

Bilag 1 Minutes from meeting 9th October, 2008
Digital Communication area

We at the IT University and this time especially at the Digital Communication area (MsC, BA, M and single subject) are very grateful for the highly qualified feedback and the engaged participation of our employers' panel. Here is a collective summary of the panellists contributions¹.

FORMAT OF THE MEETING

We agreed that panellists should have more time for discussion. From now on, ITUs presentations at these meetings will be much shorter (max. 30 min.) allowing for longer group and plenum discussion. We will invite to dialogue through questions and the identification of possible discussion topics as last time. The "what do you miss in our education programme?" question proved to be the most inspiring.

WHAT OUR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION PROGRAMMES DO WELL

It is a good idea to have education programmes that are placed within the University triangle (Science, Arts and Business). This is unique in Denmark. It is good there are different models catering to varied student situations and levels. The blend of theoretical reflection with practical work is a good idea, students have to get their hands in the tools. Another advantage is the degree to which study activities are integrated with research projects or applied work in different companies and organizations. Some of the topics that were mentioned as specially attractive in the current market were our strength on all aspects of the user experience and usability. Our stress on digital culture awareness and understanding the medium is also a strength.

A few of the panellists saw it as an advantage that our graduates could mediate between "tech" and "content" people, because this communication is not always easy, but others were sceptical about this role.

An important remark from one of the panellists was that we should think carefully how we go about implementing changes, because the digital world is changing rapidly, and we should design educations that also hold in the future even though they are of course based on the needs we perceive in the present.

AREAS WHERE WE COULD IMPROVE

The main question leading the group discussions was: what do you miss in our Digital Communications programs? A number of possible lines of development were identified that could all be integrated under this quote from the plenum: "you need to get closer to the business side of the triangle". In general there was a perception that our programmes were a bit too "humanistic", and not technical² or business oriented enough.

¹ Apologies for any omissions. We have gathered the notes from the four discussion groups to make this document. Similar comments have been grouped into themes.

² It was also stressed that the technical abilities were not the most important in relation to this profile.

I have grouped them in three areas:

1) OUR GENERAL FOCUS and TOPICS

The programs cover a lot of ground, ambitiously squeezing the 3 huge areas of design, communication and cross-mediality. There was a concern that the students end up being “jacks of all trades, masters of none”, so we have to be very strict about keeping a tight focus in the compulsory subjects. Our programmes have to become more specialized. Our current specializations are vague.

As it is now, the students cannot really become specialists in the 2 years of the program if they are starting from zero, so if they are employed as such is because they already had a particularly relevant background. The previous experience they bring to their graduate studies is therefore very important, also in relation to how much depth they can gain.

We have too much focus on Web, and too little in other platforms. This is old fashioned. We should work more with mobile, ubiquitous computing, digital television (also in distribution and broadcast) and go beyond the interface to confront our students with deeper level software development (like for example a bank mainframe). Related to this, several panellists suggested that the students should have knowledge of system architecture.

2) BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING and PROJECT MANAGEMENT

There is no explicit teaching module about business understanding. Our graduates have to be able to see beyond their own little specialized area (in communication or design) and reflect about the overall context their business/organization is placed in, so that they can think at the macro-level and align their work with more complex strategies³.

Related to this is the proposal to make our Project Management module (currently an elective) an integrated part of the compulsory path through the education. The students have to know about different ways to run projects professionally, this cannot be left to chance. Other related topics of interest were innovation, management of change and media distribution models.

3) STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION and ORGANIZATIONS

We are focused very much on the individual's choice of platform and communication as *formidling*. There isn't enough of higher level communication, for example about planning for communication in a big organization. How to communicate digitally within and from a big corporation. How design and communication decisions affect the working lives of organizations and viceversa.

³ This is very much related to the third area.

Although it wasn't targeted as one of the urgent problems, several panellists indicated that using English more in our programmes would be of benefit to the students, since most high profile employers work in English.

A more general comment also in connection to other programmes at ITU is our panellists' concern about our future Bachelors. They unanimously agreed that their companies would not employ bachelors, and that we shouldn't mislead the students taking these educations by announcing the possibility of going directly into the job market after finishing their studies. Our panellists will only employ graduates (*kandidater*).

Finally, there were a number of comments referring to other educational programs at ITU (mostly the software development area) which this document does not include due to this meeting's focus on the Digital Communication Area.