

## **Defence of the on-site teaching of the Spanish University System**

**Madrid, 27th January 2021**

The Crue Spanish Universities wish to send a message of confidence to the entire university community as well as the wider society. Universities are safe spaces.

The screenings carried out on the university community, including students, confirm the safety of academic spaces, the responsibility of members of the university community, and the professionalism of those who are part of our prevention services. Available and objective data show a significantly lower incidence rate than the rest of the population. This should be considered before any other opinions concerned or one-off perceptions. Isolated and occasional incidents that may have occurred have been immediately dealt with and do not reflect the reality of life on university campuses.

Higher Education is an essential right and service, this has been advocated since the start of the pandemic by university governing bodies, who, along with the rest of the university community, have made huge sacrifices to ensure high-quality teaching and research. Health authorities in the Autonomous Communities have supported all of the actions that have been carried out, and we thank them for their cooperation. For this reason, we deeply regret that the university governing bodies are now being confronted on Twitter by other government bodies and specific situations are being highlighted, with the tremendous work carried out by lecturers, researchers, and university staff, as well as the enormous effort by the students themselves being forgotten.

On-site teaching is the hallmark of the vast majority of our university system, it is not an anecdotal issue or the Presidents' whim, as is being implied in some of these inappropriate messages, which only harm the development of education at a very complex time, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Procedures and protocols were drawn up in plans agreed with the Ministry, which have been compiled with the utmost rigour and included exactly what is being done right now: prioritising on-site teaching wherever possible, unless otherwise indicated by the health authorities.

Online teaching should be a last resort and only applied when circumstances make it unavoidable. Carrying out online exams involves implementing extraordinary measures and comes with complex legal and technical issues in regard to data protection and identification of those sitting the exams. By taking advantage of these difficulties and regulatory loopholes, fraud attempts have been made. Our only aim with on-site examinations is to protect the majority of students who undertake their studies with honesty, transparency, and accountability.

Since the start of this pandemic, universities have watched over that the principles of equity and equal opportunity remain intact. We will never allow students who have demonstrated exemplary behaviour, both on and off campus, to be harmed by those who do not honour the University's values.



The dedication to service exercised by all members of the university community prevents us from surrendering to populism and unsubstantiated claims. Many members of the university governing bodies have had to deal with pressure in recent weeks, in some instances on a personal level, which cannot be justified and will not be tolerated.

Our responsibility goes beyond the current time. We are working to help this cohort complete their studies and be proud of the education they have received. No cohort will be stigmatised by Covid-19 as far as we can avoid it, they will always be an extraordinary cohort. Anyone who does not understand this should rethink their position.