Multidisciplinary Honours Programmes: Experiences and Strategy for Further Improvement

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Working in Honours education as a consultant coordinator researcher
Outline workshop

1. What are the characteristics of the Windesheim Honours Programmes?
2. Critical friends
3. Scenario method
4. Critical friends
5. What can we learn from this?
1. What is a Windesheim Honours Programme?

A multidisciplinary extra-curricular programme for students that wish to do more and are able to do more than is offered within their regular programme.

One year and 16 credits
Why offer Honours programmes?

In order to:

- Establish an ambitious study climate
- Challenge gifted students
- Make future professionals aware of societal issues and new ways of collaborating within different disciplines
Vision

The students of the Windesheim Honours Programmes are talented students who are able to **discover, develop, use and combine their individual talents** in a multidisciplinary context.
What are talents?

Renzulli (2005)
Activate knowledge

What do Honours students appreciate in Honours programmes?
Honours students like structured assignments:

yes or no?
The answer is no

Honours students dislike pre-structured assignments. They prefer to know the goal and end results that need to be achieved, and to be allowed freedom as to how to attain those criteria.
The main requirement for an Honours student is to be offered an academic challenge: yes or no?
The answer is no

The main requirement for the Honours student is the quality of the lecturer
Honours students like to create their own community: yes or no
The answer is yes
Honours students like context driven programmes:

yes of no
No
What do Honours students appreciate in Honours programmes?

- Interaction student – lecturer
- Community building
- Practical and authentic professional tasks
- Room for initiatives
- Small-scale organisation
- Mutual choice for participation
- Interest in other subjects than the regular degree programme
- A basic requirement is the quality of the lecturer

Using teaching for excellence

- Bounded freedom
- Creating community
- Enhancing academic competence

Wolfensberger, 2012
How can students apply?

• Pass their propedeuse within one year, average grade 7.2 or higher

• Motivation letter, CV, two letters of recommendation

• Selection interview
How to work in a multidisciplinary setting?

20 different degree programmes
Participants carrying different luggage
Assignments requiring different perspectives
Common theme of the programme

Semester 1: becoming familiar with new domains

- Workshops around three themes, organized by teacher
- Development of an individual product or service
- Completion:
  - Poster presentation
  - Workshop organized by the students for a broader audience

- Assignments aimed at collaboration between different disciplines
- Formative feedback
Second semester: future question of a company

1. Complex issue
2. Combination of three perspectives:
   - Social
   - Economic
   - Technological
3. Development of future scenarios
Main question

How to develop a future-proof Honours programme to meet the needs of intrinsically motivated Honours students who are able to collaborate within different disciplines?

What are the main questions?
Work in pairs
Share your questions and decide on one question

Work in a group of four
Which solutions do you propose for the questions?
2. Scenario method

- Trend analysis
- Finding the driving forces
- Development of scenarios
Trend analysis: DESTEP

- Demographic
- Economic
- Societal
- Technological
- Ecological
- Political
How to find trends?

- Data collection
- Newspapers, social media
- Expert interviews
- Research
- Websites (trend watchers, research agency, governmental organisations)

- Review
  - Eg. Delphi method

- Determine

- Interpret
Switch to scenarios
Tomorrow a Garden Party

Weather

Sun

Rain

Attendance

Everybody will attend

Half of the people won’t attend

Bron: Nekkers, Future Consult
What are the two most important trends that will need to be taken into account in Higher Education?
How to develop scenarios?

Describe the two most important developments or trends for Higher Education?

Which developments are uncertain?

Which developments will have the most impact?
Determine the driving forces

- High impact, high uncertainty  
  Potential driver
- High impact, high certainty  
  Driver
- Little impact, high uncertainty  
  Not relevant
- Little impact, high certainty  
  Background

- “Wild Cards”: huge impact, very unlikely

[Graph showing impact vs. uncertainty with labeled Key-dilemmas and Trends]
Determine the driving forces

- High Impact, high uncertainty: Potential driver
- High impact, high certainty: Driver
- Little impact, high uncertainty: Not relevant
- Little impact, high certainty: Background

- “Wild Cards”: huge impact, very unlikely

Impact

Uncertainty

Key-dilemmas

Trends
Scenarios

Bron: Nekkers, Future Consult
3. Critical friends:

Develop four scenarios in four groups
Describe the scenario, what are important characteristics
5. Results
7. What can we learn?
What do you take home?
Stay connected

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References

Thank you for your attention