

Employers Panel meeting for Global Business Informatics (GBI) and Digital Innovation and Management (DIM) October 5th, 2020 (online)

Present: Kirsten Nielsen, Tanja Danner, Simon Kiilerich Vedel, Jan Struwe Poulsen, Nina Husfeldt Claesen, Steffen Dalsgaard, Baki Cakici, Anne Jensen, Anna Elizabeth Thomsen

1. Welcome and welcome to new members of the panel

Kirsten Nielsen (Chair) opened the meeting and the panel welcomed Jan Struwe Poulsen as new member to the panel.

2. Follow-up from GBI and DIM: the panel's report in spring, putting the skills workshop to use and upcoming institutional accreditation

The panel's report:

Steffen Dalsgaard (Head of GBI) thanked the panel for its report: 'We were really happy about it, and it left us with no questions'. The panel asked if the panel should be more critical?

Steffen and Baki Cakici (Head of DIM) explained that the panel report is constructive and that the report plays more roles: it formalizes discussions and items agreed upon within the organization of the IT University (ITU). As an example, the discussion about programming in the panel has helped DIM formulate the reasoning behind the way the new mandatory course in programming will be structured.

Skills workshop:

The skills workshop has been very constructive in dialogue with students. It has been successful in opening up a different position for the head of programme to students and has helped discuss about the relation between programme and job market. Baki would like to revisit the workshop at the next meeting.

Review of DIM:

Every 4 years each programme is reviewed by an external panel. DIM will be reviewed in spring 2021.

Institutional accreditation:

Steffen also informed the panel, that ITU will begin a process of institutional reaccreditation in spring 2021 and the panel would like to see a timeline for the process at the meeting in November.

The panel decided to begin work on the panel's annual report at the November meeting and finalise it on the January meeting.

3. Impact of COVID-19 – we will share how it impacts on us and ask you how it affects employment processes. Do you have any concerns in relation to the graduates we are sending out right now? What can we communicate to our students about employment under COVID-19?

Steffen and Baki told about immediate impacts of COVID-19 on ITU.

Because of a government initiative in response to COVID-19, GBI admitted an extra 40 students this September (in total 100). So far, things have worked well.

Faculty is generally under pressure from the very different realm of teaching they operate in: blended teaching formats, stress around rooms and social distancing, inability to run exercises they normally would. Simply making courses online has proven to cause lower participation – there is not one solution that works.

Baki told the panel that students' links to the job market pre graduation are perceived as weakened and asked if they still have student job possibilities and what these look like?

The panel responded that the employment of people is not affected by COVID 19:

-KL (Local Government Denmark) is not hiring less people and hiring is not a problem, because people are needed to help with digitalization.

The difference is in that candidates can expect to work a lot from home.

-The blended work format (people working from different sites) presents some challenges, but the positive aspect is that everyone can now meet virtually and every week we find new solutions. There is still a lot of room for new graduates.

The panel gave examples of virtual solutions to onboarding: virtual coffee meetings and walk and talk to get new employee to feel part of the team.

– We carry on and try to make use of every digital tool we have, and we will continue to use these tools, for example for meetings with people from different regions. Project collaborations between the Danish Agency for Digitisation and ITU students have also continued as before.

The panel agreed that the present situation with predominant virtual contact presents a challenge for new candidates (both pre- and postgraduates): it is difficult for new candidates to get a close contact with senior colleagues/experts. It takes an effort to make people feel that they are contributing when they are both new and only meeting online. It is an advantage to be a strong self-starters and very– difficult if people are uncomfortable with raising their hands and saying 'I don't understand this'. It is 'soft skills', but sometimes much more important than learning a coding language.

Baki told the panel that this feedback is very useful from a head of Programme perspective: now I can give my students a very different message. Over time we have understood that we need to expose students more to the problems they may encounter within digitalization and management – and some of these problems are between people. With COVID we are facing a new challenge - we understand that we need to work more on how we can train students properly when they can't meet organisations physically.

Baki asked the panel to share more examples of how they bring in new employees in the organization, so that he could share with his students.

Examples from the panel:

-We get a lot of good feedback on this model: 1st interview is online, but like a traditional interview, next step could be to hook up with someone in the company and last step for me has involved a walk and talk.

Others have copied the important parts of a hiring process and digitalized it

- you can tell them that there is basically no change and that we are also doing more social online things (kahoot, 'Friday bar').

KL invites people into the house for job interviews.

Tanja Danner advised graduates not to behave differently, to keep knocking on doors (only to do so virtually). What graduates can do is practicing virtual tools.

– we expect them to be able to use these tools in a workshop and we expect some of this (online work) to continue beyond COVID-19.

4. Any Other Business

Steffen asked the panel members how they would like to continue the joint work between panel and programmes.

Jan Struwe Poulsen suggested that the panel receive questions for the agenda one or two weeks in advance so that panel members can research within their own organisations/ qualify their input even more.

The panel agreed that they like to meet online and would like a platform that mixes different communication formats

The panel supports the meeting structure (3 meetings) but would like to do more advising and more on a day-to-day basis and invited Baki and Steffen to reach out more when questions for the panel arise.

Baki and Steffen would appreciate to have a way to ask smaller questions on a running basis and will investigate which collaboration tools ITU allows.

Anna Elizabeth Thomsen (Programme Coordinator) will follow up with Kirsten.