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Minutes of the meeting in the Employer Panel, Medialogy on June 29, 2022

Participants: Michael Schmidt, Dripta Roy, Sune Wolff, Simon Lajboschitz, Kasper Rodil, Luis Emilio Bruni, Hendrik Knoche, Henrik Schønau Fog, Nis Ovesen, Claus B. Madsen (chair)

Unable to attend Bjørn Flindt Temte, Claus Holm, Camilla Schnatterbeck

Other participants: Anne-Marie Rasmussen, Anne Christoffersen, Signe S. Garp (minute-taker)

Item 1. Approval of the agenda

Approved.

Item 2. Welcome and introduction

Nis Ovesen (NOVE), Head of Studies, gave a presentation (see enclosed slides) focusing on the department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology with focus on the Medialogy study programs both in Aalborg and Copenhagen.

All the participant introduced themselves.

NOVE made a 2021 recap:

Since the last meeting we had to change almost all our teaching and exams to online during Covid-19 it has been with challenges.

AAU CPH department are closing many programs because of the government requirements to reduce the intake in the four largest cities in Denmark with 10% up to 2030. In our department it is the MSc program Sound and Music Computing that will close with the last intake in September 2024.

A lot of focus at AAU has shifted to life-long learning.

Research evaluation with external partners has been completed. The department has grown in both quality and quantity research wise.

At the last meeting we debated the BSc Medialogy study plan revision. The intake of September 2021 was the first year with the new study plan. This year the MSc Medialogy study plan will start.

Claus B. Madsen (CBM), Chair of Study Board shortly presented the MSc Medialogy study plan 2022. The study plan is now without specializations. Instead, we have large course packages that the students can chose from during 1st and 2nd semester to give possibilities in different directions. 3rd semester is one large semester

where the students can choose to go on an internship, studying abroad or at another Danish university, or the DADIU program (game semester).

NOVE continued the presentation. During the last year it has been a major issue to retain the students and bring down the dropout. Focus has been social belonging and a new study start.

The recruitment focus has been on “telling the good story”.

Item 3. Recruitment

Presentation by the Head of Studies (NOVE)

The yearly intake is limited to 138 across campuses on the bachelor programme. Since 2017 there has been fewer applications than allowed, especially in Aalborg. The application requirement is now increased (MAT B with a limit of 7).

We also have a relatively high unemployment rate compared to other IT educations.

With focus on the recruitment issues, we have made some activities over the last year; improved the website, made a new video campaign on SoMe, SoMe ambassadors in both Aalborg and Copenhagen, increased focus on Open University Day, focus on high school collaboration, “Getting the story out there” etc.

Group discussion

In the group discussion NOVE had prepared two questions: 1) Sharpen the profile and 2) Ideas for recruitment activities.

1) Sharpen the profile

Simon Lajboschitz (SL) asked is it make sense to change the name of the education, e.g., to ‘Creative Technology’. There was a debate about this. Henrik Schønau-Fog said that we have had that question before, and some would say that we now have created a brand that we need to keep. Michael Schmidt (MS) added that years ago we were able to recruit 300 students per year with the ‘Medialogy’ name. If the name of the education should be changed, it is important to look at other similar programs.

2) Ideas for recruitment activities

Dripta Roy (DR) mentioned success stories as important. What can be achieved after graduating from the study - could also be important to show in the webpage and the PR material. It needs to be fun to be a student at the university.

There was a debate about recruitment and contact to high school rectors in the North of Jutland to invite them into collaboration. NOVE said it would be great if it could be lifted to the Aalborg University level, as we are competing with our sister departments. Feedback from student councilors is that the study is not promoted enough. CBM added that pupils in high schools are not aware of the programme. We hear that they search on the internet to figure out what study to choose. Hence, the quality of the webpage is of high importance. MS suggested UNF (*Ungdommens Naturvidenskabelige Forening*) and ‘Uddannelseskarakavanen’ to be a way to get more young people into Medialogy.

There was a debate about whether high demands might be the way to recruit. SL mentioned that intensesness can be a strength, looseness is not always what the students find attractive. It can be more attractive if you are expected to deliver something, and you have a feeling of a community.

Sune Wolff (SW) pointed out that it is important to split the two topics recruitment and employability and work with them on each platform, as it is not necessary the same initiatives that has to be made.

Item 4. Employability

Presentation by the Chair of Study Board (CBM)

CBM presented the topic regarding Employability. He showed the figures for the unemployment rates in both Aalborg and Copenhagen for graduates from the MSc. Medialogy programme.

Positive notes from the cohort last year. During the last year focus has been on projects in collaboration with external organizations. It could be a challenged balance between what is great for collaborators and what is academically great. It is also a challenge to have a balance between “hard” and “soft” competences up against guessing what the market needs. Finally, it is also important to address another issue; some of our students are a little weak. They can sometimes hide in groups. Therefore, we really need to look more detailed at group forming in the future. Furthermore, some students have personalities that constitute a challenge in terms of getting a job.

Group discussion

There was a debate regarding the fact that some students’ personalities can be a challenge in term of getting a job. Some students are somewhat introverted and perhaps their personal appearance (style of clothes, hair, ...) can be a disadvantage in terms of making a great first impression. Kasper Rodil (KR) added there is evidence that female students occasionally drop out of STEM educations because of their male co-students not necessarily making the best impressions in terms of lingo, interests, appearance, etc.

There was a discussion regarding study group forming. Many agreed that study groups should be different at each semester. Also, to strengthen the students Emotional Intelligence (EQ) - how to respond to questions, how to memorize, articulate etc. It is custom for employers to look at collaboration skills, social skills, stakeholder management etc. when hiring.

All large companies are working with e.g., machine learning, so this will also be important in the future. The demand is massive. It is important to teach the students the right things. The new study plan is believed to reflect very well what the industry asks for. We had a debate about weak students. We had hoped by raising the bar that we could get the “right” students. We may lack courses that provide students with solid creative/design skills, with the same content-wise rigor as for the more technically oriented courses.

KR informed that in the new study plan there are two new UX-courses, and RO would like to have some input for the UX and the VR courses from the industry.

Item 5. New education – AI Engineering

Presentation by the Head of Studies

NOVE gave a presentation of the new AI engineering bachelor at AAU in Aalborg. It is still on the drawing board. It is a cross collaboration education between several departments at AAU under the TECH faculty. We are currently communicating with external partners about this program. It is a technical professional bachelor program, and it will be created in collaboration with the industry. It is expected that the industry very soon will lack employers within this field. At the same time AAU has great research environments in AI across departments and faculties, which is very important as foundation for this. We need to act now if we want to be in the game.



Group discussion

Opinions, competences for an AI engineer, format, relevance?

There was a broad agreement that it seems to be very targeted to get a job after graduation. It is very compact programme. It is nice that it is problem based. The challenge could be the balance between hard and soft skills. We must remember to make the programme clear, so it will be easier for the students to brand themselves.

The applied part will be accepted by the industry. The under-standing of process is important. All AI engineers work in Python, it should be part of the program. They also run the AI computing in the Cloud. High demand for computer vision. The timing is great.

NOVE told that our target is SMEs, and there is a lot of them in the North of Jutland. We expect to apply for it this fall.

SW said that he liked the combination of technology and user understanding and estimated it to be approx. 2/3 technical skills and 1/3 “complementary skills”.

MS mentioned that it would be a useful education: “I really think the applied part is what is needed”.

SL considered it to be an interesting education but currently not relevant for Khora.

DR said that the education sounded good and emphasized that the timing is really good.

MS further mentioned “Predictive Maintenance” as a potential area or interest for the education.

Item 6. Completion and evaluation

The time for the meeting is fine (before summer holiday in the working hours). The hybrid format also works fine and is a good solution.

It would be nice to have had the presentations beforehand, so the employer panel can prepare some questions etc.

Maybe next time start the meeting with a summery from last time, so we can see if these meetings have an impact.

MS suggested to have some externals from bigger companies, e.g., Novo, Lego, TDC. There are many large companies that could be of interest.

KR would like to send some of our best AV productions to the employers, to show what the students are doing, and you can see the diversity in our students work. He would also like to visit some of the employers soon.

NOVE ended the meeting and thanked for the participation today and wished all a nice summer.