



Student Innovedum 2016

Author:
Karin Brown

March, 2017

Acknowledgements

“He aha te mea nui o te ao? He taangata, he taangata, he taangata.” *What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people* (Maaori proverb)

This report attempts to capture the process and key impressions of Student Innovedum 2016, which would not have been possible without Daniela Ewason, the working group; Andreas Vaterlaus, Lukas Sigrist and Johannes Suter. However, without the students, none of us would be here.

Content

1	Executive summary	4
2	Overview	5
2.1	Stated Goals	5
2.2	Process	5
2.3	Project Governance	5
3	Process description + evaluation	6
3.1	Marketing	6
3.2	Budget	7
3.3	Online presence	7
3.4	Kick-off – 5 October	8
3.5	Design Labs	9
3.6	Presentation Night	10
4	Outcomes	11
4.1	Using the inventiveness of students for enhancing teaching and learning	11
4.2	Building the capabilities of students so they take increased responsibility for shaping their own learning process	12
5	Summary of key recommendations	13

1 Executive summary

Over the course of seven months (March – October 2016), Student Innovedum was actively advertised using print and online media. Students were recruited to participate in a nine-week Design Thinking process to produce feasible ideas for enhancing teaching and learning at ETH. In order to get the most motivated students, any external incentives as credit points or prize money were not provided.

The online forum was used effectively with 44 posts made by students. This helped recruit people for the programme. The forum and the “space for your ideas” marketing campaign set up the expectation that students could bring ideas to work on, whereas the Design Thinking approach requires participants to start by identifying and analysing problems. This took some time to resolve. Despite this, twelve students participated in the nine-week programme and presented five suggestions at the annual Innovedum event.

During the nine weeks, students participated in a Kick-off where they were introduced to Design Thinking through the “wallet exercise” and they attended four 4-hour long design labs where they were able to explore problems, ideas and work in groups. They struggled with some aspects of Design Thinking more than others.

Overall the project team was very impressed with the huge amount of work that students invested in Student Innovedum. Feedback about the experience has been positive from students. Assessing the impact of their work and the investment made in Student Innovedum remains to be seen.

2 Overview

How to involve students in Innovedum has long been a question in the teaching commission. In 2015 it was agreed that the Innovedum office at LET would run Student Innovedum, using Design Thinking as method to empower students to develop their own ideas for enhancing teaching and learning at ETH into prototypes.

2.1 Stated Goals

Increase student engagement for the benefit of learning by:

- using the inventiveness of students for enhancing teaching and learning
- building the capabilities of students so they take increased responsibility for shaping their own learning process.

2.2 Process

FS/HS 2015	Planning
FS 2016	Teaser marketing campaign called “space for your ideas”
HS 2016	Renewed marketing effort Kick-off (October 5, 2016) Design Labs x 4 Student presentations at annual Innovedum event (December 6, 2016)
FS – 2017	Ongoing support to projects

2.3 Project Governance

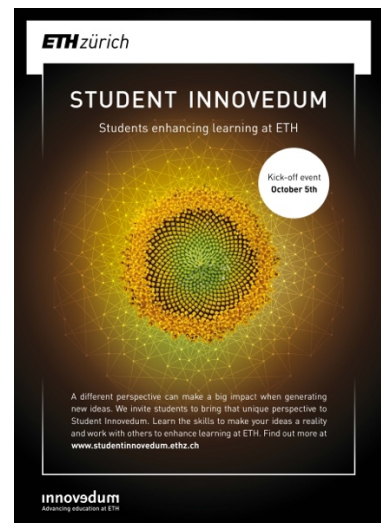
Student Innovedum was overseen by a working group. This working group was composed of several members of the teaching commission, which met a total of 14 times, including once immediately following the final event in order to capture impressions. Their feedback is incorporated in this report.

3 Process description + evaluation

3.1 Marketing

The marketing campaign for Student Innovedum was split in to two distinct components. In FS 2016 the “space for your ideas” campaign featured posters where students could write down their ideas were sent to facilities managers and large posters were placed in prominent places around the campuses such as the main cafeteria and on Höggerberg. In addition, serviettes printed with the same message were provided in all the campus cafeterias. All students received an email explaining Student Innovedum and inviting them to visit the website and discuss ideas on the forum there. The purpose of this teaser campaign was to raise awareness. It was only possible to collect a handful of posters in order to see the actual written student ideas.

In HS 2016 a renewed campaign was launched featuring eye-catching posters with six colourful central imagery. The images were selected to appeal to the different departments at ETH. Flyers were handed out and another email was sent to all students, except those in their first semester.



Evaluation

A survey was sent to all who attended or had expressed interest in attending the Kick-off. Students reported that the emails were the most effective, the colourful posters were second and third the “space for your ideas” posters. Serviettes were not mentioned at all. There was never any intention to repeat the “space for your ideas” as it was deliberately created as a teaser campaign. Due to the large time difference between when the serviette design had to be created (early March) and when the Kick-off occurred there was a slight mismatch between the marketing strategies.

Recommendations

1. Serviettes should be implemented one more time, however if the feedback is similar after the second implementation then should be discontinued as a marketing strategy due to the not insignificant cost.
2. The project should continue to create A3 and A0 posters as advertising materials.
3. The colourful eye-catching posters should be continued.

3.2 Budget

In addition to the staffing cost, an amount of 10,000 was allocated in the budget for expenses relating to design, printing, advertising and food for the various events.

Student Innovedum was the main task of the project coordinator (Karin Brown) within her 40% role. In addition, she was supported by Daniela Ewason (roughly 1-2 hours per week on average). An additional 50 hours of time was spent by additional LET staff either attending the Design Labs or mentoring students. The working group met a total of 14 times for hour each time.

Administration time spent by the apprentice (Jillian Stähli) at the time was not counted.

3.3 Online presence

During the first marketing campaign, students were directed to the custom URL www.studentinnovedum.ethz.ch where a WordPress blog was set up in both English and German. The blog provided additional information about Student Innovedum as well as Design Thinking. It also featured a forum where students (and others) could discuss their existing ideas. The blog is also a place where the student's project can be documented and remain accessible to a wide audience. Student can choose to provide updates via this platform should they choose. Unfortunately, the blog service does not offer a web statistics plug-in so it was impossible to tell how often the page was visited and what effect advertising had on web traffic.

A complimentary Facebook page was created. The existing Innovedum Twitter account was used to promote Student Innovedum.

Evaluation

In total, there were 44 posts made on the forum. The most comments of any one thread/topic was eight. Students commented positively about the forum and hope it will remain.

In contrast, they did not appear to benefit from the Twitter account which made a total of 52 Tweets, many of which were republished automatically on the Facebook account. The Facebook account remained largely dormant with only one comment and 16 people who "like" the page". The Twitter account built up to 25 followers, perhaps half of which, are ETH people. There are other benefits to having the Twitter account, for example it does help to raise the profile of the project internally and externally to the ETH. It also provides the project with links to similar projects.

Recommendations

4. Keep the website up to date
5. Add a web statistics plug-in to WordPress site
6. Maintain the forum
7. Discontinue the Facebook page



3.5 Design Labs

Following the Kick-off four workshops, called Design Labs, were organised. The purpose of these design labs was to support students through the iterative Design Thinking process so that they could identify co-conspirators and develop ideas collaboratively. As their ideas crystallised, they were referred to experts at ETH from the area they were interested in. These people included other staff at LET (in the area of EduApp, curriculum development and Moodle) as well as people working on Student Project House and ETH library.

At the first two design labs students were clearly still struggling to match their initial impressions of the project (a space for their own preconceived ideas) and the actual intention of Design Thinking (generating ideas based on identified problems). This proved time-consuming and was only fully resolved by the third design lab. Despite this, or perhaps because we dealt with this issue in a very transparent manner, all the students stayed involved. Only one student left after the first Design Lab citing workload reasons. At the end of each of the first three design labs, an informal evaluation was held at the end of the evening enabling us to make some adjustments for the subsequent session. This also generated wider feedback on the whole process.

Evaluation

Students liked the room at Technopark and the playful atmosphere created by having lollipops and anti-stress balls on the table. They also preferred having the workshops highly structured with clear agendas. It was also observed that additional scaffolding was required to assist students to complete particular tasks associated with Design Thinking. For example, when asked to develop problem statements, students struggled until they were presented with step by step assistance. They also suggested that more information about the Teaching Commission is provided and asked if experts could be invited earlier to provide context to their project. Several students suggested having “more time” to complete their projects, perhaps even extending the length of Student Innovedum into the following semester.

Recommendations

10. Invite alumni of Student Innovedum iteration to speak to next group of participants
11. Invite experts into the process early
12. Invest in creating a playful and “funky” atmosphere to spark inspiration and creativity
13. Provide clear structure to each evening and throughout the process
14. Clearly scaffold specific tasks, such as problem defining



3.6 Presentation Night

The Student Innovedum final event (presentation night) was integrated into the annual Innovedum event. This is a community event for all staff involved with the innovative teaching fund Innovedum. Unfortunately, the only date available was the 6th of December (St. Nikolaus). A professional photographer was hired and video footage was taken.

Student Innovedum was briefly introduced and the Design Thinking approach was quickly explained. In total, there were five student presentations of roughly 3 minutes each, to an audience of roughly 50 people. The student groups ranged in size from one person to four people. Their presentations as well as their chosen topics were diverse in nature. Some used videos, some had PowerPoint slides.

The topics were:

- Collaborative learning spaces
- A Moodle community for students and teachers
- A virtualised curriculum, representing scientific knowledge
- Teaching project labs
- Immersion events to illustrate relevance of study topics

Following the presentations, a further presentation was made by Prof. Dr. Gisbert Schneider a previous recipient of Innovedum funding. The formal part of the evening was then concluded and attendees were invited to an Apéro for refreshments and discussion.

The Rector, Prof. Dr. Sarah Springman, presented the students with their certificates by and had photos taken with her and Prof. Dr. Andreas Vaterlaus, the Vice Rector and Chair of the Teaching Commission. In the foyer, attendees were able to provide written feedback on posters corresponding to each of the student projects and speak to students directly.

Evaluation

Students stated in the survey that they felt positively about the presented ideas. They also appreciated the opportunity to present their ideas to such an audience and to be taken seriously. Some other (non-student) people who attended the event stated that the immediate impact of the presentations could have been stronger. However, the informal discussions after the presentations were highly valued by staff and students alike.

The working group reflected that they would have liked to have more people present. The date may have been partially to blame. However, the number of people in attendance was equivalent to the usual number of people who attend the annual Innovedum event. There was some contradiction between the desire of some to stay loyal to the usual casual and intimate atmosphere of the Innovedum community event and the desire to increase exposure for Student Innovedum presentation (and Innovedum in general) to attract a larger audience. Innovedum events tend to be more intimate and having the student presentations immediately added formality to the event. In order to maximise the impact of the student presentations (and promote Innovedum), the audience should have been bigger, however if the audience becomes too big, the result will be the loss of the intimacy to which the Innovedum community has become accustomed and values highly. Additionally, should Student Innovedum grow, it is possible that it will no longer be possible to present all the student ideas in the same manner and a new method for disseminating their work would be required.

Recommendations

15. Carefully evaluate the twin-purposes of the events
16. More effort in raising awareness of the student project results
17. Confirm a date with the Rector early

4 Outcomes

4.1 Using the inventiveness of students for enhancing teaching and learning

One goal of Student Innovedum was to generate a range of student ideas for improving the learning environment at ETH. By using Design Thinking as the development process, it was hoped that these ideas would be more than a “good idea” and would go through a prototyping phase in order to test out the feasibility of the idea and increase the likelihood they would be implemented. So how did we do?

Twelve students were able to develop five ideas to the point where they could confidently present their concept to the Innovedum community. They engaged with stakeholders (student, teaching staff and experts) in order to revise and refine their final suggestions. Many of the student groups were approached and provided with names of people they should get in touch with following their presentations. At least one Educational Developer offered to support one the groups.

Whether or not these ideas are going to be implemented remains to be seen. It is important to point out that, based on experience gained from the Student Ideas Competition and the transient nature of students, Student Innovedum was developed with the firm objective that students should not feel obligated to continue their projects in the following semester. Having said that, several are already planning to follow up on leads and to develop their projects further in 2017. LET is also, at a minimum, pledging human resources to support them should they wish to continue in some way.

What impact their ideas have will also only become visible over time. However, their projects and presentations have already triggered conversations and ideas. One conversation has already sparked the idea of including an additional question in the end of semester evaluations. One group is being drawn into the Moodle redesign process as well as EduApp development. Some of the other participants are being asked to provide feedback on the new custom Moodle Theme which LET is developing. Some projects may take on a life of their own which would make tracking progress even harder.

Evaluation

After surveying the students who participated, they reported feeling strongly that they had benefited from participating, however were less consistent when rating how enabled they felt to develop their own ideas. Their confidence in the likelihood that their ideas would actually make an impact at ETH was medium.

Anecdotal feedback from attendees at the final event was that further iteration of the ideas into physical prototypes would have strengthened their impact. It could be argued that the ultimate goal of Student Innovedum is relatively unclear. Some feel that it should simply serve as an opportunity for teaching staff to hear more about what students think and gain good ideas. However, others feel that Student Innovedum is a way to mobilise and empower students to make actual changes to the ETH learning environment. These two goals are somewhat in conflict. If we take the first statement in isolation, then we achieved it. If we consider the second, then we have probably fallen short.

Recommendations

18. Clarify and limit the key goals of Student Innovedum
19. Continue to evaluate the implementation of ideas and emergent impact

4.2 Building the capabilities of students so they take increased responsibility for shaping their own learning process

Design Thinking was the method chosen for building student capabilities. Was design thinking the correct method to use? This is an important question to ask. As previously indicated, there was a mismatch between the advertising campaign “Space for your ideas” and the actual process of design thinking (starting with human centred problems). By adjusting the marketing concept this problem should be resolved in future iterations.

An additional challenge identified, was the broad nature of the challenge posed to students. Asking them to understand and develop ideas for a topic as broad and as abstract as “teaching and learning” may have been an unnecessary additional challenge. It may be advisable, for example, with the help of students, to select a narrower topic. Perhaps by restricting the challenge somewhat it would help students get more creative. These topics could be things like student community, group-based learning, active learning or learning spaces.

Sometimes students came up with good solutions to problems which they would then investigate, only to find out that these ideas already existed. For example, students might make a suggestion, like “offer courses for teaching staff” and then it would be explained that courses already exist. This would take the wind out of the students’ sails* and they wouldn’t necessarily choose to adapt their idea, instead, choosing to change track all together.

Certain aspects of Design Thinking were more of a challenge than others. Taking responsibility for identifying a problem and thinking creatively was difficult for some. One even suggested that we should “give them data” and “just tell them what to do”. They were very interested in finding the “best” problem and the “best” solution for their problem which is contrary to the Design Thinking ethos which embraces imperfection and speed.

Evaluation

In the final survey, some students specifically reported that they enjoyed learning about Design Thinking. They also reported both a high likelihood that they will use Design Thinking again in the future and that they feel confident using doing so.

Recommendations

20. Add more expert input at the beginning to expose the students to parts of the ETH environment of which they may not be aware.
21. Promote a playful atmosphere in the design labs
22. Provide additional scaffolding with challenging tasks and group work in general
23. Be more forceful when requiring students to produce early prototypes to get them used to imperfection and the still considerable impact of early prototypes

*This does raise the question of student resilience and perhaps raising the topic of managing disappointment, set-back and rejection would be worth considering.

5 Summary of key recommendations

1. Serviettes should be implemented one more time, however if the feedback is similar after the second implementation then should be discontinued as a marketing strategy due to the not insignificant cost.
2. The project should continue to create A3 and A0 posters as advertising materials.
3. The colourful eye-catching posters should be continued.
4. Keep the website up to date
5. Add a web statistics plug-in to WordPress site
6. Maintain the forum
7. Discontinue the Facebook page
8. Repeat the wallet exercise
9. Ensure Kick-off is more aligned with marketing campaign and overall stated goals
10. Invite alumni of Student Innovedum iteration to speak to next group of participants
11. Invite experts into the process early
12. Invest in creating a playful and “funky” atmosphere to spark inspiration and creativity
13. Provide clear structure to each evening and throughout the process
14. Clearly scaffold specific tasks, such as problem defining
15. Carefully evaluate the twin-purposes of the events
16. More effort in raising awareness of the student project results
17. Confirm a date for the final event with the Rector early
18. Clarify and limit the key goals of Student Innovedum
19. Continue to evaluate the implementation of ideas and their emergent impact
20. Add more expert input at the beginning to expose the students to parts of the ETH environment of which they may not be aware.
21. Promote a playful atmosphere in the design labs
22. Provide additional scaffolding with challenging tasks and group work in general
23. Be more forceful when requiring students to produce early prototypes to get them used to imperfection and the still considerable impact of early prototypes

Contact

ETH Zurich
Lehrentwicklung und -technology
Haldenbach 44
8092 Zurich

www.studentinnovedum.ethz.ch