



ZENTRUM FÜR WEITERBILDUNG DER UNIVERSITÄT GRAZ
Center for Continuing Education at the University of Graz

CASE STUDY “Academy on Monday – an example for open access in university lifelong learning”

I. THE UNIVERSITY SETTING: Lifelong Learning at the University of Graz and the Center for Continuing Education

The goal of the University of Graz is to be a partner in lifelong learning for people of all ages interested in knowledge, learning and education. The Center for Continuing Education at the University of Graz is responsible for the research-based development and testing of innovative programmes and learning settings for open access programmes at university level. Furthermore, the Center is responsible for setting up an information center and counselling service on university continuing education, for developing programmes to further competence and increase professionalism of educators/facilitators working in university continuing education and for building up and maintaining regional, national and European partnerships for programme development, cooperation projects and networks.

II. THE PROGRAMME: The Academy on Monday; www.uni-graz.at/montagsakademie

1. Idea and content

An example of an innovative public access programme is the Center's series of Monday evening lectures in the Aula of the University, "Academy on Monday" (Montagsakademie), which the Center has been developing since 2002. The idea behind the "Montagsakademie" is to offer "*education for everyone and for all ages*" through a series of open access lectures by well-known scholars for an intergenerational audience, thus providing an interesting insight into many fields of research, not only at the University of Graz. Topics range from technical and economic developments to the social sciences, art and culture. Each year there is a key theme, e.g. "Sustainability", "Time" or "Chaos", offering listeners a wide range of academic approaches with 12 lectures on each topic. Some examples of lecture titles from the 2010/11 programme: "From Chaos to Theory: Chaos research explained", "Chaos on the financial markets – what we've learned from the financial crisis and what we haven't" or "Compulsive Hoarding: Living between chaos and orderliness".

2. Expected learning outcomes of the programme

By offering general interest courses at university level (no registration is required and there are no exams), the following learning outcomes are expected: Attendees should be able to

- develop a better understanding of a complex world,
- get an overview of current discussions and relevant questions in a specific field of research and
- learn about the process by which research approaches a certain phenomenon.

3. Target group

The University of Graz invites everyone who is interested in furthering his/her knowledge to attend the lectures of the Academy, no matter what previous education he/she has received. Even though the lectures are open to everyone, older people in particular are attending the lectures and the idea of social inclusion through university education is actively supported. The attendance is free of charge; registration is not necessary, although participants who have attended 75% of the lectures can register with the Center for Continuing Education to receive a certificate of attendance.

4. Diverse access points: live, internet, books, radio broadcast

Since the beginning of the academic year in 2004/05, the Academy on Monday has been broadcast live to partner institutions in Austria (such as municipalities, galleries or regional centres for development, technology or adult education). Starting with just 3 "pioneers", today 16 partner institutions in the provinces of Styria, Salzburg and East Tyrol are following the lectures, thus making university knowledge directly available to the regions and, vice versa, the university receives valuable feedback from the regions.

Each partner is required to have a moderator for the lecture so that participants in all the locations are able, via videoconferencing or via chat forum, to ask questions and to take an active part in the discussions following each lecture.

The use of new technologies has turned out to be an effective instrument to promote social inclusion by reducing mobility and time barriers. Two local radio stations are also broadcasting the lectures in their programmes. More than 50 lectures are available free from an online video archive and accessible 24/7. Furthermore, an anthology of the year's lectures is published at the end of each academic year in order to provide sustainable learning materials. Six anthologies have been published so far.

5. Some facts & figures



Montagsakademie

www.uni-graz.at/montagsakademie

Up to 13 May 2011:

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Total number of attendees (estimated) | Over 70,000 |
| First lecture | 07 October 2002 |
| Total number of lectures to date | 124 |
| Attendees per lecture in Graz (average for academic year 2010/11) | 380 |
| Attendees per lecture in all partner institutions (average for academic year 2010/11) | 475 |
| Number of live broadcasts | 85 |
| Core audience/lecture | approx. 30%* |
| % of women/lecture: | approx. 55%* |
| % attendees interested in publication of the lectures (winter semester 2010/11): | 70% |
| Highest level of education (winter semester 2010/11): | |
| % attendees with compulsory education/school leaving certificate: | 11% |
| % attendees who finished apprenticeship: | 23% |
| % attendees with secondary school certificate: | 21% |
| % attendees currently studying at a university or college: | 7% |
| % attendees with university or college degree: | 38% |
| Attendees by age (winter semester 2010/11): | 11%* |
| % attendees < 20 years: | 9,5%* |
| % attendees 20-29 years: | 13,5%* |
| % attendees 30-49 years: | 38%* |
| % attendees 50-65 years: | 27%* |
| % attendees 66-79 years: | 1%* |
| % attendees > 80 years: | |
| Reason for attendance: (winter semester 2010/11) | |
| General interest / deepening general education | 86% |
| Interest based on profession | 6% |
| On recommendation of employing institution | 0% |
| On recommendation of school/teacher | 8% |

* Basis: Questionnaire at the lectures in Graz (approx. 25% return rate/lecture)

III. LEARNING POINTS OF THIS CASE STUDY

1. Concept of the lectures

a. Select the right topics

Choose topics which are not only of current research interest but also of interest to the general public. This can be even more difficult as the programme has to be set up a year or more in advance.

b. Choose attractive titles and offer research-based content

To draw people's attention, attractive titles must be formulated for the lectures. The lectures themselves should offer participants a theoretical and research-based background to current developments – to enable discussion and common reflection on an "objective" basis.

c. Select the right lecturers and provide clear information

On the one hand, all lectures have to be research-based and, on the other, comprehensible for everyone. It is essential to provide the lecturers with detailed information about the special lecture setting of the Academy on Monday (different and diverse target group, cameras and live audience, interactive discussion...). Another critical point is that the Academy on Monday depends on the lecturers working without remuneration.

d. Ensure sustainability and further development

When we look at the future of this project, two questions come to mind: how do we sustain what we have developed and how can the project be developed further? There are numerous other open access lecture series nowadays, so we constantly have to evaluate, analyse and further develop the format of the Academy to keep up with changing demands of society and the system of education.

e. Proceed towards university admission?

One question regarding the ongoing development of the series concerns university admission: can we proceed/should we be proceeding in the direction of a "studium generale" (foundation studies) or "studium integrale" (complementary studies)?

2. Dissemination of the lectures

a. Establish strong partnerships and marketing

The success of this series depends not only on its programme and professional organisation but also on good working partnerships with media partners, sponsors, the Austrian Students' Union and a creative and intensive marketing campaign, which includes the distribution of 230,000 programme folders in Graz, the province of Styria and via partner institutions in Salzburg and East Tyrol as well. Printing costs and effective distribution have to be carefully considered and the continued participation of the regional partners is essential.

b. Ensure financing

The sustainability can only be assured by a sound financial basis. The question of finances and financing is crucial to the future of the project: the project depends on being able to use the resources of the University of Graz, on partial financing from the partner institutions, on government subsidies and on sponsoring. From the organisational point of view, as the Academy on Monday continues to grow, it will require more and more personnel and resources.

c. Keep up with technical developments

Due to growing public expectations in the area of the new technologies, one of our biggest challenges will be to keep up with the latest technical developments, as far as financing permits. The online video archive has just been revised and new formats had to be introduced. The live broadcast will see high-definition video formats becoming standard.

d. Use media as instrument in the background

It is important to remember that this process is running in the background, since the technical aspect of the Academy on Monday is just the instrument to provide new ways of access to university education – an access that can be used worldwide (language permitting). International broadcasts to universities in Eastern Europe have been tested and universities abroad have used the online video archive as course materials for lectures.

e. Keep up interactivity and participation

If we choose to let the Academy on Monday expand, it will also be vital to maintain the interactive aspect – one of the underlying principles of the Academy. With a growing number of partner institutions, there are more and more attendees taking part in the discussions following each lecture. It will be a challenge to find innovative solutions to keep up interactivity in a bigger network, but it could also open new approaches and accesses to university lifelong learning.

3. Quality development and quality assurance

The programme Academy on Monday is one example of the wide range of existing formats in university lifelong learning showing the diversity in the field. Diverse formats (with different expected learning outcomes, target groups, level of content, channels of delivery, etc.) call for different approaches and methods to develop and assure quality. The programme for the Academy is developed by a team of professors. There is an ongoing evaluation: participants are asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of the lecture and the input is evaluated. It is taken into consideration in the planning of the future programmes and has an impact on the selection of the lecturers. The partner institutions are also asked to contribute their feedback after each lecture and there is an annual meeting to give feedback and to discuss and propose ideas face to face. For instance, we have received feedback from attendees in different regions who are interested in setting up self-organised discussion forums (online or face to face) where they can discuss the latest topics of the lectures. The Center for Continuing Education is responsible for the project development and organisation.

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