Master Project “Design Thinking and Business Innovation”

In collaboration with Stanford University, University of St. Gallen and corporate partners

Quick facts about the course

- From September to June (two semesters)
- Team work with students from different institutions (e.g., University of St. Gallen, Hasso Plattner Institute, Stanford University)
- One corporate partner per team (e.g., SAP, Audi, FIFA in 2012/13)
- Independent work atmosphere (students teams are in charge of the entire process from generation of ideas to development of a fully functional prototype, like in a start-up)
- Separate work environment at the University of St. Gallen and the University of Zurich (project room with all necessary appliances)
- A significant budget to build prototypes, managed solely by students
- Two lecture weeks at a leading research institution (in the past years Stanford University) and visits to partner companies (travel expenses will be covered)
- Letters of recommendation upon successful completion of the course

Description

This is a two-semester project based course covering all Master Project credits, in which students develop a software prototype for an innovative product or a service together with corporate partners. The corporate partners provide the problem statement, as well as a significant budget for field studies, requirements analysis, prototyping and other activities necessary to solve the given problem.

“Design Thinking” is an innovation philosophy that has been developed at Stanford University and is most often associated with the design consultancy named IDEO. Design Thinking is a human centered approach to innovation that focus on the feasibility, viability but even more important on the desirability of new products and services. Large corporations (Audi, Deutsche Bank, SAP, UBS, Clariant) increasingly adopt this way of innovation to ensure that customers and user really want the newly developed products and services.

The course teaches this innovation philosophy and different methods and tools that have been developed and taught at Stanford University. To facilitate the knowledge transfer, HSG students and students from cooperating universities will travel to a leading research institution (in the past years: Stanford University) twice for training sessions and will be coached by the international Teaching Team. The expenses for this travel are included in the budget provided by the sponsors.

The students work in teams to determine project requirements, benchmark alternatives, conceive solutions, and develop a series of increasingly sophisticated prototypes through rapid prototyping,
analysis and user testing with the focus on the user experience. Final deliverable is a detailed documentation of the design process with specifications of the final prototype.

The structure of the course is based on the experience of this course at Stanford University but will be slightly adapted to the requirements at the University of St. Gallen and the University of Zurich.

There will be short lectures at the beginning of the first semester, introducing the Stanford design methodology. In addition, there will be a preliminary assignment to practice the methods and encourage team building. After this introduction phase student teams will start working on the problem statement that has been defined by the corporate partner.

Weekly review meetings will enable discussion of the findings and questions with the teaching staff. Whenever necessary, lectures or workshop on certain topics will be scheduled to answer specific questions of students. In addition, there will be an informal weekly get-together where students and coaches gather in a social setting.

Students have to present their concepts and prototypes in three formal presentations for review and benchmarking purposes. The final solution will be presented to project sponsors in Stanford and St. Gallen/Zurich.

Additional benefits:
- Experience in group work in a multidisciplinary and multicultural team
- Education in creativity techniques and innovation process management
- Strong relation to the real world problems and processes

Organization

If you are interested in learning the world leading method on creative design and are open to challenging tasks demanding lots of creativity, you are free to send a short motivation letter (1 page, including CV and qualifications) to dolata@ifi.uzh.ch any time during the year.

Information events are organized each year around June and September. Please, watch the information published on [http://www.ifi.uzh.ch/imrg/theses/masterprojects/design-thinking.html](http://www.ifi.uzh.ch/imrg/theses/masterprojects/design-thinking.html) for updates.