Strategic Design

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Year:	4
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Type:	Optional
Subject:	Design Processes
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This Course is taught in: English, Spanish
Tutosials may be carried out in: English, Spanish

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Course Guide Index

Course Description

Brief description

This subject provides continuity and goes one step beyond the compulsory business courses completed in the second and third year, during which students had to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to manage a design project (second year) and to manage their own business project (third year). Therefore, students taking this course should be able to apply and use the main concepts of business management from an entrepreneurial perspective, such as, for example, drafting and implementing marketing, HR, production or financial plans.

Course objectives

The objectives of the Strategic Design course focus on the role of design in the strategic management of companies and institutions. They are as follows:

Learn to interpret the economic, technological and social environment in relation to design to be able to identify strategic opportunities to improve the world, as well as opportunities for organisational, business and professional development.

Participate in the strategic management of companies and/or institutions. Use the design thinking methodology to solve business problems and identify new services and/or business models.

Develop the skills necessary to manage international and multidisciplinary companies, institutions or design departments.

Acquire the skills necessary to lead teams, companies, institutions or design departments: leadership styles, time and priority management, team motivation and management, negotiation with clients and suppliers.

Contents

1. How can we use design to improve the world around us?

   1. What opportunities and needs are generated by the current economic, technological and social changes that society is undergoing?
   2. What role does design play in emerging economies and in the Western economies?
   3. How do we position ourselves in this context as individuals? How do we manage our professional careers?

2. Design thinking as a strategic tool in companies and institutions

   1. How can we apply the design thinking methodology to solve problems in sectors such as finance, education or health? What are methodologies such as creative problem solving?
   2. Service design. How can we contribute to improving services and business models through design skills? What work methodologies can we use to achieve this?

3. Strategic design

   1. How to create and manage global and interdisciplinary teams? Selecting and coordinating collaborators and/or employees.
   2. How do we create and manage relationships with clients in other parts of the world?
   3. Where do we carry out production activities? How do we select our suppliers in a global context? How do we manage these relationships to ensure suppliers meet our expectations in terms of quality and delivery times?
   4. Managing financial resources. Understanding financial statements, cash flow, financial leverage, investment partnerships, as well as the management of the Board of Directors.

4. Business project leadership

   1. Leadership styles. How do I adapt my leadership style to my employees and my business context? How do I generate motivation in order to achieve the business goals I have set?
   2. How do we reduce the time we spend on non-essential matters and spend time working on the things that matter? How can I coordinate a team of employees to meet the company's objectives?
   3. The art of the negotiation. How can I find solutions acceptable to all members of the team/company/institution?
   4. Conflict management to ensure win-win outcomes. How do I manage my relationships with my employees, co-workers and/or bosses? How do I give

feedback so that my employees improve their performance? How can I manage difficult situations such as poor performance, lack of alignment with the values of a project, or dismissal?

Methodology
Teaching methodology and activities

The methodology is structured as follows:

a. Presentation of information. Along with the lectures and the research carried out by students themselves, the case studies that will be provided are of vital importance for this course, since they allow students to situate the contents of the course in the current business environment. Selected cases will be presented by the Design Director or R&D Manager of the company/institution and, when the logistics and capacity of the organisation allow it, students will travel to its headquarters to obtain information on the case in situ and actively participate in tackling the challenges faced by the companies in question. In this sense, the presentation of the case studies by the companies/institutions themselves allows students to develop a personal relationship with people working in the sector, which makes it easier for them to realise the diversity of professional roles that they can pursue within the industry.

b. Knowledge-building. Students will take part a number of practical activities such as analysis and discussion of publications, role-playing games, as well as delivering presentations on the business challenges tackled in their case studies. Students will also participate in a practical workshop in which they will use the design thinking methodology to come up with new services, in collaboration with a selected company/institution. The practical workshop is a knowledge transfer exercise useful for both students and the companies/institutions involved, which allows for modifications and follow-up within the context of the course to ensure the stated learning outcomes are achieved.

Assessment

Assessment system

The general assessment framework for the course includes several continuous assessment activities, linked to the exercises carried out during the teaching sessions, and a final project (the grades obtained for the continuous assessment activities count for 40% of the course grade, while the final project counts for 60%).

In accordance with the objectives of the course and the CE11, CE13, CT11 and CT16 competencies, the assessments are intended as a simulation of the deliverables that are used in the professional reality of the sector. For example, students are asked to propose, in a limited time period and in a physical environment often external to the classroom, well-argued solutions to the business problems faced by the managers of companies/technological institutes that participate in the case studies. In this sense, the feedback provided by these industry professionals on individual students' performance is of special importance (this evaluation will not entail a grade, but it will make students aware of the demands of the sector and familiarise them with the professional assessment criteria used in the real world).

Moreover, in order to develop the CT6, CT7 and CT8 competencies, the activities on which students will be assessed will include teamwork as well as individual work. Students will have to work in groups of 2 or 3, depending on the activity in question, and each group activity will have to be presented by a different group member. Students will also be encouraged to deliver certain course projects, whether written or oral, in English and will be graded on their ability to do so (CT1 and CT2 competencies).

Finally, it must be pointed out that students will not only be the object of assessment, but will also be asked to assess their own work and that of the group, in order to develop their capacity for initiative and decision-making (CT8 competency) as well as their ability to determine and plan their own professional trajectory (CT18 competency).

Bibliography and Resources

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Competencies and Learning Outcomes

Specific Competences Competency

Competency

CE11 Demonstrate an understanding of the functioning of the economic, business and institutional environment in which design projects and activities are contracted and professionally developed.

Learning outcomes

CE11.2 Analyse the usual operating conditions and systems for the outsourcing of design services.

CE11.3 Comprehend how design is incorporated in the organisational charts of business organisations and its role in them.

Competency

CE13 Plan, organise, manage and monitor the development of design projects, both within the framework of self-employed professional work and within companies or institutions.

Learning outcomes

CE13.1 Plan and organise a design project by setting objectives, creating a timeframe for the various implementation phases and deliverables, as well as establishing the collaborators who will participate in each stage of the process.

Transversal competencies

CT1 Oral and written communication skills in students' native language and in other languages, such as English, that allow them to work in an international context.

CT2 Preparing professional reports and academic papers.

CT6 Ability to work in a team and communicate effectively with the different roles and across the different disciplines involved in the development of a design project.

CT7 Ability to coordinate, direct and lead work groups around a design project, or a project where design plays a significant role.

CT8 Capacity for initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.

CT11 Ability to adapt to the national and international professional environment and, in particular, to the technological, social and economic changes that are taking place in the modern world.

CT16 Demonstrating values and deontological principles specific to the profession.

CT18 Ability to self-manage one's own career development and professional trajectory.