

OPEN MEETING

“Strategy” Teaching at UPF

28 November 2011

« TO MEET AND TO SHARE »

15.00-18.00



A Changing World?

Positive conversations about us and our teaching

The intention of this meeting is to meet and share openly about our teaching at UPF.

We will take the time to meet, to present what we are teaching, to share how we like to do it, and to discuss where we aim to go.

If we succeed, we will know better what makes our classes relevant and how they make a difference, if any. We will have a good time together and will feel more powerful to be the teachers we want to be.

The meeting is open to all teachers in the area “Strategy” at UPF. It is not a convocation or hopefully not one more pressure on your busy calendar: it is an open invitation to meet and share.

If you plan to come, think about:

Content:

- What do you hope your students will remember after your classes?

Passion:

- What is your most preferred manner to teach a class?

Relevance:

- How would you like your teaching to make a difference?

“At UPF, INSEAD or Cambridge, in Europe, US or China, to undergraduates, MBAs or senior executives, I have nurtured my passion for teaching by learning to be at the service of my students. As Area Coordinator of the Strategy Area at UPF, I try to be at the service of you, my colleagues, and I am always keen to learn about you and your pedagogical journeys. With this meeting, I want to give you the opportunity to meet all together in an open, positive and non-strategic manner.”

Marc Le Menestrel

Insights from the First Meeting

It was as a very international team from Mexico, Bulgaria, Ukraine, India, Catalunya or France that met in a circle, expressing the desire to become at the service of each others and improve our teaching experience at UPF.

We raised big questions, like the one about the direction, vision, ambition of the UPF pedagogical mission but also small questions, like how to contact the Secretariat to make sure a particular class will take place in a room with free chairs, which can be very useful for a participative seminar.

We shared equally big and small answers, about the balance between **teaching content** and students' motivation, about our **passion** but also our sense of being exhausted after five repeated seminars, and of course about the ways to give more **relevance** to our work. Below is an attempt to share a few insights:

- The ambition of our teaching excellence should come from us: we can develop our vision and if we do it together, we are more likely to sustain a meaning and a synergy;
- The Bolonya process is very much aimed at committing the students to the learning process, this is a great opportunity to modernize our teaching methods and experiences;
- Oxford has a vision of "broadening students' minds". What is ours?
- Having a theme that reflects the key message we want to share with students as a person helps to give meaning and relevance to a teaching experience. Examples were given, like one of us who has given a twist to his teaching around the theme of Power, thus making his teaching much more interesting, for the students but also for himself;
- We also shared about themes like responsibility, cooperation or sustainability, which are nice complementing themes given the somehow competitive orientation of economics education at UPF;
- We should not merely compete with books, but add something unique that makes students willing to come to class, something coming from us as a person and often a particular expert in some subjects
- We should promote intercultural interactions and push students to participate more: it works!
- On-going assessment can make much more sense for courses around strategy, where a final exam is sometimes of little learning value for the students. It can be possible to have a course without final exam if evaluation is truly continuous;
- You can make sure students are prepared by quizzing them at every class! Sometimes, grading of these daily assignments can be on a fail/pass basis, or over 5 points with a clear structure;
- Having bad evaluations as a teacher can be tough and question ourselves. There is a motivation to improve but a distance to take in order not to be prisoners of evaluations ;
- There are many ways to include small activities, games and case-studies in order to learn by doing and develop experiential aspects of the learning. In fact, experience is the only way to attain the identity, which takes part of the development process proper to excellent management education;
- Students love to think and work when we succeed in making the work relevant to themselves;
- As professors, we can relate with what we like and are interested in. It is impossible to be an interesting teacher if we are not interested ourselves;
- We can learn to manage tension/controversy during class that can generate discussion. If it does not, the teacher can play roles (devil's advocate?) to elicit more participation;
- Importance of self-reflection exercises for students (i.e. a simple "what did you learn" at the end of each class);
- We need to experiment/change sessions that proved to be boring/unsuccessful in the past;
- We can link with other initiatives, such as <http://wedreambusiness.org/>
- We can dare to be more emotionally engaged and engage more the students. Keeping in touch with others ensures we are not completely off-track though;
- Clarifying our take-away messages helps to clarify the content of our courses;
- There are various solutions for dealing with the copyright issues of case-studies but it seems some clarity is needed there, maybe from the dean office?
- It would be great that professors know clearly who their administrative assistant at the secretariat is. Maybe Marc could coordinate that better?
- There are many practical tricks that are worth being shared and we should increase our ability to exchange them among us
- We could open a forum to discuss among us, post useful practical advices and keep the ball rolling;

Looking at the feedback from attendants, the meeting was successful and could be repeated!