

Excellence programmes at EDLAB

A platform for experimenting with new education models and innovations in the educational landscape.

Therefore, the integration and coordination of the programmes fits well within EDLAB's vision and goals.

The excellent student:

- *Is high performing, competent and proficient;*
- *Has an intrinsic drive to prosper;*
- *Is motivated and dedicated;*



EDLAB



PREMIUM

PREMIUM is UM's honours programme for high-performing Master students. PREMIUM students work on a project for an external clients, attend workshops to add onto their professional skill set, and receive individual competence coaching.

multidisciplinary teams work on a project for a real-time client, under guidance of Project Mentor

Competence Coaching for personal development.
Skills training for professional development

Focus on **broadening of knowledge** and practically applying of academic knowledge



All UM MA students (max 125 annually)

Extra-curricular, 250 hours, certificate upon completion

Running for 12 successful years!

Careful selection of students by EDLAB

Vivid community/network (students, staff, clients)

Academic and support staff as Project Mentors and Competence Coaches

Training programme with certificate for Mentors and Coaches

Added value of these programmes

- Safe learning environment to experiment with other approaches to problems and ways of teaching and learning.
- Empowerment: Students become more aware of their own capabilities, competencies and how their implicit knowledge can actually be applied in a work environment.
- Opportunity to work on a project that is relevant, current and makes impact → stimulates motivation.

Development of relevant future-proof competences.

The T-shape model (McKinsey) is essentially a metaphor used to describe the abilities of persons.

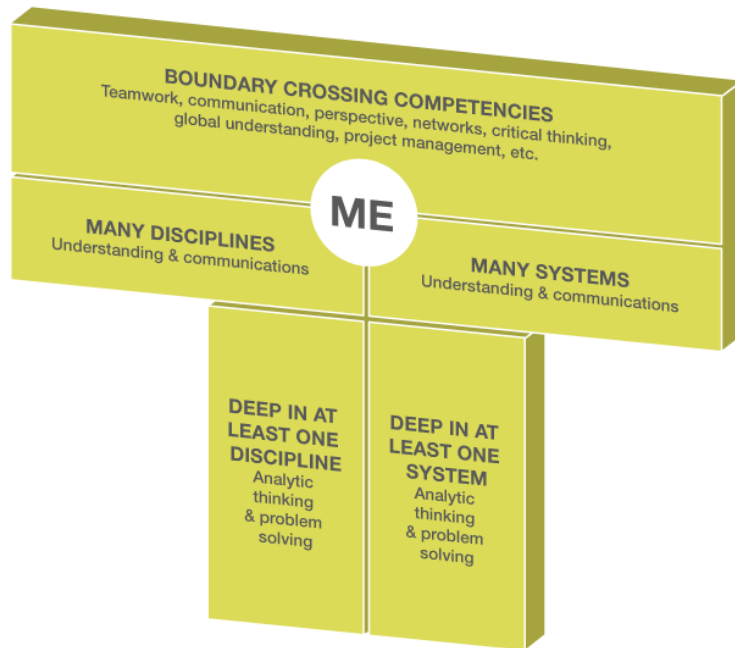
*The **vertical bar** on the letter T represents the **depth of knowledge and expertise in a single field**, whereas the **horizontal bar** comprises the **ability of one to collaborate and think across disciplines and to apply knowledge in parallel areas of expertise.***

The challenge here lies in equipping students with the right mindset and those skills to be able to collaborate with other disciplines in a connecting way.

It is primarily about the insight 'you are good at that and I am good at this'. This means recognizing one's own talents and those of others.

The connecting competencies are not only the obvious ability to communicate well, but also, for example, process-oriented and innovative thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy, creativity, analysis and concretization.

“Their ability to contribute, pinch-hit and problem-solve make them high-performers who can boost an organisation’s overall productivity” (Forbes, 2020).



Development of relevant future-proof competences.

- **Critical thinking:** ordering and structuring, reasoning, analyzing, evaluating and sound decision-making.
- **Collaboration:** formulating a common goal, situation awareness and shared leadership.
- **Sense-making:** Ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed; this activity enables transforming the world's ongoing complexity into comprehended situations.
- **Social intelligence and reflective functioning:** Ability to respond to another person's behavior but also understanding and acting upon the perceived underlying mental states to that behavior. To connect to other in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions. Ability to swiftly assess the emotions of others, adapt to their register, vocabulary and style, be compassionate.
- **Novel and adaptive thinking:** Proficiency at thinking up solutions and answers beyond discipline-based, rule-based or routine responses. Situational adaptability to address unique or unexpected emerging circumstances.
- **Cross-cultural competency:** Ability to operate in different cultural settings. Linguistic skills, adaptability to changing circumstances, ability to sense and respond to new cultural context.
- **Transdisciplinarity:** Ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines. Specialists who can speak languages of multiple disciplines.
- **Design mindset:** Ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes. Recognizing and adapting various kinds of thinking required by different tasks, and adjusting to work environments.
- **Career and life skills:** flexibility and adaptability, resilience, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility.



Lessons learnt

- **Extra-curricular** is easier to arrange than within the curriculum in a decentralized university.
- **Building and maintaining a network for projects** is labor intensive, and this network can be vulnerable when a contact person leaves.
- **Guidance of students is crucial**, and the supervisor has an essential impact on the student's learning experience. Therefore training of the supervising staff is crucial.
- **Supervisor (or mentor) is a sparring partner, not an expert.** They help students organizing their thoughts and stimulates them to come up with new perspectives.
- **Role of a coach is important as a safe space for students to reflect on their individual performance and development.** The coaching style ought not to be counselling, but focused on solutions, development and the empowerment of students.
- **Provide for a safe experience** by focusing on the growth, learning and development of the student, instead of the actual outcome of the project.
- **Give students ownership of their project** and the design of their project. The process of defining goal and scope is new to most students, but valuable to practice with and having ownership stimulates motivation.
- **Student or consultant?** Interesting but challenging to transition from student to the role of consultant.

Lessons learnt

- **Teamwork has its own realm of challenges**, especially working with members from different disciplines and backgrounds. Dedicate sufficient time to team establishment and dynamics.
- **Clear communication is key, as is expectation management and trust.**
- **Students focus a lot on the end-goal**, not so much on the process, which is a pitfall. Rush too fast into problem-solving.
- **Lot of time goes into defining the project or research question**, the scope and the common goal, which may lead to frustration in the beginning.
- **Cognitive bias:** Individuals tend to overestimate the extent to which their beliefs or assumptions are typical of those of others. This will lead to misunderstandings.
- **Perspective taking is often difficult for students**, but essential to solve the complexity of the problem at hand.
- **Growth mindset is crucial:** students must be open to other people's ideas and perspectives without the risk of being threatened or outshined.



EXCELLENCE PROGRAM
PREMIUM
MUNSTER UNIVERSITY