

The Thesis Market: a useful instrument to enhance the interaction between NGOs and the university.

1. Origin:

The idea came from an existing annual thesis market in the School of Psychology. Research units were presenting their research to students. Students could choose their theme for their Master thesis. (so look around in your institution, maybe there are already departmental markets doing a similar thing)

2. What is it?

A real market with booths for all NGOs, presenting themselves and their activities, as well as their problems or questions that require scientific research. Students are invited through a marketing campaign and pop-in voluntarily and shop around. It is organized twice a year and offers thesis subjects that are relevant for the society.

3. What do you need (resources) or need to do?

- a. Publicity and communication: NGO's and clubs that had previous contact with the science shop receive an invitation about 8 weeks before the market (email). Deadlines are communicated for further participation (confirmation, info-page with infra-structure requirements, and eventually new questions). The UCOS partner invites separately NGO's within their own network. Based on the information received from the potential participant, the necessary reservations are made inside the university (tables, poster panels, projectors, screens,).
- b. Staff: 1 staff member spends some 30 hours work before the event (but there is also the contribution from the partner). At the event, 4 staff members are continuously present for reception, and for steering the event.

- c. Catering: The UCOS partner takes care of that. Sandwiches, coffee and tea etc are ordered and delivered in function of the number of participants (not the students)
- d. Space: We use a centrally localized space on campus, large enough, close to the restaurant and student area. Timely reservation is required.
- e. Time slot (in the student's calendar): the moment is chosen strategically, taking into account the departmental requirements (especially the deadline to hand in the subject). In Brussels, some students have to hand in the title in December, others have to do so in March (to start with the research the next academic year!).
- f. Partner(s): In Brussels, the market is organized in collaboration with UCOS, the university NGO for assistance to underdeveloped countries. In the future, we plan to bring in other university departments in the market, for which no subjects are on offer from outside. For those, the thesis directors present the subject themselves. This is one way to increase the offer for the students and to enhance the interaction between the science shop and the departments.

4. Further organization and schedule:

- a. Information of and promotion towards students:
 - Information is distributed to all relevant student groups within the university and to those of associated institutions in the region.
 - Three email-mailings are organized to students through the institutional student mail system (approximately 15, 10 days before, and in the week of the market).
 - For each market a specific website is set up and activated 10 days before the market.
 - Every time the same layout is used for the posters. We produce colour posters on A3 format in 120 copies.
 - Flyers are also reproduced every time in a fixed lay-out (using Pagemaker). We produce 1200 copies. They are handed out in places crowded with students (student restaurant, the forum, student pub around noon).
- b. Information towards thesis directors:

- Promotors and directors are contacted twice, 2 weeks and 1 week before the market.
- c. Media:
 - Two weeks before the market a press release is mailed.
 - Publication in the university's electronic newsletter.
 - A short message is sent to the two student newspapers.
- d. Day of the event:
 - Reception desk (with attendance lists for the students, who receive an information package in return).
 - Boots: NGO's already linked with the science shop, NGO's linked with the partner(s), boots for the partner(s) and for relevant university organizations (in the framework of the event: research, further studies).

5. Evaluation:

- Students statistics: number of visitors, their eventual options for a theme or their interest).
- New clubs or NGO's that learnt to know the science shop through the event.
- Internal evaluation by the science shop of strong and weak points.

6. Follow-up:

- Mailing to NGO's and clubs to inform them about students that showed interest in their problems.
- Name and coordinates of students who decided to take on one of their questions.
- Mailing to students to find out if they want to take an option on one of the subjects.
- Mailing to students who already took an option to ask for confirmation and to inform them on the further steps to take.

Need more information? Contact ssvdboss@vub.ac.be (Sofie Van den Bossche) of the VUB Science Shop [http: www.wetenschapswinkel.be](http://www.wetenschapswinkel.be).