

UWE Bristol Design Enterprise Studio

Overview

Free consultancy via the Design Enterprise Studio is available to local organisations in exchange for supporting an individual/ small team of student(s) learning on the job as part of their final year undergraduate degree at the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE Bristol).

The Design Enterprise Studio is part of UWE Bristol's BSc Digital Media programme, a course that is both creative and technical. Students on the award learn about the iterative development and design of software applications as well as creating content for a variety of media platforms. Students focus on user experience and interaction design as well as client communication.

The Design Enterprise Studio contributes to a final year module on the award. It helps students to hone their professional skills in project management, employability and entrepreneurship through working on a number of industry relevant projects.

Please read on for an overview of how the scheme works, including examples of the sort of projects client organisations can benefit from, and how to register your interest in getting involved.

Process

Students work as consultants individually or in small teams, with University supervision and support. The projects begin around the end of October and may run until March. Students devote around half a day per week to this work although the actual effort varies. After initial meetings with clients students may work on the projects on Campus at UWE Bristol's Frenchay Campus or other locations. At the end of the project students present back to the organisation demonstrating their response to the brief/challenge.

Benefits

Organisations will benefit from the experience in the following ways:

- Opportunity to source/ explore new ideas from the resulting student work.
- Opportunity to pool potential solutions for project outputs themselves.
- Increasing visibility of organisation and its work.
- Talent spotting for ongoing recruitment needs.
- Contributing to students' education.

For Digital Media students, the consultancy project will provide an opportunity to work on creative technologies projects in a near-professional capacity. They will be able to:

- Develop a greater awareness of current real-world problems in the industry.
- Develop their professional portfolio to include one or more industry relevant projects
- Demonstrate application of project management and self-management strategies
- Developing confidence by communicating successfully with a range of stake holders as well as team members in a professional and constructive manner.
- Successfully demonstrate ethical and professional conduct during all production stages.

Project timetable

All organisations interested in hosting a project are asked to contact mic.palmer@uwe.ac.uk in the first instance. A careful selection process operates, at the same time as students are briefed initially by tutors. Short-listed organisations are expected to be available for project talks with students - dates and times are confirmed following shortlisting.

Projects are allocated and start soon after, then operate over the following phases:

- **Initial analysis:** by the end of this preliminary phase, students should have achieved a good understanding of the client organisation, explored the needs, opportunities, expectations and business priorities, discussed and identified project objectives, agreed written terms of reference and project deliverables, defined individual responsibilities within their teams and established a project plan.
- **Project body and handover:** by the end of this second phase of the project, the agreed client activities will be carried out and completed, and a final presentation, together with other agreed deliverables, submitted to the client.
- **Write-up:** by the end of this phase, students prepare an academic report to University tutors (~April). Clients are invited back to the University to take part in the final phase and contribute feedback, which is taken into account during assessment. Assessment of the consultancy project contributes 25% to most students' final year mark.

Project Examples

Suggested projects students might undertake:

- Develop data visualizations, 2D/ 3D animations, or explainer videos.
- Develop visual branding / business identities, including social media strategies.
- Web site design /development.
- Mobile application design /development.
- User interface design/ Interaction design.
- User experience (UX) research: Interviews, Observations, Usability testing.

Project management

A UWE Bristol tutor acts as academic supervisor, but student teams are expected to be largely self-managing. A project plan including a schedule of meetings is negotiated and agreed. Students take on individual speciality areas of interest or expertise and will be able to delegate tasks. However, we expect teamwork delegation not to reduce the overall coherency and direction of any project from a client perspective, so this is an area that tutors monitor carefully.

The University tutors are committed to a "customer care" policy that recognises that, as well as carrying out an applied teaching programme, we are providing a service. Part of the project supervision philosophy is therefore to help students build in quality and continuity considerations. We have limited or no resources to support client organisations when projects end, but the project selection process considers management of risks like this – see "Key Considerations" below.

Responsibilities

The STUDENT (team) is expected to provide some or all of the following:

- documented and tested deliverables whose scope is negotiated in the initial analysis phase and defined in the agreed terms of reference;
- high standard deliverables to the client as also defined in the agreed terms of reference

In return, the CLIENT is expected to provide:

- a single contact person who will be involved in the project throughout its lifespan
- contact time with staff of up to a half day per week for up to 20 weeks
- access to relevant information and persons to support the project
- where possible, a contribution to travel expenses as appropriate
- written feedback on project outcomes, together with oral contributions as needed.

The UNIVERSITY provides:

- supervision and support to students
- computing facilities / design space where appropriate
- expert advice to student teams (and/or signposts to other sources of expertise and advice)

Key Considerations

We view the Design Enterprise Studio scheme as a three-way working partnership, involving client organisations, the University and our students. This is usually a “win-win-win” arrangement, but there are inevitably some risks, for all three parties. All prospective clients are asked to consider actively some key issues and risk factors as a pre-requisite to a partnership with us and the students.

For example, managing the scope of the project so that neither students nor clients develop unreasonable expectations is a major consideration. In addition, it is easy to underestimate the time required for any recommended changes to become sustainably embedded in the client organisation’s work processes.

A crucial issue (even at the start of the process) is what happens when the project finishes? We may be able to help clients find follow-up expertise and support, and we assess student teams on their ability to build sustainability into their work, but continuity of input necessarily remains the client’s responsibility.

Related to this, there is often a tension between the temptations of a ‘quick-fix’ solution and a longer-term, more strategic solution that aligns better with organisational objectives and business development. A partnership-based approach to these considerations is usually a must.

Interested? What next?

If you are interested in finding out more, please go to www.designenterprisestudio.com or contact Mic Palmer (see contact details below).

Then, if you would like your organisation to be considered for a project, email us a broad outline of your envisaged student project. The deadline for receipt of expressions of interest for the annual projects round can be found online. It is usually over the summer.

After the deadline the Design Enterprise Studio tutors will draw up a shortlist and contact you to discuss the possibility of working together, but please note that it is the students' responsibility to negotiate and agree the terms of reference of their projects with successful clients, following project allocation and initial analysis. It is important for tutors not to preempt this at this stage, only to establish that initial ideas are broadly suitable for both your organisation and the students, and that the proposed partnership is mutually viable.

Further information

For further information please see www.designenterprisestudio.com or <https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/et/csct/aboutthedepartment/partnerships/designenterprisestudio.aspx>

It's best to register your interest via email. This does not commit you formally to anything at this stage! We can discuss eligibility, suitability, etc. later on.

Contact

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