

Innovation Lab: Design Thinking for Socially Relevant Innovation (B28)

Credit weighting:	4.0 ECTS credits
Teaching period(s):	20 July 2026 – 31 July 2026 (2 weeks)
Level:	Bachelor level
Teaching methods:	102 hr(s) lectures/field excursions + assignments (including self-study)
Course leader:	Jens Gijbels, MSc
Lecturer(s):	Jens Gijbels MSc, Kim van Veldhuijzen, MSc

Description

We see an increase in the need for socially relevant innovation: to boost our networks, activate our communities, and contribute to a healthier society. We aim to change the way you look at the world by using a creative and iterative way of working. Enter Design Thinking: a creative, holistic, multidisciplinary approach based on strong fundamentals where co-creation takes central stage. To achieve this, we have set-up the innovation lab.

The didactical approach of this course may be quite different from what you would expect from a traditional module – so don't expect long lectures and a written exam in the end. Instead, you will work closely in a team on a project from a real-life client. Through collaboration, shared insights, and problem-solving, the coaches from the work field will guide you through a meaningful and valuable experience, where learning from and with each other is key.

During this module, you will work on a real-life project by focusing on user-experience and the merits of co-creation. You will learn by doing and explore different perspectives, while in the meantime being offered important academic insights. Our goal is to create an innovation experience for you with all of the pressures and demands of the real world. We'll quickly explore and test new ideas with the people we design for, to make sure the innovations we create are relevant and meaningful. The module will help you integrate your current knowledge with new insights, step out of your comfort zone and develop the mind-set, agility and resilience one needs in today's dynamic world. During this learning experience, you will receive intensive coaching from experienced coaches as you apply best practices to co-created innovation and service-design.

This course is offered in collaboration with: [Fundamentals Academy](#)

NB: This course is part of:

The five-weeks track is B02: [Innovation in European Business](#). This five-week track can also be extended to six weeks by adding the Global Management Simulation programme (B47); the six-weeks track is B45 ([Innovation in European Business XXL](#))

What previous participants say about this course

The working methods, centered around listening and understanding, allowed us to approach the topic in the most appropriate way, enabling everyone to get to know each other and making this project a true success and potential path for development. In addition, the involvement and enthusiasm of the coaches allowed an optimal integration to assimilate the subjects.

- Marketing, Communication & Event student at ICS Paris

I'm very happy to share that I had the opportunity to have this exceptional experience at the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht and I'm thankful for the project team and coaches who contributed to making this adventure a unique and unforgettable experience.

- Business and management student at ICS Paris

This course included a lot of practical learning. We went on the streets to conduct interviews and collect data. I appreciated the coaches' assistance with this endeavor, which included training us how to communicate more effectively. It was a wonderful experience and I definitely learned a lot.

- Business Management student at SP Jain School of Global Management

This course teaches various ways to find ideas to solve problems. It doesn't hold your hand but it lets you explore these pathways in an open environment and see what you and a team can accomplish.

- Computing Information Technology student at Queen's University Belfast

Lecturers

Jens Gijbels, MBI

Kim van Veldhuijzen, MSc

Target audience

Students from all kinds of backgrounds (from Design, Business, Communication to Engineering, etc.) who believe innovation is key and who are curious to learn more about creative approaches to innovation and development of services in the (near) future.

The course really focuses on the basis of Design Thinking, please reach out to us before applying if you already have experience in this, so we can check if we can meet your expectations.

A good command of English is necessary! Given the interactive nature of teaching, students must have the capabilities to actively contribute in class and communicate (understand and speak) in English well, ideally min level B2. This course is not suitable for those whose primary goal is to improve their English.

Aim of the course

To provide students with an understanding of a design thinking approach and the application of innovation in a socially -relevant context. On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Explain experience of situations from a user's perspective;
- Understand and apply a design process;
- Use design thinking to develop innovative interventions;
- Propose coherent strategies for designing interventions in ways that bring truly radical improvements from a user's perspective.

If you are pursuing a specific learning goal, please reach out to ensure that we will meet your expectations.

Study load

105 hours of lectures/field excursions + assignments (including self-study). The course is highly interactive: experiencing is key. With every challenge, you enter a new stage, a new level of maturity, discovering new insights and secrets about life and living. AND: it is so much fun doing it, together with fellow students from around the globe.



Course calendar WEEK 1**SATURDAY AND SUNDAY**

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
12.00-18.00	Key pick up	You will find the exact key pick up location in the pre-departure information, which becomes available after you have paid the course fee.

MONDAY

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
09.30-10.00	Campus tour	
10:00-12:00	Welcome session	Meet & Greet and course introduction
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Setting culture + theory	Design Thinking

TUESDAY

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Project Briefing	We will work on a real-life project
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Project work	Start the team process

WEDNESDAY

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Theory	Design Research
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Project work	Design Research

THURSDAY

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Theory	Defining
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Project work	Defining

FRIDAY

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Workshop	Pitch preparation
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-17:00	Interim presentation	Pitch for the client

WEEK 2

MONDAY		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Recap + Theory	Recap on team culture + Ideation
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Project work	Ideation

TUESDAY		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Theory + project work	Prototyping
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Theory + project work	Testing

WEDNESDAY		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Theory	Implementation and Iterate
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Workshop	Pitch preparation

THURSDAY		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
10:00-12:00	Project work	Finishing the project
12:00-13:00	Lunch break*	
13:00-16:00	Final presentation	Final pitch presentations + Drinks

FRIDAY		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
09.30-10.00	Bring back the key	Bringing back the room keys
10:00-13:00	Evaluation + assessment	Course evaluation + assessments
13:00-14:00	Lunch break*	
14:00-15:00	Course end	Deep reflections +assessments and saying goodbye

*Note: Students must bring/cover their own lunch. This schedule is still subject to change.