

Master's Program in Health Informatics at University of Agder

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Introduction

University of Agder (UiA) offers a master's program in health informatics. This is a part-time interdisciplinary program with a problem-oriented approach. The master program was established in 2000 together with Aalborg University. The two first years (60 ECTS) was offered at UiA and the last year (30 ECTS) at Aalborg University. From 2010 the whole master program in health informatics has been offered at UiA.

Academically, the program benefits from the longstanding collaboration between Aalborg University and their overall problem-oriented approach [1]. The program has been developed and modified in a joint effort between the Faculties of Health and Sport Sciences, Engineering and Science and Economics and Social Sciences and builds on the academic traditions of the humanities, social sciences and technology.

The Master's Program

Approximately 30 students apply every year to the master program. To be qualified they need a bachelor degree in health or social care, and at least 2 years of professional experience in the field of their degree. They come with background as nurses, x-ray technicians, disability nurses, child welfare workers, bio-engineers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, or social workers. The program runs over 6 semesters. Teaching is supplied during two weeks on campus every semester by lecturers, as well as by guest speakers. The program offers a solid theoretical foundation for the study of health informatics and identity and develops students' practical skills through three project management courses. The last year the students conduct their master thesis. The master program contains 8 separate courses. The first two years the students do one course per semester, and in parallel they do a project which also counts towards the degree. These projects are problem based, and the students generally find projects related to their work.

The master thesis is usually undertaken individually or in a group of up to three students. The grade for the thesis is based

on the submitted report and an oral presentation with a question and answer session.

The learning environment contains a learning platform used between the two seminar weeks in every semester. Supervision is given both in the two seminar week and in between. Due to the projects that run all through the study year, students meet regularly over Skype and supervision is to a large degree also done over Skype. Group work, project work and report writing are important pedagogical methods. The lectures are given in Norwegian but the literature is mainly in English. More information about the master program in health informatics is available from www.uia.no [2].

The program has been highly successful, due to the increase use and pressure on using technology in healthcare. High quality candidates with a master in health informatics are recruited to different positions in business, academia and practice.

Developing an E-Learning Course

Our further plans include developing a 5 ECTS online course in health informatics; this will be made available for students in the master program from January 2014. The course will be developed in collaboration with University of Nebraska (UNO), Omaha, USA. It will run as a joint course, available both for UiA students and UNO students in health informatics.

Stand-alone Course for Further Education

We have experienced a growing demand for shorter courses for larger groups of employees, especially in municipalities. As a response to this we will from Fall 2013 be offering a course on Assistive Technology over one semester. The course is 15 ECTS and will be offered as a combination of a seminar on campus over 2 days, and on-line teaching and supervision. For more information on this, see:

http://www.uia.no/portaler/studietilbud/etter-og_videreutdanning/innfoeringskurs_i_velferdsteknologi.

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