3. **KEYWORDS** in your paper's language (if not English): 3 / **KEYWORDS** in English: 3
Academic Management, Teaching support, model
4. **FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE:** Indicate the subject area of your proposal:
 - Arts and Humanities
 - Sciences
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- Social and Legal Sciences
- Engineering and Architecture
- More than one area (X)

5. SUBJECT AREA: Specify the subject area you propose for your paper:

- Evaluation and Institutional Quality (X)
- Cooperation In and For Knowledge
- Innovation In Higher Education
- Autonomous Student Learning
- Internationalization of the University

The Scientific Committee reserves the right to decide the final area of the proposals.

6. PRESENTATION CATEGORY:

- Oral Presentation
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7. DEVELOPMENT: 25.000 – 35.000 characters (with spaces)

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a) Objectives

At this congress on teaching topics, it is not very common to talk about management and administration (particularly academic) support to teaching activity. In this paper, we wish to introduce you to the Pompeu Fabra University academic management model, in terms of administrative support to teaching activity, considered as a whole. Thus, we intend to provide information about its structure and functioning, the use of this model for teaching activity, how it may be perceived by lecturers, and finally new projects for the near future. Hence, this paper is an approach to our academic management organization, and hopefully its conclusions may be useful to other institutions of a similar size to UPF.

b) Description of your work

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Description of the UPF Academic Management and Administration Model
3. Description of the Academic Management Service (AMS)
4. How this implemented model is giving support to teaching activity
 - a. Teaching activities which receive support: qualifications entry, tutorial support, teaching group organization.

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- b. How this model is perceived by lecturers
 - c. Consequences of this model
5. Future: forthcoming projects

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of our university, searching for quality has been constant throughout the range of activities: teaching, research and management. In this paper we deal specifically with academic management, which is one of the most related to teaching activity, as it gives direct support to its different levels.

At UPF, in terms of academic management and administration, an initial centralized model was implemented which was quite suitable in the context of 20 years ago, when there was a relatively low number of students and degrees taught. This number of students has grown slowly but steadily, in all studies, as has the complexity of managing and administrating students' records.

In recent years, as the Bologna process has been established at UPF with the new degrees (bachelor's, master's and doctoral), and with a growing student population (about 9500 students in the 2005-06 academic year), there was a need to design and implement a new decentralized model, partly due to the new teaching organization derived from the conclusions and improvements of the Bologna process itself.

As all degrees had become tougher to manage and administer, it was difficult to handle the increasing complexity of a centralized model, with rigid criteria and functioning. In

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this respect, the model we explain in this paper has offered the chance for Centres and Faculties to take control of processes as they interact with their respective students. So, with greater complexity in teaching demands from a new kind of degree syllabuses, required by the Bologna process, the new decentralized academic model was designed, from the proposals of a workgroup consisting of staff from both the Academic Management Service and several faculty secretaries, in order to provide a wide range of flexibility to satisfy the needs of Faculties and Centres, under common general working rules.

The main goal of this change of model at UPF was to make decision-making, management and administration points closer to both lecturers and students, in order to achieve a greater degree of effectiveness and better outcomes. There are still no data about lecturer and student satisfaction with this model, or from the administrative staff; in the future, some studies would be useful to assess their satisfaction.

Compared with other Spanish universities, generally speaking, this UPF model may be considered to be somewhat original, although a few universities also have a similar model. As a general rule, Spanish universities, coming from their long tradition, have a highly decentralized model, where Faculties and Centres have much control over all fields of academic management, administration, and over how processes are designed and implemented.

In addition, in many of these universities, central services, similar to the AMS at UPF, function as intermediaries with the Ministry of Education, to inform as to the students either applying for grants or scholarships, or applying for their degree diploma. They also provide general regulatory support, when faculties need to obtain the proper interpretation of any rule, or simply centralize every regulatory change at the university

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itself. So, in general, in this model, faculties and centres have a high degree of autonomy, as they plan and implement almost all processes, and in many cases, establish their own criteria.

2. Description of UPF Academic Management and Administration Model

As we said before, this paper merely intends to expose and explain an approach to the UPF Academic Management and Administration Model. In this respect, we shall explain its essential features for a better understanding.

This model is structured in two different levels:¹

- Central Services: Teaching Area (Academic Management Service, Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies Office and Centre for Teaching Quality and Innovation).
- Centre and Department secretary's offices.

Within this structure, a central position is occupied by the Academic Management Service (AMS), acting as a coordinating office, and working according to the university governing bodies' guidelines. In the next section, we deal with its transversal functions and how they are implemented by means of briefly explaining its main roles.

On the other hand, Centre and Department secretary's offices directly implement most academic procedures, based on general and specific guidelines issued by the Academic

¹ A third level might be considered: the Student Information Point. This office is where most of the procedures are started. In this paper, we have not taken this service into account because its functions are related to giving information about procedures to students, and to initiating most of them.



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Management Service. These offices also provide direct support to lecturers and Centre or Department governing bodies.

One important thing to point out about this dual-level model is the continuous feedback from these secretary's offices with the AMS (by means of specific meetings between them, or reports on particular subjects), once processes have been completed, so they can be assessed and, if necessary, improvement measures can be planned, created and implemented for the following year.

If we consider a SWOT analysis, the UPF academic management model has a new perspective about the items to be considered:

Strengths:

The dual level structure of this model means that agents at one level can be more devoted to planning and coordinating processes, and at the other level, can be more focused on executing them. This structure enables work specialization, efficiency, prioritizing resources, energy saving, homogeneous criteria with room for manoeuvre for implementers, and clear organization in the academic field.

Weaknesses:

This model may be perceived as if the decision-making part on how processes are carried out is only at the level of the central services, and it could be considered to be too far from the other level where the processes actually take place. In addition, if the model is not clearly understood as a whole, there may be dysfunctions at any point of the processes (although almost all is documented).

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Opportunities:

As the Bologna process started to be implemented at UPF, it was considered that it was a good moment to design and create a new model, where a new teaching organization and types of studies could be managed in a different and more efficient way. New developments in electronic administration planned at the university level will help drive this model forward.

Threats:

Within the current economic context, a change in Spanish, Catalan and/or UPF regulations cannot be ruled out in terms of general or specific cuts in resources, which may affect the UPF administrative staff structure, and so the general functioning of the academic management model.

So, the UPF academic management model can be defined as a decentralized model with support from central services, and responds to teaching needs, immersed in a constant process of change. We think that, at this moment, higher quality academic management can be achieved within this dual structure, where functions of every level are specialized, both in the planning and implementing areas. The current model is under constant review in order to prompt the continuous improvement process.

In the next section, there is a description of the Academic Management Service, as the office at the heart of the UPF Management and Administration Model. Four different roles are explained in order to form an overview of its varied activity, and also its importance in this model.

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3. Description of the Academic Management Service (AMS)

Among the different offices in the Teaching Area, inside the UPF organizational chart, that is, Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies Office, Centre for Teaching Innovation and Quality, and Academic Management Service, the latter may be considered essential in the model we are presenting, located at the heart of many interaction processes, not only with the other two offices, but also with Faculty and Centre secretary's offices, with other central services, and directly with UPF governing bodies, and students themselves.

These different levels of relationships and interactions are explained by the presentation of the four main roles of the AMS, which are: to facilitate services, to coordinate processes, to process administrative functions, and to develop management and administration technological support.

- *Role # 1. Facilitating services and providing support to other units.*

The following functions, developed by the AMS can be outlined:

- o Support to the governing bodies in drawing up academic regulations governing undergraduate courses. All proposals for inclusion in the UPF regulations from the academic point of view come from the AMS, in accordance with Spanish and Catalan regulations in this field, mainly to be approved by the Board of Governors;
- o Support in technical advice and reports issued to enhance decision-making processes, according to the requirements of the Bologna process. In this respect, direct support to the rector (annual report to University Senate) or various vice-rectors is provided in the academic scope, as well as support to the vice-manager of the Teaching Area;

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- o Support to new institutional projects within the field of academic management. In the last few years, different projects have been started, such as electronic administration, where one procedure can already be applied and completed online by undergraduate students: personal transcript. Another institutional project in which the AMS is taking part actively is the UPF Data Warehouse. In this case, the Academic Management Service is providing support, and coordinating with all services involved in both the structure and data from the academic area, in order to improve the conditions for decision-making by the governing bodies of the university, in this field;
 - o Establishing criteria within a common framework, and providing the necessary resources in administrative management, for secretary's offices at centres, departments, institutes, and other units involved, within the academic field. This may be considered one of the strongest points of the model presented, not only in general processes (i.e. process calendars, protocols,...), but also in respect of any specific doubt arising from all procedures, which needs to be solved.
 - o The great advantage of the last paragraph is that processes, no matter where they are executed, have been previously planned by the AMS, in order to gain efficiency and rapid execution, having taken into account the specific needs of centres and departments;
- *Role # 2. Coordinating processes*

The AMS plays a key role in this academic management model. In this respect, and in a wide range of its activities, the AMS is responsible for planning, publishing and organizing the management procedures related to undergraduate students, from

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admission and registration, through all procedures regarding student transcript management.

Another branch of this coordinating role is related to teaching organization, both in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. In this respect, the AMS sets up calendars and an annual system of teachings on offer, and also the subjects and groups on offer, so Faculty and Department secretary's offices can have a steady reference in their daily work.

In order to carry out this role, different tools are used, for example:

- The creation and maintenance of the Teaching Area intranet, where a whole range of academic management procedure manuals can be found, which are at the disposal of Centre and Faculty secretary's offices, so a useful tool is available for consultation.
- Regular meetings between the AMS (mainly Undergraduate Section) and Faculty and Centre secretary's offices, in order to keep secretary's offices updated with the latest improvements in academic management processes, as well as in Spanish, Catalan, or university regulations. This regular contact also allows the AMS to get feedback from the secretary's offices, as their complaints or improvement proposals can be reported directly to the central service.
- Regular meetings between the AMS and UPF-attached teaching centres to coordinate and assist them, within the field of the academic management of undergraduate programmes.

In other scopes of processes (applications for grants and scholarships, degree diploma application, and teaching organization), coordination also comprises the office responsible for postgraduate matters (Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies Office), and

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Department secretary's offices, which implement academic procedures for lecturers and students from master's and doctoral studies.

- *Role # 3: Providing academic management software support (from the user's perspective)*

This role is of crucial importance, as this software is considered the means to implement most UPF processes within the academic management model. In this respect, the AMS is devoted to planning and proposing new functionalities, coordinating their implementation and monitoring software in the academic management field, in coordination with the Computing Service.

This tool may also be considered a bridge between the AMS (and also the Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies Office) and Centre and Faculty secretary's offices. Many improvements in academic management are explained in detail through this software; in fact, most of its procedures are explained in manuals firstly, and then, there is a complete description of how these procedures are performed on the academic management software. Another advantage is that any problem with the software may be detected relatively quickly, as all staff of secretary's offices use the same software, so this indeed helps to keep software at a good level of functioning.

Academic management software is shared and used among all of the university community (students, lecturers and administrative staff). At student level, we shall mention two procedures where software is highly relevant: self-registration, either new access or continuing students, and consulting qualifications by iphone or android

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application. From the lecturers' perspective, two projects stand out: direct entry of grades into the software (CDS10), and the recent ACTE-PAT project, where undergraduate student tutorials are supported by the academic software. We shall further explain these two projects later on.

- *Role #4: Implementing Administrative processes (Grant and Degree Sections)*

This role is applied in two specific areas within the AMS: Scholarship and grant; and Degree areas. In both cases, there is direct interaction with students, and there is little involvement of other administrative offices (Faculty and Centre secretary's offices, or Student Information Point). We may say that both procedures are for students to apply for something which specifically is not within the University procedures or regulations.

In this respect, their functions may be summarized in two points, although they are complex processes:

- managing general study scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and student insurance.
- managing the issuing of official and UPF-endorsed degrees.

These two process areas have remained with the AMS, mainly due to two reasons:

- 1- As students' transcripts are monitored by the academic shared software, both processes can be managed almost completely by the AMS. So it is possible to centralize these processes, as most of the information needed is registered on the academic software, which enables it to be processed more quickly. The AMS is making a great effort to

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obtain improved software, in order for as many parts of these procedures as possible to become automated. Now, for instance, degree self-application, and general grant self-application (the latter from the Spanish Education Ministry) can be found. It should be pointed out that one of the future projects in e-administration at UPF is degree self-application.

- 2- Both processes (grant and degree applications), at some stage of their respective procedures, require sending and receiving application data to and from the Spanish Education Ministry. In this respect, it is more efficient for a single section to manage all of the processes (input, process, output) than a variety of administrative offices managing different parts.

4. How this implemented model is giving support to teaching activity

In this section, some of the teaching activities which are supported by the UPF academic management model can be found. It should be noticed that we are talking about one model, and not referring to a specific service or services, as these two levels previously identified in Part 2 both share a certain degree of responsibility.

Support to teaching activity, in this case, is understood in a broad sense, as the whole activity, and not just when attending a lecture room, and giving/receiving a lesson.

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- a. *Teaching activities which receive support: qualifications entry, tutorial support, and teaching group organization.*

At different moments of Pompeu Fabra University history, it has been necessary to implement significant improvements in managing points whose direct or indirect responsibility is assigned to lecturers, but the main workload fell with the Faculty secretary's offices.

The main process to which we are referring is entering the grades directly to the software by lecturers (CDS10). This process needed different moments to be duly explained to lecturers, since at the beginning, there was much resistance among lecturers, basically senior, and also according to the faculties.

Another important process which has just started this academic year (2011-12), is the support to tutorials (ACTE-PAT). In this respect, first year undergraduate students are tutored, and a module within the academic software is being developed, so lecturers may enter and modify information on the students supervised by a tutor.

The third process started four years ago and is linked to the development of the Bologna process at UPF. We are referring to teaching group organization, according to the recommendations of the booklet *The organization of teaching at UPF: Guide to undergraduate and postgraduate courses*.² New types of teaching group (theory, practical, seminar, etc.) are proposed, and once more, a major effort has been made for several years at the AMS in order to adapt the new requirements of the Bologna process

² Edited by UPF Centre for Teaching Quality and Innovation, Barcelona 2009



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to the academic software (PDS module). Much effort has been addressed to be able to adapt such complex software as the new teaching group organization demanded. In this respect, there is no direct effect on teaching activity, as this process only helps to organize class groups, under teaching criteria previously established by Faculty governing bodies.

b. How this model is perceived by lecturers (and how it is useful for them)

In this section, we present different features of the academic management model, and how it affects lecturers' activities:

- Regular references on how to create procedures in which lecturers take part. These procedures related to the everyday teaching activities focus on the Centre secretary's office, which provides a contact person for each lecturer, so that all questions and requests can be centralized clearly.
- All detailed information available in procedure manuals helps to do work in a proper manner (i.e. CDS10). This allows lecturers to adopt new applications and these new procedures may also result in improvements in the way teaching is organized, and in the information provided to students by lecturers.
- Continuous support for lecturers by Centre and Department secretary's offices, and the AMS, on a second level. Therefore, these offices are considered a bridge between lecturers and Central Services.
- Lecturers may be more devoted to teaching and innovation tasks, since academic management falls with both the secretary's office and the AMS, who also have a better knowledge of the administrative structure.

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- Leadership is provided with this model on different projects: i.e. CDS10 (entry of grades directly into academic software by lecturers) and ACTE-PAT (tutorial monitoring software).
- Proximity, as the secretary's offices provide direct support to lecturers.
- Transparency, as all procedures and processes are published on the respective intranet, depending on the topic, so it is easy for both students and lecturers to follow the guidelines.

c- Consequences of the implementation of the UPF academic management model

Three levels of consequences may be considered concerning this model: academic management, teaching and decision-making.

Academic management

This flexible model allows establishing management bases, by planning unique calendars per processes, and creating steady criteria. On the other hand, it makes discretionary execution possible, according to Centre or Department needs.

In this model, lecturers can learn of improvements quickly as they have the secretary's offices as a reference.

Teaching

This model should enable lecturers to concentrate on their academic activities without worrying excessively about the bureaucratic system. The existence of a clear workflow concerning the relationship with central services, and the existence of a contact person

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for each lecturer in the figure of the Secretary, helps to solve problems more quickly and to improve coordination between lecturers, avoiding contradictory rules, or multiple responses to the same question.

In this respect, the introduction of new administrative procedures and new tools designed by the AMS does not only help lecturers in their everyday activities. In addition, they may result in a way to improve the quality of teaching and a great stimulus to adopt new measures which lecturers may be reluctant to accept.

As an example, let us mention the implementation of CDS10, which is the application to introduce students' grades into the system. The adoption of CDS10 was preceded by lengthy discussions between members of the AMS and a group of lecturers to improve the programme, but also to clarify the rules which should be used and the information to be provided to students by lecturers.

Another example is the ACTE-PAT (software for supporting tutors): According to the new regulations of the University, every student is assigned a tutor, who supervises and helps him or her to adapt to our system. This new tutor support system could be seen by lecturers as a part of their increased workload, and some of them may feel unable to handle the students assigned, or even that they are not sufficiently trained for this work. ACTE-PAT offers the right environment for lecturers to accomplish their duties in a better way, and will help to the success of this new tutorial programme.

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Decision-making

This model also helps not only Centre and Department deans and directors, and their boards, but also UPF governing bodies in the decision-making processes. It is important to note the fact that most academic procedures are resolved by deans or directors.

In this respect, the close support by secretary's offices to deans and directors makes it easier for them to get overall information on academic and teaching matters, and so their decisions, which directly affect lecturers, should be more related to the real teaching activities.

5. Future: forthcoming projects

As far as the academic management model is concerned, the creation and publishing of the AMS menu of services is in progress, which we think will enable a new focus on the working of this academic model and might lead to having different quality standards available.

The basis of the academic management model is expected to be working in the near future; however, the progressive introduction of e-administration processes will change the concept of how procedures are managed and will help both to re-design and execute the e-procedures. Some projects are in the process of being implemented, and others are in a trial phase: degree self-application, signature of electronic qualifications documents, among others.

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Another important project to be developed in the short term, with effects on teaching support, is the end-of-degree project in bachelor's degree programmes. This is a specific software development in which every student may be qualified separately, in a group or with the rest of the class group for this final subject of his or her studies.

c) Results and/or conclusions

This paper sets out the UPF academic management and administration model from its origins, in 2007, until the present. This model was adopted due to the growing number of students and also due to the implementation of the Bologna process at our university, which meant greater complexity in the teaching activity, and therefore in teaching support.

The model presented is structured into two levels; one to define criteria, plan and give support to processes, and the other to carry them out and interact with both students and lecturers. Formal, steady communication can be found on both sides, to ensure that process information reaches all involved.

In this model, the Academic Management Service is the transversal office in the Teaching Area. In this paper we have presented its four main roles (facilitating, coordinating, providing tools, and executing) as the structuring service of this model.

The SWOT analysis has shown this model to be a solid-based structure, to be implemented in a complex teaching context, and allows to processes to be more efficient

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and with a greater specialization at every level. However, this model could be perceived as if the decision-making level is far from the processes that take place.

The implementation of this model in terms of direct teaching support has been manifested mainly in three projects: CDS10, that is, entry of grades into the academic software; PDS, software module to support teaching organization; and ACTE-PAT, software module to support tutorials.

We have also grasped what lecturers' perception of this model might be, as there are no studies regarding their degree of satisfaction. It seems that this model enables processes to be more transparent and closer to lecturers, as there is direct support from Faculty and Centre secretary's offices. This model, in which all processes are documented on the Teaching Area intranet, also allows lecturers to concentrate on their teaching functions, and in a way, they are driven to carry out processes, which, without direct support, would be difficult for them to complete.

Therefore, three areas of consequences are detailed (academic management, teaching and decision-making) and finally, future projects outlined: e-administration applied to academic management and also a menu of services approved by the governing bodies will allow this model to develop into an improved one, as quality measures would be adopted.

8. REFERENCES

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