INTERNATIONAL FACHHOCHSCHULE-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION IN THE DELIVERY OF A PROFESSIONALLY ACCREDITATED MEng PROGRAMME

Dennis McKeag[1] , Frank Owens[2]

[1]University of Ulster,
Shore Road
Newtownabbey
Co Antrim, BT37 0XL
Northern Ireland, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 2890 368599
Fax: +44(0)2890 358580
d.mckeag@ulster.ac.uk f.owens@ulster.ac.uk

INTRODUCTION

The University of Ulster has, for some years, been operating a joint Masters of Engineering (MEng) degree with the Fachhochschule Augsburg and the Fachhochschule Kempten. In all three organizations there is commonality of programmes in the final four semesters leading to the award of the fully accredited MEng degree. Students can therefore graduate with the German qualification of Dip ING and the British MEng qualification. Approximately 46 countries have signed up to the Bologna agreement, which aims for transferability of qualifications across member countries. This has a significant implication for engineering degree programmes across Europe where there are traditionally two types of undergraduate engineering degree each in general of three years duration, the vocational degree and the academic degree. In general only the academic degree permits students to advance to two years further study leading to the award of the professionally recognised qualification of Master of Engineering. The knowledge taught to students in engineering degrees falls into three categories, scientific which seeks to understand the created environment, technological which seeks to manipulate the created environment, and philosophical which is what is important to people. Fachhochschules traditionally teach vocational degrees, those that focus on technology, whereas universities traditionally teach the academic degrees, which have their basis in scientific study. However both types of institution teach design, which falls into the category of philosophy, and in the context of engineering design, embraces both science and technology. This paper will outline how the Fachhochschule brand of education has successfully merged with the university style of education to produce highly innovative engineering graduates.