

Communiqué issued by the Rectors of the Public Universities of Andalusia regarding the extension of measures to be adopted to combat COVID-19

15 March 2020

Following the national State of Alert declared by the Spanish Government (Royal Decree 463/2020 of 14 March), and in implementing the measures set out in the Ruling issued by the Andalusian Ministry for Health and Family Affairs of 13 March—governing preventive public health measures across the Autonomous Community of Andalusia in response to the spread of coronavirus COVID-19—the Rectors of the Public Universities of Andalusia have today, 15 March 2020, held an emergency meeting. A series of general, temporary directives were agreed to ensure, as a matter of priority, the safety of university employees, while continuing to provide essential administrative services for the duration of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this period, which may be extended by order of the Spanish Government and/or by the Autonomous Government of Andalusia, all facilities, centres, units, and services pertaining to Andalusian Universities will remain closed to the public. Every effort will be made to minimise the presence of members of the university community on our premises.

This decision is intended to enable university activity to continue, as effectively as possible, in line with the principles of institutional loyalty to the National Government and the Government of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, while ensuring—as a fundamental governing principle—that the health of our university community is protected and that the spread of infection is contained, through our collective efforts.

General measures agreed:

1. To continue the suspension of all face-to-face on-site teaching activities (both theoretical and practical). This freeze will commence on 16 March and continue until at least 30 March, when the situation will be reviewed.
2. To continue the suspension of all courses and activities scheduled to be held on university premises.
3. To continue the suspension of all cultural activities.
4. To continue the suspension of all curricular and extra-curricular activities conducted in university facilities. Those curricular and extra-curricular activities conducted beyond university facilities may still take place, depending on the external entity concerned and providing they can be delivered via remote technology.
5. To continue the suspension of field trips.

6. To continue the suspension of all work assignments requiring travel beyond the university, including Examination Committees for *oposiciones*, participation in competitive selection processes and participation in doctoral thesis defences.
7. Libraries, study rooms and sports facilities will remain closed.
8. The refectory, cafés and photocopying services will be closed. In the case of university halls of residence and *colegios mayores*, where some students will continue to live during this period, such services will only be offered in strict adherence of the preventive health measures stipulated.

Specific measures agreed for Administrative and Support Staff (PAS):

1. All the measures adopted herein are without prejudice to the responsibility of all staff to fulfil the needs of the service and to their availability to deliver that service, when required.
2. In pursuit of guaranteeing, as far as possible, service continuity during this period, Administrative and Support Staff will perform their roles by means of remote technology, as required by Management, to fulfil the tasks assigned to them by Heads of Service.
3. Exceptional and justified cases in which it is deemed impossible to perform the necessary functions via remote means, and in which it is not strictly necessary for the employee in question to work on-site, will be considered for eligibility for justified absence with no loss of rights.
4. Shortly, the Senior Management Team of each university will finalise and communicate their plans for operating those minimal skeleton services that will require on-site staff presence, including those relating to external contracts.
5. Where staff are required to deliver services on-site, every effort will be made to agree flexible work-home arrangements and to guarantee personal safety in the working environment.
6. In deciding on the member(s) of staff required to work on-site, priority will be given first to those who volunteer to work. On this basis, should there still be insufficient employees to deliver the required work plan, the Senior Management Teams of the respective Universities will apply the criteria they deem necessary.
7. In all work-related activities—be they on-site or performed remotely—under these exceptional circumstances and as a temporary measure, tasks may be reassigned as required, to meet needs as they arise. Should this be required, the tasks may be reassigned by Heads of Service, Unit Heads or Team Leaders.
8. The Universities will endeavour to provide the technical means necessary to enable staff to work effectively using remote media.

9. All staff are required to be contactable and to regularly consult the updates provided by the University via the appropriate channels (primarily the institutional email and website).

Specific measures agreed for Academic and Research Staff (PDI) and Research Staff (PI):

1. Both PDI and PI will continue to fulfil their teaching and management responsibilities remotely, and also their research activities (preferably off-site).
2. Should a case arise where this is not possible, PDI and PI may, by exception, gain access to university facilities, on a strictly voluntary basis and adhering to the hygiene and healthcare guidelines issued by the Health Authorities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and propagation. In such cases, access to the premises will only be granted upon showing proof of membership of the university community or the University Identity Card.
3. Off-site, remote teaching activity will be delivered via the various different platforms and media authorised by the Universities.
4. Tutorials will continue to be held, again in virtual format via the aforementioned teaching platforms, email, or any other remote system authorised by the University.
5. In light of the exceptional nature of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, teaching staff are asked to be as flexible as possible in the provision of teaching and evaluation activities and to remain mindful of the need to reduce the inherent detrimental effects of this situation on the student body.
6. All activities necessary for planning purposes vis-à-vis the next academic year and any other essential issues that require discussion to ensure the continued operation of the institution will be dealt-with via virtual meetings only.

Specific measures and recommendations aimed at the student body:

1. Students must refrain from attending university premises and facilities and to remain at home or in their current place of residence.
2. Students are urged to maximise their efforts to sustain their academic work during this enforced quarantine, and are reminded that, while special measures are in place, the academic year continues.
3. Students are asked to pay regular attention to the information and guidance being provided by the University Senior Management Team, PAS, and PDI—in particular, via official UGR web pages and the institutional email.

The Public Universities of Andalusia offer their reassurance that, despite the exceptional circumstances, they will strive to protect the rights of the student body and to seek the best possible solutions to the academic upheavals that may arise.

Collectively, the Rectors—convinced of the university community’s ample capacity to deal with the major challenges ahead, and indeed confident that our institutions may even find themselves all the stronger for this collective experience—call on all members of this community to act with the utmost responsibility and institutional commitment by adhering to all the conditions of the national State of Alert, both for their own wellbeing and for that of society at large.