



University of Nova Gorica
Staffordshire University
University of Turku

Vilnius Business College
D-Labs d.o.o.
ideate.me

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE VALIDATION OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY MODULE

A Critical Analysis and Comparative Report
of the IDEATE Validation Process

This summary report is aimed at HEI stakeholders such as managers and teachers, to provide them with conclusions and recommendations on validation of such innovative interdisciplinary modules. It was drawn up in March and April 2015 by the key actors of the validation processes at four HEIs involved in the validation of the module IDEATE, after a year-long process of multiple validations.

Executive Summary

(by Peter Purg, project and work package lead)

April 20, 2015

The successful validation procedures at all four universities show a **positive record and a good potential** of the module to be incorporated into existing curricula, primarily as optional provision. The IDEATE module can be offered **across faculties of the same university, as well as in international collaborations**, possibly also in **life-long learning** context. As particular assets of the module, the **flexible outcome levels** and an **open assessment structure** allow to validate the module both on graduate as well as postgraduate levels. The methodologies seem to be **attractive to non-academic practitioners**, who may be involved as co-mentors. The **challenge-based syllabus** and **real-life relevant pitching** elements motivate the course implementation to **include external entrepreneurial stakeholders**. The below individual summaries and lessons learned prove that, when taking up this module, **a trans-disciplinary ambition and a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship** must be assured in the teaching community, and supported by the academic management – however in turn, both can be generated already through the mere presence of the IDEATE course as a curricular option, and above all through targeted teacher-training provision, and inclusion of real-life entrepreneurs.

Lessons Learned in the Process of the Validation of the IDEATE Module at
University of Nova Gorica
(by Rene Rusjan and Boštjan Potokar)

In the case of University of Nova Gorica (UNG), the Media Arts and Practices (MAP) master programme at the School of Arts again proved to be usefully open towards interdisciplinary applications. Its novel element of the "Studio" module acted as, metaphorically speaking, a specific DNA, infused into the IDEATE module to keep it truly flexible and in touch with the real-world. The Studio module of MAP **mixes differently specialized students in a practical production project under primary mentorship by non-academic practitioners**, it usually brings them to a **specific site and lets them react to a local issue at stake** (in the form of an international "mobility", a condensed one-week workshop, very similar to the ones that are to be conducted as intensive learning in IDEATE).

Thus the project team of UNG believes **access vectors were opened for artists and creative-media practitioners of different backgrounds** to enter the IDEATE module – as these profiles were until then rather rare participants of interdisciplinary entrepreneurship collaborations, and less interested for any academic provision implying “business” or “entrepreneurship” topics or methods. Furthermore, the IDEATE module was also complemented by the outcomes pertaining to the “Management” courselet within the "Discourses in Practice" module of MAP, which is another flexible curricular form(at) of the MAP programme that **allows the school to formulate on-demand academic provision in contact with real-world practitioners and in response to contemporary topics at stake**. This is why the learning outcomes of the IDEATE module may be considered as equivalent to the two mentioned modules of the MAP programme. Such a two-course structure will **remain open for slight ad-hoc modifications on the level of implementation** that will be agreed on along the evaluation of the two piloting runs of the course in 2015 and 2016.

To assure the diversity of IDEATE module adoption and stimulate mixing of disciplines, the bold agenda of UNG was to accredit the IDEATE module under the “Engineering and Management” M.Sc. programme, conducted at another school of the university, the School of Engineering and Management. However due to the proximity of learning outcomes to some of their electives in the generic “project management” realm, their senate eventually decided not to accredit it in April 2015 as a self-standing provision – but they might reconsider it next year, upon complete programme renewal. Therefore an **exact syllabus narrative of the IDEATE module as piloted in February and March 2015** is to be validated



University of Nova Gorica
Staffordshire University
University of Turku

Vilnius Business College
D-Labs d.o.o.
ideate.me

as an elective course at the School of Arts (as leader of the IDEATE project) by the July of 2015, and promoted as a joint module possibility on the level of entire university.

The transversal adoption of the module in the academic community of the university will be promoted through a dedicated **Teacher Training programme, developed within the IDEATE project, targeting academic and also non-academic staff from across the university**, besides engineering and arts also the realms of e.g. biomedicine, physics, cultural studies etc. – **for more radical cross-disciplinary blends**. What is more, the module might also be inserted as an elective in an upcoming international collaborative provision on post-graduate level in the realm of "Creative Computing", where the School of Arts and the School of Engineering and Management shall again work side by side with notable international partners.

Summary of the Process of the Validation of the IDEATE Module at
Staffordshire University
(by Stella Mills and Rosemary Borup)

All modules at Staffordshire University (SU) need to be part of an award; the University has no provision for University wide modules and so the first necessity was to identify an Award Leader (AL) **who valued entrepreneurship and saw the advantages of having such a module on the award programme**. In the first cohort of students, SU was to provide students within a computing subject area and so relevant Award Leaders were approached on a one to one basis with two ALs taking up the offer of the module. These awards were in Computer Science and Applied Computing. Consequently, four versions of the module were validated: one at Level 5 and one at Level 6 in each award, Levels 5 and 6 being respectively equivalent to the second and third (final) years of an undergraduate degree.

The IDEATE partners had agreed learning outcomes and some content for the module at their meeting in February 2014 but validating two modules at different levels required different learning outcomes for each module. Consequently, the learning outcomes were re-written to give similar but different learning outcomes to enable validation of both modules to take place. There remains, however, **sufficient cogency with the modules of the partner HEIs for all students to work together in the required group work and assessments**.

The validation process itself went well with the modules being validated by early September 2014 for students to take in Semester 2 of the academic year 2014/2015. Three students on the Applied Computing Award selected one of the modules and a fourth student from the Film Production Award asked to take the relevant module as an additional study. SU is also investigating the possibility of a certificate of completion for students from all partner HEIs to add joint ownership to the modules.

From this experience, a number of lessons can be highlighted. First, SU does not have any provision for cross-Faculty or cross-University modules and so the **uptake for the EU module depends on each award adopting the module as an option**. This is time-consuming for the IDEATE project team as it necessitates selling the module to each award leader. It also makes the legacy of the project for SU less attractive. Associated with this, is the process for obtaining separate certification of completion for the students, thus giving **the cross-EU group of students some additional coherence**. Such processes are time-consuming and appear to be inflexible in terms of an authoritative reply.

More positively, the validation process itself **has generated good will and support** within the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Sciences, particularly amongst the relevant support and academic staff. The module has been **seen as a leader in innovation, both from its structure with intensive learning weeks and its joint assessment** across four EU member states. The validation has also **generated interest in the teacher training (WP3)** amongst academic staff.

Summary of the Process of the Validation of the IDEATE Module at
University of Turku
(by Vesa Hautala and Terhi Heino)

University of Turku (UTU) has **a strong vision on enhancing the students' entrepreneurial thinking and business skills**. The long-term goal is to have at least some level of education in entrepreneurship and business knowhow. There had been previous collaborations between the Business and Innovation Development (BID) unit and the BSc and MSc programmes in Biomedicine (previously Health Biosciences). The collaboration included teaching entrepreneurship for students as well as entrepreneurial education for teachers. As a continuum of this collaboration, it was natural to

validate the IDEATE module for the 3-year BSc programmes in Biomedicine, which in its current form already has two modules of Bio-entrepreneurship (altogether 5 ECTS). These modules provide students with an overview of entrepreneurship and its special aspects with regard to life sciences.

The programme leaders see a significant added value in the development of students' entrepreneurial thinking and thus **enhancing their future employability**. The entrepreneurial skills are not just needed when the students themselves might start a business but also when working in the private sector or performing academic research. Biomedicine is an **international discipline requiring communication and team work skills** and therefore the possibility to participate in an interdisciplinary and international module was highly appreciated.

In practice, the module validation went through the normal procedure. The curriculum of the programme is pretty rigid, including many obligatory modules, and since only four students could participate in the module in this pilot stage, it was agreed that **the module will be included in the selective studies**. The course module description was written and it included information on e.g. learning outcomes, content, teaching methods, and evaluation criteria. At UTU, the curriculums are validated every two years and the IDEATE module was included in the curriculum planning round for 2014-2016. The module was presented to the degree planning committee, which consists of professors, teachers and other faculty members, as well as student members. The committee agreed on having IDEATE as a 5-ECTS selective module in the BSc programme in Bio-medicine. Bio-entrepreneurship modules take place during the spring semester of 2nd BSc year (T4) and autumn semester of 3rd BSc year (T5) and therefore the module was included in the spring semester of the 3rd year (T6) **to deepen students' knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship**. The faculty board approved the curriculum, including IDEATE module according to the proposal by the degree planning committee in May 2014.

In general, the validation process at UTU went well and without any major obstacles due to the **flexibility in curriculum planning and the positive attitudes** of the degree programme leadership. For a successful validation process it was **essential to have teachers who were familiar with the curriculum structure and its limitations, appreciated the potential added value of students' enhanced entrepreneurial thinking and took true ownership in promoting IDEATE** for academic personnel, as well as students.

Lessons Learned in the Validation of the IDEATE Module at
Vilnius Business College
(by Dalia Rimkūnienė and Deimante Vilčinskaitė)

Vilnius Business College (VBC) has a long established teaching practice in such programmes as social, humanitarian and physical sciences. To effectively conduct study programmes, various innovative teaching methods are applied in order to back up students' employability in the labour market at the post graduation stage. Aiming to achieve one of its strategic goals, as the enhancement of learning and teaching experiences, Vilnius Business College has initiated development of a number of combined study programmes. Working **in close cooperation and partnership with business companies and professional bodies**, it aims not only to continually update the existing programmes, but also initiate innovative programmes that would enable better **integration of various disciplines in students' training and to respond changing needs of the market**.

The IDEATE intensive learning module was developed as a short and practice-based course of 5 ECTS aiming to present business fundamentals for an interdisciplinary community of students with a possibility to integrate it in various study programmes. Vilnius Business College plans to **integrate this module across most of the VBC study programmes** including social, humanistic and physical sciences. Knowledge and skills related to entrepreneurial, and **"interpreneurial" behaviour** are an essential component for VBC students in terms of their success and further professional development.

The validation process went smoothly. Following the procedures, the designed course module was presented to the VBC Consortium - executives, supervisors of Study Departments and teachers, who are responsible and are engaged in entrepreneurial training at different extent and levels. Receiving approval of the VBC Consortium, the module was presented to members of the VBC's Academic Board with the purpose to enable integration of the module in study programmes in natural sciences realms as well as the humanities as of 2015-2016. Consequently, the curriculum of the course module was **approved by the VBC Academic Board** in 13 October 2014.



University of Nova Gorica
Staffordshire University
University of Turku

Vilnius Business College
D-Labs d.o.o.
ideate.me

In terms of lessons learned through the process of developing and validating the IDEATE intensive learning module, the following aspects are to be noted: Firstly, VBC, as a relatively small, private and flexible HEI, has an advantage to adopt and validate innovative modules such as the IDEATE intensive learning, **escaping rigid bureaucratic constraints** of larger universities. Secondly, to make the IDEATE module a distinctive “buy in” product of the project, it requires a **strong and well formulated value proposition**. For “selling” this module it is highly necessary to employ **the “pull” strategy** in order to gain and maintain interest and support from teachers and other practitioners. It seems that only the **personal involvement** of teachers and practitioners, their **readiness and openness to experiment** in teaching can generate the added value and lead to excellence in terms of a unique learning experience. Finally, the IDEATE module validation process has shown an overall positive approach of VBC teachers towards the implementation of the module.