

# Sagunto Adventist Campus

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MIGUEL ÁNGEL ROIG, VÍCTOR ARMENTEROS, AND DANIEL BOSQUED

Miguel Ángel Roig

Víctor Armenteros

Daniel Bosqued

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The Sagunto Adventist Campus (Campus Adventista de Sagunto) offers education at the infant, primary, and secondary and high school levels, in its School of Music, the Academy of Art, a Spanish Language School, and the School of Theology. It belongs to the Spanish Adventist Union and to the worldwide educational system of the Adventist Church and has existed on the current campus in Sagunto since 1974, although its origins date back to earlier times.<sup>1</sup>

## Forerunner (1942-1946), Phases in Madrid (1947-1967) and Valencia (1967-1974)

The beginnings of the institution date back to 1942, shortly after the Spanish Civil War, because of the need to provide theological training for Adventist pastors. What is known today as the Adventist Faculty of Theology (FAT) is an educational project that began in 1942, and has continued to the present day with the mission of training men and women in pastoral ministry. In its more than 70 years, FAT has had as its headquarters the cities of Madrid (1947-1967), Valencia (1967-1974), and Sagunto (from 1974 to the present).

During the Madrid era, the then Excelsior Academy underwent several vicissitudes, being closed on two occasions due to the lack of religious freedom in Spain at the time. In 1967, church leadership transferred the academy to Valencia under the name Spanish Adventist Seminary (SAE). Its facilities were meager and inadequate, but the enthusiasm, the spirit of sacrifice, and the will for self-improvement, together with the commitment of the local church of Valencia-Vives, made it possible to overcome the challenges of those years.

## Final Location in Sagunto (since 1974)

Finally, in 1974, the project became a permanent reality and the SAE was able to continue its educational work as Sagunto Adventist College (currently Campus Adventista de Sagunto: CAS). The CAS is located in Sagunto (province of Valencia), on a property of eight hectares acquired in 1969, expanding in 1981 to its current 23 hectares.

The construction of the first buildings of the new center took place under the administration of the SAE, headed by Pastor José López Gutiérrez. Because of its “Protestant” character, the CAS initially stirred misgivings in the strongly Catholic-influenced Spain. Gradually, however, the educational center won the support of many residents of Sagunto and of the Camp de Morvedre region.

## Campus Focus: Spanish Language, Theology, Music

The Escuela Superior de Español (ESDES) began as the Spanish for Foreigners Department in the 1968-1969 academic year as part of the seminary in Valencia. In 1970, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists created the Adventist College Consortium known as Adventist Colleges Abroad (ACA) and began officially sending university students to Valencia.

The department moved to the current campus in 1974 under the name Hispanic Language and Culture (LCH), and together with the theology seminary, it gave birth to the current campus. The music department of the Sagunto Adventist College also began in 1974.

## Primary and Secondary Education

Beginning in the 1974-1975 academic year, Argentine professor Raúl L. Posse, a prestigious pedagogue, directed CAS. He set the guidelines for its development, prepared a body of teachers, and established a program faithful to the teachings of Ellen G. White, for which he had the valuable help of his wife, Inés Schmidt. The Portuguese pastor Ernesto Ferreira (historian, author of several books, missionary, and former president of the Adventist Church in Portugal), who contributed to the academic level of the new institution, also deserves special mention during its pioneer phase.

The objective of the CAS was to meet the educational needs of the children of church members and of all those who freely wished to share its philosophical ideals. It began with only 25 high school students, who were preparing to graduate from high school or were studying in the fifth year of high school, the final year before university entrance.

In 1975, the institution started the first year of a secondary school (BUP Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente) with a total of 13 students, adding an additional years until in 1978 the course received its qualification as an approved educational center.

In June 1976, a kindergarten started with seven students between the ages of 2 and 5, children of CAS's students and teachers. Beginning with primary school, it gradually added educational stages over time.

Subsequently, in June 1980 CAS received authorization to begin the University Orientation Course (COU), a program taken prior to entering university and the termination of secondary education. In 1983, the facilities

expanded with the inauguration of the Ladies' Boarding School and the remodeling of the central administration and secondary school building. In November 1984, CAS inaugurated the first of the three modules that would form the General Basic Education (EGB) school.

## First Accreditation

Also in 1984, the General Conference of the Adventist Church officially accredited the institution as a junior college. Neal C. Wilson, world president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, visited Campus Adventista de Sagunto in June 1986.

On June 23, 1987, the Department of Culture, Education and Science of the Generalitat Valenciana gave the final authorization to operate the school for Basic General Education. The same entity, on December 29, 1993, granted permission to conduct educational programs for infants, thus implementing all levels of education.

During the 1992-1993 academic year, the Spanish Language School (ESDES) began to prepare students to obtain the Diploma of Spanish as a Foreign Language at the University of Valencia.

## From Music School to J.S. Bach Professional Center

In 2000-2001, the music school received official authorization and in 2001 it obtained its first government grant. At the same time, the process of converting the school into an officially recognized educational center began. The government authorized the school to become, first, a music school and, later, a J. S. Bach professional center for elementary and professional musical education. From 2006 onwards, it formalized its teaching staff, methodologies, and subjects. Today the center has three choirs (primary, secondary, and campus) and two orchestras (children's and campus). It also offers four groups of courses of music for students from 3 to 7 years of age.

## Campus Adventista de Sagunto and Spanish Adventist Seminary

In March 2002, the XVII Assembly of the Spanish Union established two independent institutions: the Campus Adventista de Sagunto (CAS) and the new Spanish Adventist Seminary (SAE). In May 2003, the Spanish Adventist Union Council ratified the appointment of Carlos Puyol as general director of both institutions. The CAS became responsible for the primary, secondary, and music departments, and the SAE would include the theology department, the Master's Degree in education, and the Spanish Language School (ESDE, the new name for the former LCH Department).

In April 2004, the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognized SAE as a senior college offering the Bachelor of Theology. That same month, ESDE received accreditation from the University of Alcalá de Henares (Madrid) and was a founding member of

Seventh-day Adventist Languages Europe, a consortium of the six Adventist language schools in Europe. In 2008 the school received accreditation in all fields (from kindergarten to high school).

In February 2009, the AAA accredited the SAE as a level III institution with the capacity to offer postgraduate courses leading to Master's degrees or higher. In November 2009, agreements signed with the Faculté Adventiste de Théologie de Collonges-sous-Salève in France led to the joint offering of a Masters in Pastoral Theology since the 2010-2011 academic year.

In June 2010, the Adventist School of Theology (FAT) signed agreements with the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, USA, for offering in Sagunto the Spanish Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program of Andrews University as an extension program. It began in July 2012 and received accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). On November 11, 2011, the ministry of education of the government of Spain officially recognized the Bachelor and Masters in Theology program, making the university level of the Faculty of Theology equal to that of any other institution in Spain.

## Campus Projects Today and in the Future

In 2016, the Spanish Language School (ESDES) became an examination center for the International Service for the Evaluation of the Spanish Language (SIELE).<sup>2</sup> Three years later, the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) approved the establishment of the Master's Degree in Faith and Science of the School of Theology as a separate degree, pending official government recognition. In October 2020, the Campus Art Academy began as a center offering programs in drawing, theater, pottery, creative writing, photography, and video. In January 2021, ESDES received the distinction as an accredited center of the Cervantes Institute, the most prestigious accreditation for teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

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### NOTES

1. Because of the political circumstances of the Franco era and the tumultuous later times, Adventist history of these periods depends largely on collective memory and oral traditions, on which this article is based.
2. Cf. [www.siele.org](http://www.siele.org).

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