
SUMMARY

Summary of Report 1/2015, relating to the Department of Education's Open Institute for Catalonia, year 2011

Barcelona, 18 March 2015

The Public Audit Office for Catalonia, in accordance with its Annual Programme of Activities, has issued this audit report on the IOC, the Open Institute for Catalonia (*Institut Obert de Catalunya*), for the financial year 2011.

The report was approved by the Audit Office Board when it met on 10 February 2015. It was presented by Board Member Mr Jordi Pons i Novell.

This report has its origins in audit report 25/2014, issued by the Public Audit Office, relating to the Department of Education's financial management of public educational centres for the financial year 2011. It was considered appropriate to draw up a separate report on the IOC, owing to its specific organisational arrangements, the activities it provides and the amount of resources it manages.

The IOC is a public educational establishment for distance learning which provides tuition in standard secondary education, medium and upper level vocational training, "baccalaurate", preparatory courses for entry to upper level vocational training and language teaching; it also prepares students for university entrance exams and runs some unofficial (not formally recognised) training courses.

The teaching staff arrangements at the IOC include its own in-house lecturers and participating lecturers. The pay-roll for in-house teaching staff is paid directly by the Department of Education and is not included in the IOC's budget.

In the academic year 2011-2012 the IOC had 35,877 students, 115 in-house lecturers, 451 participating lecturers and 11 people in administration and services. Recognised liabilities on the IOC's expenditure budget outturn for 2011 totalled €3.07 m.

In section 3.1 of the report there is a summary of the main findings from the work carried out, of which the following can be highlighted:

- The Catalan Education Act (LEC) requires the educational authorities to organise general educational distance learning through a specific centre, and to set up and regulate for a Register with details of all students who enrol for distance learning for basic general education. It also establishes a time period of three years, ending 17 July 2012, for setting up and providing regulations for the distance learning centre. These regu-

lations had not been passed at the time the field work for this audit was completed (November 2014).

- The IOC does not use the Academic Administration and Management System software *SAGA (Sistema d'administració i gestió acadèmica)* created by the Department of Education to manage educational centres. Instead it uses specific computer applications and a financial accounting package for its financial management, which complicates the centre's budget management.
- All the IOC's teaching posts are filled using provisional appointments by means of temporary secondments of staff, which are renewed annually. According to regulations, these temporary secondments (*comissions de serveis*) should be for a maximum of two years. At the end of this period there should be a proper selection process leading to a permanent appointment. Information has not been obtained regarding the length of time IOC teaching staff have been there on secondment.
- The weekly working hours for the IOC's in-house lecturers for 2011-2012 were twenty-five, instead of the thirty mandated by regulations. Furthermore, the IOC's rules for its organisation and running and its Internal Regulations established a regime for teleworking and certain compensatory arrangements for working hours which were not compliant with the Department of Education's regulations for teaching staff.
- No regulations have been approved by the Department of Education for the hiring of participating lecturers in regard to the number of lecturers that should be appointed, the selection criteria, the pay scales and the aspects to be laid down in their contracts.

In section 3.2 of the report the Audit Office makes a series of recommendations to the Department of Education and the IOC, of which the most noteworthy are as follows:

- At the earliest opportunity the Government needs to approve the regulatory framework for this unique distance learning educational establishment, as envisaged by the Education Act (LEC), including the powers invested in the various governing officials and its autonomous management regime.
- The precise administrative status of the IOC lecturers should be revised and all irregularities corrected.
- It would be advisable to carry out an analysis of the teaching capabilities, commitment and tasks undertaken by the IOC's in-house teaching staff, and to establish a regulatory framework for their working conditions, bearing in mind the specific requirements of a distance learning centre.
- The figure of participating lecturer needs to be regulated, including the procedure for determining their number, the selection process (which must fulfil the principles of publicity, competition, merit and capability), the pay scales and the duration of lectureships. In addition, compliance with regulations on compatibility with other posts must be ensured.

<p>This summary is purely for information purposes. The audit report (in Catalan and Spanish) can be consulted at www.sindicatura.cat.</p>
