



FULL D'EXPERIÈNCIES d'INNOVACIÓ DOCENT en EDUCACIÓ SUPERIOR

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ADAPTING THE ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE TO THE EHEA

INTRODUCTION

The Pilot Plan for adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) currently encompasses seventeen UAB degrees.

The adaptation process has not been easy. It has involved a series of educational changes that affect the work of both the teaching staff and the students. These changes have affected how we define the educational goals and professional skills for each degree and have brought about new teaching, learning and assessment methods.

Coordination between the various parties is essential to the success of this process. Without it, change would be impossible.

This paper explains how one degree programme has undergone this process. This example features an excellent management system made up of several work groups that ensure the optimal implementation of the changes.

ELENA AÑAÑOS
Innovation Area
IDES

UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

The introduction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) methodology involves coordinating various activities in order to adapt educational methods to student-centred learning criteria. In the case of the Advertising and Public Relations degree, the syllabus developed in 1992 had to be adapted to the new credit system and teaching methods.

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE

The 1999 Bologna Declaration and the Catalan Universities Act (1/2003) laid the groundwork for the process of adapting university degrees in Catalonia. In 2004, an agreement was reached to launch the pilot programmes.

This process requires a proposal to harmonise Advertising and Public Relations degrees throughout Europe. Each European university classifies its programme in a different area of study. As a result, the existing degrees have no common ground. In 2003, the European Association of Communication Agencies (EACA) met in Barcelona with representatives of the major European universities (from France, Italy, Greece, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Sweden) in order to develop a unified proposal for this degree.

REVISION OF SYLLABUSES

Officially recognised degrees must have validated syllabuses. Therefore, students in the pilot programme receive the unofficial UAB qualification upon completion of the third year. Because the current syllabus calls for a four-year programme, students must complete another year of coursework in order to obtain the officially recognised degree. The pilot programme was introduced progressively, according to the following calendar:

– 2004-2005 academic year: two subjects from the second semester of the first year (Design, Visual Layout and Technology in

the Press and Introduction to Creative Advertising).

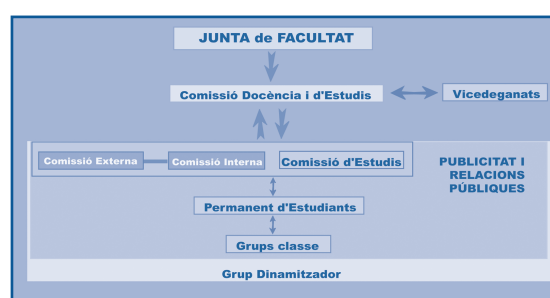
– 2005-2006 academic year: first and second years (pilot programme subjects were taught throughout these two years).

– 2006-2007 academic year: third year (pilot programme subjects were taught throughout all three years of the unofficial UAB undergraduate degree).

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The management system for this process is made up of various work groups that ensure the optimal implementation of the pilot programme.

The process is overseen by the Promotion Group, which enjoys the support and guidance of several committees: the Student Standing Committee, the Internal Assessment Committee, the External Assessment Committee and the Faculty Committee.



TRAINING PROFILE

The training profile is a set of skills expressed in terms of knowledge or abilities and classified as either specific or cross-curricular, and as academic or professional.

The training profiles of the Advertising and Public Relations degree were developed taking into account the skills, knowledge and abilities required for professional practice. They are as follows: 1. Strategy. Consultancy on sales communication and public relations. 2. Creation, design and production management in advertising and public relations. 3. Accountancy in advertising and public relations. 4.

Unitat d'Innovació Docent
en Educació Superior (IDES)

Edifici A
Campus de la UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)
Tel.: 93 581 41 66
Fax: 93 581 41 67
ides@uab.es
www.uab.es/ides

Equip de la Unitat

Dra. Maite Martínez
Directora

Dra. Elena Añaños
Àmbit d'Innovació

Sarai Sabaté
Núria Marzo
Equip col·laborador

Jordi Grau
Virtudes Guzmán
Suport administratiu

Edició i impressió

Servei de Publicacions
de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



Resource planning. 5. Consumer and market research.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

These skills are the goals, defined in terms of knowledge and abilities, that students are required to meet over the course of a particular subject. These skills were adopted based on the findings of the Unit for Innovation in Higher Education Teaching (IDES) of the UAB. Each lecturer for the course was asked to identify the skills that students were expected to acquire in each subject.

For the Advertising and Public Relations degree, these skills were classified in nine basic areas. Each area is defined by generic skills and observable indicators or characteristics.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

The teaching objectives are guidelines for determining the content of each subject and defining the assessment method.



These objectives may be either degree-specific or subject-specific. The degree-specific teaching objectives include the general course objective, which in this case is to train students to work professionally in advertising and public relations. The subject-specific objectives correspond to each subject of the course.

NEW TEACHING METHODS

The key factors of the EHEA-adapted course are the new teaching methods and

the students' work. These elements make the course more appropriate for training future professionals.

The new system reduces the number of lectures and places the emphasis on a more active learning process. The assessment methods have also changed. Traditional exams have been abandoned in favour of other means of assessing personal effort (assignments, study hours, seminars and tutorials).

CONCLUSIONS

With regard to the educational changes to adapt the Advertising and Public Relations degree programme to the EHEA, we conclude the following:

- The new teaching methods do not necessarily imply a decrease in the students' marks.

- Humans (students and lecturers) are the greatest obstacle to change.

- The main cause of dysfunctions is the difficulty of applying new methods to a syllabus approved in 1992.

- The new method requires the support of new educational platforms such as the Espai de la Titulació (managed by the coordinators of the pilot programme and the students) and the Virtual Library (BRE-VIA, an online-resource project of the UAB).

- In order to track the progress of the pilot programme, teaching quality is monitored through the Teaching Assessment Programme (PAAD) and, especially, through the UAB Teaching Quality Monitoring Plan (PSQD).

DANIEL TENA PARERA
Vice Dean of Teaching Affairs
Faculty of Communications Studies
Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising
Promoter of the DURSÍ Pilot Plan
of the Advertising and Public Relations degree
Building I, UAB Campus
08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)
Tel: +34 93 581 44 58
daniel.tena@uab.es

