

Sustainable International Experience: A Collaborative Teaching Project

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My name is Thomas Mejtoft and I'm, among other things the program director of the five-year integrated MSc program in interaction technology and Design at Umeå University.

This is a project that I have done in cooperation with Helen Cripps at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia, and my local colleagues Stefan Berglund and Chris Blöcker, here at Umeå University in Sweden.

This is a paper describing an international interdisciplinary teaching project that we have been working on since 2017.

The motivation behind the project is that international experience is increasing in importance among both engineers as well as most other groups of students. On my program almost half of the students engage in exchange studies sometime over the course of their studies. But we can turn it around and say that half of the students don't get this kind of important international experience before entering the professional part of their lives. Or a situation with a global pandemic can make us all grounded.

So how can we create long-term sustainable international experiences for our students?

What have we done?

We have set up an international interdisciplinary collaboration between our engineering program in Sweden and marketing students in Australia.

Really simplified, the basic setup is that our engineering students develop prototypes based on the marketing students marketing analysis and they later on create marketing plans for the finished services.

We done three iterations of the collaboration so far and further developed the collaboration in each step. The last iteration is just briefly mentioned in paper since it was finalized just this spring.

The results so far!

Challenges addressed in the paper are moving away from the universities' educational platforms, aligning assessments and how to deal with information.

Problems that we had to deal with were the students' identity as engineers or marketeers, different cultures (even though Australia and Sweden seem alike, they are not) as well as creating real-time collaboration opportunities.

The results are a study environment that strengthen the ability to work as a team, communicate and understand the engineer's role in society.

However, the results are also an environment that are hard to control as a teacher, which makes it both more challenging, but also more fun to be a teacher!