

# update

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HANSEN.**

## Study Programme Development – An Obvious Constant at CBS

**The topic of this issue of Update is the constant development of CBS's study programmes and new initiatives to the benefit of the students. A development that is important to ensure the continued quality of our graduates. This time, we will give special attention to the business language programme MA in Business Communication.**

*By Sven Junghagen, Director CBS Graduate School, sj.gsb@cbs.dk*

One of today's highly debated topics is Denmark as a knowledge society. Many suggestions have been made on how to ensure this. An important element, which all participants in the public debate agree on, is that university education must be of top-quality.

It requires two things to reach this goal. At the universities, we should focus on further development of our existing study programmes all the time and develop new ones where needed. However, it also costs money to have study programmes of high quality. During recent years, the grants per student from the Government have



*CBS Undergraduate and CBS Graduate School co-operate closely to ensure the quality and further development of the study programmes. The two directors, Sven Bislev and Sven Junghagen, are pleased with this cooperation.*



been reduced while the expenses to pay have followed the ordinary development in society, i.e. upwards. It does not require a PhD in funding to figure out that this development will not last for long.

This does not mean that we disclaim every responsibility and pass it on to someone else because we certainly do not. At CBS, we denote ourselves to ensure the quality of our study programmes. We do this, for instance, by listening to our students. The students experience all the good and bad aspects of the study programmes, and they are often updated in relation to the jobs they may get as graduates. Therefore, we consider the students' feedback seriously and use it in the further development of our study programmes.

The foundation of our graduates' competences is laid on the undergraduate programmes. Therefore, the quality of our study programmes at undergraduate level is decisive for the quality of our graduates. I am, therefore, happy to present Sven Bislev, Director for CBS Undergraduate, as writer in this issue of Update, which will be our common newsletter for both CBS Graduate School and CBS Undergraduate from now on. In the article "CBS Undergraduate – Business Basics and a lot more" Sven Bislev

writes about the strategic development work that takes place at CBS's undergraduate programmes, and which also influences our graduate programmes in the end.

The partnership of CBS Graduate School and CBS Undergraduate, which we wrote about in the last issue of Update, is a good facilitator for the exchange of experience and with that the quality of both our undergraduate and graduate programmes. We hope to be able to keep this partnership in CBS's new organisational structure.

All our graduate programmes are completed with a master's thesis, which is the crowning glory of the academic education. This may be an intense experience for many students – with both good and not so good elements. The article "How to Survive your Thesis Project" gives you various pieces of advice on how to handle the thesis process.

Our special focus on the study programme MA in Business Communication is displayed in three articles in this issue. MA in Business Communication got new programme regulations in 2003 as a result of the constant development and quality assurance that take place at CBS. A student who has tried the new programme herself

writes about how the changes have influenced her studies in the article "MA in Translation & Interpretation – An Old-Fashioned Necessity".

The students on MA in Business Communication generally use more time than that of the standard duration on their theses. A group of students have completed a research project to figure out the reasons for this and transformed the results into a number of recommendations to the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies. You can read how the faculty implements these recommendations in the article "Study Programme Development is nothing New".

Another group of students have initiated a project that is going to establish closer ties between MA students in Business Communication and the small and medium-sized businesses. Read more about this project in the article "Get A ling – and get along".

I hope that this issue of Update will give you an insight into the work behind the quality assurance of CBS's graduates and the activities that we launch all the time to make the period of study a good and rewarding learning process for our students. Happy reading!

## CBS Undergraduate – Business Basics and a lot more

By *Sven Bislev, Director CBS Undergraduate, sb.ikl@cbs.dk*

CBS Undergraduate was formed in January 2005, and I was appointed as its Director. The idea is the same as that of CBS Graduate School - to establish a coordinating unit for maintenance, cooperation and development of the study programmes. CBS-U is about undergraduate programmes, but our experience is that things are closely related, both academically and as

regards budget and administration. Therefore, active and daily cooperation takes place between the two schools.

CBS-U has an agenda with various subject areas: recruitment, the learning process, evaluation, programme profiles and internationalisation. The agenda is informal and flexible, and it is developed continuously as a dialogue with the school's management, the departments and the study boards.

### RECRUITMENT

As to recruitment, CBS admits students on three levels or areas: the two large ones are undergraduate and graduate programmes, and the third is the payment programmes (HD and MBA/MPA). Our undergraduate programmes do not follow the most common strategy for business schools, which typically includes a standard study programme that may be varied and supplemented with modules that contain different types

of specialisation. CBS's portfolio strategy implies that we offer 14 different study programmes; each with its own profile, its characteristic blend of topics and disciplines. This model is the core of our recruitment strategy: we offer interesting, academically and pedagogically integrated environments, which attract motivated and qualified students.

CBS does not market its undergraduate programmes much. It is not felt to be necessary, as we have many applicants and good students. Most of our study programmes sell themselves in the best possible way: word-of-mouth. But we do work to attract applicants to some study programmes, particularly to get hold of the students that have exactly the right qualifications and the right motivation.

After development of the undergraduate programme in Information Management last year, we are not planning to develop any new combined programmes in the coming years. The school's financial situation does not invite major new development projects, and we do not, at present, have any academic projects that obviously will lead to new undergraduate programmes. Instead, we are working on three aspects regarding recruitment: marketing of the programmes taught in English to attract foreign students who pay for their studies, marketing of the study

programmes that would benefit by more applicants, and an intensified dialogue with the surrounding world about the existing study programmes to ensure that their reputation is as it should be, and that they develop in the best possible directions.

#### THE LEARNING PROCESS

The learning process is alpha and omega for any educational institution. CBS has an official learning philosophy where student participation is central, and a Learning Lab whose job it is to develop and disseminate the learning philosophy. CBS-U has a central task of communicating and promoting the cooperation between the Learning Lab and the undergraduate programmes. Within the portfolio of undergraduate programmes, many experiments with teaching methods take place, and the idea is not to rectify these methods. All of them are good in different ways, and many of them are innovative on a high level. Still, it is necessary to have an overview of what is going on.

Our task together with CBS Graduate School is to support the forces that develop and carry through ideas and exciting renewals within the very large umbrella provided by CBS's learning philosophy.

#### EVALUATION

Evaluation is part of the learning process: the students' feedback through

questionnaires after each course is the core of the evaluation, but the quality of the study programmes is also monitored in other ways. CBS-U's task is to develop an overview of the evaluation processes on the individual study programmes and to support the development of a good evaluation practise.

#### PROGRAMME PROFILES

Every study programme has its own programme profile, a competence profile that decides which qualifications the programme should give the students. These qualifications should be relevant to both continued studies and entry into the labour market. CBS-U follows the development of the students' choice of further studies or jobs together with CBS Graduate School, the Career Center and the new Advisory Board, which now also includes CBS-U. The monitoring of programme profiles involve knowledge about the students' choice of graduate specialisations as well as labour market career patterns.

#### INTERNATIONALISATION

All higher degree programmes are part of a strong internationalisation process. At CBS, the most international programme market is placed at CBS Graduate School, and the number of full-degree foreign students at CBS-U is limited. However, every year several hundred exchange students spend one or two semesters at CBS-U, and as 6 out of 14 undergraduate programmes are now taught in English, we aim at a certain increase in the number of foreigners. Nevertheless, we also have other elements of internationalisation: the syllabuses of all study programmes are already mainly based on international literature, and most subjects include internationally relevant topics in their reading lists and the other contents of the course. This is a process that will develop further, and which CBS-U will stick to.



It requires a great effort to fill these chairs with students and make the subjects so relevant that the students stay.

# How to Survive your Thesis Project

**It is hard work to write a master's thesis, but generally it should also be fun. The article provides an insight into a way of getting safe and sound through the last part of your studies.**

By Vibeke Ankersborg, Master's Thesis Counsellor, [vap.gsb@cbs.dk](mailto:vap.gsb@cbs.dk)

It is a privilege to write a master's thesis. We do not experience many times in life when we get the opportunity of spending six months on absorption in a subject just because it interests us. But it is also hard work, and a lot of unexpected things usually happen. It is not the idea that you should be able to write a thesis before starting. It is the idea that you should learn it during the process. This article will give you various pieces of advice on how to survive your thesis project.

Of course, the work with the thesis will give you a lot of knowledge about the subject of the thesis, but, first and foremost, it will give you various academic competences, which will be useful to you for the rest of your working life. The work with the thesis requires that you are able to control a large project, identify relevant problems, find the right methods and, if necessary, develop new methods to solve the problem. This demands both theoretical depth and the ability to transform this knowledge into practical conduct, which again will develop your ability to make independent choices and manage the art of delimitation. You have tried this before, but with the thesis you will learn it on a level that you have never done before. Therefore, new graduates sometimes get high by the level of knowledge that the thesis gives, knowledge that we are only able to acknowledge after the thesis is completed.

## GET YOUR LIFE UNDER CONTROL AND TAKE A DAY OFF WITHOUT STRESS

Before getting that far, you will have to respond to a lot of challenges. Begin by making a schedule of how you use your time. Remember to put everything in it, also cleaning and leisure activities, which you would rather not do without. Every time a working day begins, you will use the first half hour to reflect upon how far you are with things. You will work more efficiently if you set aside 5 hours one day than one hour a day for 5 days in a row. Therefore, you should set aside modules of several hours each for the work with the thesis.

To get well through your thesis work is not only a question about the amount of hours that you use on the thesis. To write a thesis requires mental energy, and you should, therefore, not plan too many other different activities in your life while writing your thesis. You will probably also experience that your social energy is not as big as it usually is, but do not worry, it will pass.

Nobody can stand permanent stress for six months. When you take a day off, it is, therefore, important that you do it with a clear conscience. Academics always feel guilty because there is always one more book that we ought to read. But none of us feel guilty about things that are not important to us. Actually, a guilty conscience is an expression of commitment, and that you take your studies seriously. Therefore, you should not feel guilty about your guilty conscience, but take a day off without stress.

If you invest your mental energy in the thesis, you will experience, in return, that your subconsciousness is working when you are off duty. It is when the brain is on free-wheel that we get all the good ideas. It may be rather inconvenient if you,

in the middle of the soup at your Aunt Anna's birthday dinner, realise why you should choose a perspective from social constructivism instead of a functionalistic perspective. And you will probably soon forget it again. Therefore, you should invest in a notebook, which is small enough to fit your party wardrobe. Every time, you get an idea, you should write it down in the notebook, no matter where you are. Write what you think but do not reflect upon it thoroughly. Then you will have material to consider next time you sit in front of the computer.

It may be difficult to embrace a whole thesis in the beginning of the process. Therefore, you should divide the thesis into a number of tangible actions, for instance, literature review, finding a case, data collection, the first partial analysis etc. Put the actions in a schedule and write how many working days you will use on them. This will give you an overview of what to do, and when you – might – be finished with the thesis. Remember that things always take longer than we think. Therefore, there is no reason to be disappointed with yourself if you do not comply with your own deadlines. Instead you should focus on the process and reward yourself every time you have completed an action.



Master Thesis Counsellor Vibeke Ankersborg

This will give you the motivation to continue.

#### WRITING IS A TOOL FOR PERCEPTION

The focus of the thesis is the production of knowledge that you are to make. When we colloquially say that we write a thesis, it is a truth with modifications. We work with theses, and this work implies a number of other activities besides writing. Writing helps you to get a deeper insight, to make a clear line of argumentation, and to find out what you still need to know about the subject. Writing is, therefore, a really good tool when creating academic knowledge, but writing is not a goal in itself. Therefore, you should focus on the analyses you are to make, not on the writing.

The first version of the manuscript should not be perfect, neither linguistically or regarding content. Every time, you make one more partial analysis, you will gain new knowledge. This means that the last partial analysis you make will have a higher level of knowledge than the first one. To make the level of knowledge consistent, you should therefore go through the thesis and make the necessary adjustments when the first version of the manuscript is about to be finished. After this, you should write the thesis for the third time, and it is only now that you should focus on the linguistic communication. To think of language and syntax while analysing is a waste of time, as you cannot know which parts of the first version that will be part of the completed thesis.

#### THE PERCEPTION PROCESS IS AN INTERACTION

The structure of the completed thesis is generally linear, that is research question, theory, method, analysis, conclusion, but this is not the way the perception process goes. The first overall reading will give you ideas for data collection, and the first analysis will raise questions, which you are not able to ask at the beginning. Ba-

sed on this, you can read in more detail, and this reading will bring your analysis to the next level. Therefore, the perception process is an interaction between reading literature, collecting data and analysing, and you will have to make this interaction many times during the process, and as a consequence develop your research question along the way.

It is at this time that you can really feel that you are becoming wiser, that it really is fun, and that you just want to go on writing. But you will also come to a standstill when new knowledge makes you question your established knowledge, and you have not yet found out how the things are connected. A standstill is, therefore, an integrated part of the perception process.

When you are deeply absorbed in the analysis, you will hit the point of banality. You will obtain such a deep insight into your subject that you will begin to regard it as common knowledge and thus as a banality. Banalities do not belong in a thesis, and you risk writing about your subject in a way that is incomprehensible to outsiders leaving out relevant information or even come to a standstill. Actually, it is not common knowledge to anyone else than yourself. Therefore, when reaching the point of banality, you should ask a fellow student to read your manuscript so that you can get the relevant parts of the argumentation back into the thesis.

#### CBS IS GLAD TO HELP

Even though you follow all good advice on how to control the thesis process, it might not develop as planned. It is completely all right to do other things once in a while, but if you discover that you are doing everything else than working on your thesis for weeks and against your will, you should try to break the deadlock. Remember that CBS is there to help. You can read about this in the Survival Kit, which we will present another place on this page.

## Survival Kit for Master's Thesis Students

**CBS Graduate School has developed the booklet "Survival Kit for Master's Thesis Students" as part of our strategic focus area to help the students faster through the thesis programme.**

By Christel Nygaard, [cno.gsb@cbs.dk](mailto:cno.gsb@cbs.dk)

The Survival Kit contains information and advice on the different processes and stages the students will go through when writing their master's theses. This can be everything from practical things such as enrolment to the more demanding parts of thesis work, for instance, information retrieval, development of research question and the actual analysis. Additionally, the Survival Kit contains information about the places at CBS where the students can get help to handle the challenges and problems that they experience during the thesis programme.

It is our plan to hand out the booklet to all students at CBS when they begin to write their master's theses. The first time that we will hand out the booklet will be in the autumn of 2006.

For further information on the Survival Kit, please contact Vibeke Ankersborg, Master's Thesis Counselor on email: [vap.gsb@cbs.dk](mailto:vap.gsb@cbs.dk) or tel. 3815 2918.

# Study Programme Development is nothing New

**A number of changes in the structure of the MA programme in Business Communication have been made within the last year, at the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies. The changes have been a long time coming and are partly the result of student involvement, comments and suggestions. The students have been consulted and have influenced the development throughout the process. Hopefully, the result will be a better study programme, which takes into account the students' requests.**

*By Tine Eide Joensen, the Dean's Office at the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies, tej.spfak@cbs.dk*

Study programmes have always been modified, and study programme development has taken place continuously at the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Culture. This is nothing new, as such. Students have also always been involved in the process through study boards and students' organisations. The new factor in the approach to programme development is that we have discovered the importance of creating other points of connection with the students to make them more involved and engaged in their studies. In turn, this results in better study programmes and happier students, who feel that they contribute, and that their suggestions are taken seriously.

## **NEW TIMES FOR THE MA PROGRAMME IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Students will be able to experience the development particularly in the

MA programme in Business Communication starting this semester. It is a growing problem that students are delayed writing their Master's thesis, just as very few students complete their studies within the standard duration of the programme. This is a waste of the students' time and society's resources, just as the study programme loses resources, which could be utilized elsewhere.

We have been working to find a solution to this problem for a long time by improving the conditions for thesis students to enable them to finish their theses during the fourth semester – as planned. Former initiatives with thesis workshops and attempts to set up thesis groups have not had the desired effect, and the initiatives have often faded. Therefore, the study board for the MA programme in Business Communication decided to do something about this problem once and for all. They decided to ask the students for advice. The thought was that thesis students know best what it is like to write a thesis at the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Culture, and therefore it would be obvious to ask them how they think

conditions could be improved.

Therefore, the study board set up a project group consisting of present and former students in December 2005. The objective was to find out how to improve the thesis programme for MA students in Business Communication. The result of the group's research was gathered in a report, which listed a range of very good suggestions for improvements and was a fascinating read.

## **MORE ADVANTAGES FOR THESIS STUDENTS**

As a direct result of the report, a thesis room has been established, providing students with computers, lockers and a permanent workplace while they write their theses. In addition, a student assistant has been employed from 1 September 2006 to assist the thesis students during the process of writing and help them to establish networks and social and academic events, which will hopefully make their time as thesis students a bit more exciting.

Academically, the study board has decided to implement a new obliga-



*No one else than the students themselves now what it is like to be students.*

tory course “Problem and methodology” during the third semester of the master’s programme. The course will prepare students to write a thesis and train their ability to formulate a research question. This decision was made upon clear recommendation from the students in the project group.

#### **STUDENTS WANT FREEDOM TO CHOOSE AND CO-DETERMINATION**

Another significant change, which will take its effect for the study programme this year, is that the obligatory common core language courses have been reduced. The study board has decided to redistribute 15 ECTS from the common core language courses to be used for electives instead according to the students’ own preferences. This will provide students with more freedom

of choice as well as the opportunity to shape their own academic profiles. This change has also been effectuated based on input from students. Working groups were established and focus group interviews carried out. The students showed a great deal of initiative and collected signatures to make their opinion clear to the Dean, the programme director and the study board. Doris Hansen, Programme Director of MA in Business Communication said, “We cannot ignore such strong pressure. We are going to take the students’ wishes seriously”.

#### **STUDY PROGRAMMES ARE OUR PRODUCTS AND STUDENTS OUR PARTNERS**

The business language programmes are the products of the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies, and we need to be

able to sell these programmes to the students. Søren Barlebo Rasmussen, Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies says, “Good study programmes are to be regarded as the universities’ *raison d’être* to a very large extent. Without study programmes, universities lose their justification for existence. Students are not only our customers. They are our cooperative partners and we have to listen to them and take them seriously. By involving them, we create a positive ripple effect, as they will bring their experiences back to their fellow students, thereby spreading a positive attitude. With students as our allies, it becomes easier to implement changes – also in future”. It will be exciting to see how this way of involving the students in study programme development may spread to other CBS activities in the future, thus creating close ties to students.

## MA in Translation & Interpretation – An Old-Fashioned Necessity

**CBS develops the study programmes, their structures, course combinations and the division of ECTS credits all the time. This means that new graduates meet the business sector with other competences and qualifications than former newly qualified graduates. The study programme MA in Translation & Interpretation has been changed considerably, but how do the students experience these changes?**

By Line Marie Pihl Hansen, [lph.gsb@cbs.dk](mailto:lph.gsb@cbs.dk)

It was with great expectations that I began the study programme MA in Translation and Interpretation in English in 2005. My first year on this programme has been both exciting and academically challenging. We

have had good and qualified teachers, and our core courses, i.e. technical language, legal language and economic language have definitely met my expectations. But everything is not rosy. As I have experienced it, MA in Translation & Interpretation is often seen as an old-fashioned education at CBS. Grammar and translation are not exactly today’s buzzwords, and this is why we as Translation & Interpretation students may feel a bit overlooked compared to the other specialisations. This is a disadvantageous development, as the business sector still needs translators and interpreters, who are language specialists. Abroad, Danish companies are assessed on different aspects, and a company with correct English usage appears more professional than a company with incorrect usage.

#### **CORE SUBJECTS OR COMMON CORE SUBJECTS**

Students studying MA in Translation & Interpretation generally agree that

the core subjects should constitute more hours of teaching than the common core subjects, which the students with other specialisations also have - just as it was with the old programme regulations. Our teachers have also expressed their concerns about to what extent we are prepared to meet the business sector’s requirements to translators and interpreters, and that we as the core subjects are reduced will lose the academic specialisation while focus is moved to more general language competences. With fewer resources for the core subjects, it is difficult to achieve the same academic level within the subjects related to translation as older graduates have. On the other hand, we will acquire broader competences.

#### **SYNOPSIS UNDER PRESSURE**

One of the common core subjects that I often have used disproportionately much time and energy on is “Culture and community analysis”. In this subject, 3 synopses must be approved

before we can register for an examination. During 2 semesters, we have 4 subjects of 4 weeks each. In each subject, different topics are discussed, and we must choose one to write a synopsis about. With only 4 weeks to each subject, we are forced to priority either to begin writing the synopsis or read our syllabus about the other topics. We have to read a good deal of literature to be able to write the synopses, and as we are required to pass them, they automatically take up a lot of time. However, the subject is not irrelevant. Translators and interpre-

ters need to know something about cultural and social conditions, and the subject has also given me a better theoretical and methodical basis for writing my future thesis. Yet, due to the intensive course we neither get a real insight into the 4 subjects nor the necessary specialisation in Translation & Interpretation.

The feeling of not being able to live up to former newly qualified translators' academic level has been one of the contributory reasons why I am now working on my second student

job as a translator. As students, we have a responsibility to make sure that we possess the qualifications and competences that are required by the business sector, but, as is well known, we also have to comply with the programme regulations and pass the obligatory exams. Despite of my frustrations regarding the emphasis between subjects, I look forward to one more exciting and challenging academic year where the thesis might give me my desired opportunity to go into depth with translation of specialised language.

## Get A ling - and get along

**The qualities of the MA students in Business Communication should be more visible to the business sector. Therefore, the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies and the Union of Communication and Language Professionals have initiated the company project "Get A ling – and get along". The purpose of the project is to establish contact between BA and MA students and the business sector.**

By Christel Nygaard, [cno.gsb@cbs.dk](mailto:cno.gsb@cbs.dk)

Many students from the business language programmes have difficulties explaining their qualifications, and at the same time the business sector is not enough aware of the

graduates' interdisciplinary competences: "Linguistic knowledge and cultural understanding are in great demand in the business sector due to globalisation. And it is exactly these competences that the graduates with an MA degree in Business Communication possess. We need to make the small and medium-sized businesses realise this", says Lisbeth Gaulshøj Nielsen, who is project manager of "Get A Ling – and get along" and an MA student in Business Communication herself.

"Get A ling – and get a long" builds upon networks, and the purpose is to make the students launch their own initiatives. Students that have ideas of how to create contacts can get support from the secretariat. The idea is that the initiatives and the network that have been created should benefit all students. "If a company begins by arranging a project that a group of students write for it, the company might like to get

a more thorough examination of the project made by a thesis student, and then the company might realise the advantage of employing a person with an MA degree in Business Communication", says Lisbeth Gaulshøj Nielsen.

The project has obtained grants for the first 2 years from, e.g. the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, after which it must be self-financing. The project is managed by and for the students, but it receives support and guidance from the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies, the Union of Communication and Language Professionals, and CBS Career Center.

For further information, please contact the secretariat on tel. 3815 3393 or project manager Lisbeth Gaulshøj Nielsen on email [lisbeth@gaulshoj.dk](mailto:lisbeth@gaulshoj.dk)

