

# ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE NETWORKED SOCIETY THROUGH THE NEXT GENERATION OF IS MASTERS-LEVEL CURRICULA

*Panel*

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## **Abstract**

*AIS and ACM recently set up a task force for the revision of MSIS 2006 - the master's level curriculum recommendation in information systems – MSIS 2016. The revision is justified by the challenges posed to the IS field by the networked society: emergence of new configurations of information technology; new demands from enterprises, markets and society; evolving professional practices; unfolding research questions.*

*The panel will allow the involvement of the IS community in the debate of major issues regarding graduate IS education in the broader context of educating professionals for the networked society.*

*The panelists choice aims at providing perspectives on IS graduate education from different European areas. Besides opening the floor to the viewpoint of practitioners, attention will also be paid to the developments, occurring in Europe, regarding the competences in information and communication technologies demanded in the modern workplace.*

*Keywords: IS Education, Curricula Recommendations, IS Master Curricula, MSIS 2006, MSIS 2016*

## **1 MSIS 2016 - MSIS curriculum revision**

AIS and ACM recently started a revision of MSIS 2006 - the master's level curriculum recommendation in information systems (Gorgone et al. 2006). The pursuit was recommended by an initial task force, jointly established in 2012 by AIS and ACM, that studied the need for and the feasibility of revising MSIS 2006. In April 2014, AIS and ACM started the process of constituting a task force for carrying out the MSIS 2006 review. In 2014 the IS community was addressed for the identification of the co-chairs of the revision task force and for collecting expressions of interest in integrating the MSIS 2006 revision task force. The task force will present a first draft for comments in summer 2015, a second draft in spring 2016, and a third draft in summer 2016 for comments. The final outcome is expected to be published by the end of 2016. Both AIS and ACM made a conscious choice to support a revision process that is led by a truly global task force. Both co-chairs and the six members represent the Asia-Pacific, European, and North American regions. This diversity offers a much richer set of perspectives than the earlier processes that were primarily focused on North America. The task force is determined to make sure that perspectives broadly from around the world are represented in its work.

Curricula recommendations, both at undergraduate and master levels, play an important role in the development of academic and professional fields. They reflect consensual views for the education in the field and, thus, contribute to the field's identity. Curricula recommendations also have practical utilization. They are a valuable instrument for curricula designers and for program managers, and an authoritative reference for program evaluators and accreditors. However, to reflect a shared view of the field and of its education good practices, the development of curricula recommendations must be a participated project. Participation is desired from educators, curricula designers, academic programs managers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. The MSIS 2016 task force is well aware of this requisite and it is committed to engage all stakeholders along the project.

The existence of curricula recommendations doesn't prevent the existence of the diversity that is necessary for the normal evolution of degree programs in a field. And it provides a basis that helps to perceive and map the progress in a field's education. The revision of curricula recommendations is thus a natural process, where a field adapts to the perceived changes that reflect its own development and the development of its context. In the case of IS the field faces the challenges of the networked society: emergence of new configurations of information technology; new demands from enterprises, markets and society; evolving professional practices; unfolding research questions. The MSIS revision must be attentive to all these aspects and needs to hear from their players.

Panels in major conferences of the field, and particularly those conferences promoted by the associations involved in the development of the curricula recommendations, are a key mechanism in the functioning of task forces that address the production of curriculum recommendations. Their role is three fold: i) they are an important channel for the task force to bring up to the community any issues that demand broad discussion; ii) they allow for the participation of the stakeholders in debates addressing the issues the task force is facing; iii) they constitute moments for the task force to inform the community about the advancement of the work being carried out and about the produced results.

The panel contributes to the conference in a significant way because it is designed to increase the participants' awareness of a very important IS education initiative and make it easy for the participants to contribute to this process that has the potential to have a strong impact on how education in the field is organized. Strong education in IS is an absolutely necessary foundation for a "networked society" in any national or cultural context and therefore, the topic has an excellent fit with the conference theme.

Taking into consideration the location of ECIS, it is natural that special attention will be paid to European issues. Since the publication of MSIS 2006, Europe went through developments in the education arena that are relevant to the work of the MSIS 2016 task force. The following European development and initiatives are particularly interesting: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

(ECTS); European Qualification Framework (EQF); European e-Competences Framework (e-CF); initiatives from the Council of European Professional Informatics Societies (CEPIS).

The panel will address the following topics: Presentation of the MSIS 2016 initiative, addressing its justification, objectives, expected outcomes, task force, calendar, and ways of contributing; Impact of IS curricula recommendations in the current offer of IS master degrees; regional perspectives; The European e-Competences initiative and its impact to the IS and Computing professions; Current and emerging professional demands in the IS and Computing areas and the offer of graduate education – a practitioner’s perspective.

## **2 Panelists**

The proposed panelists are the result of a selection that aims at combining several criteria, namely: involvement in the MSIS 2016 task force; regional perspective on IS Master education (Anglo-Saxon, German, Iberian, Nordic); familiarity with European initiatives related to education (ECTS, EQF, e-CF), representation of practitioner and professional perspectives on IS education.

- *João Carvalho*, Professor, Information Systems Department, University of Minho, Portugal. João has coordinated BS, MS and Doctoral Programs and been the head of the department and deputy dean of the faculty. He has led a task group to propose an integrated Master (5 years) in IS. He collaborates with the Portuguese national agency for the accreditation of degree programs in computing and in management.
- *Brian Donnellan*, Professor, Maynooth University Business School, and Academic Director of Innovation Value Institute. In addition to developing the curriculum for MSc in IT Management, Brian has participated in several related European Union projects, and worked on IT competency issues in the context of the Innovation Value Institute. He has also participated in panels discussing curriculum development (AIS SIG-ED IAIM 2011, AMCIS 2010 and ECIS 2008).
- *Eija (Helena) Karsten*, Associate Professor in Information Systems at the Åbo Akademi University in Finland. She has MSc in Computer Science (University of Helsinki) and aMA in Education (University of Minnesota). She earned her PhD in 2000, supervised by Kalle Lyytinen and Matthew Jones. During 2012-2014, she led a Ministry of Education funded project on joint curriculum development for doctoral studies between Finland and China. In 2011, she was the Finnish representative in the team evaluating 32 Information Systems degree programs in 18 universities in Sweden.
- *Andreas Gadatsch*, Professor, Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Sankt Augustin, Germany, and head of the master program in information and innovation management at the department of management sciences. He has several years of experience as a consultant, project manager and IT manager in well-known companies like GKN, Deutz and Deutsche Telekom.

## **3 Structure of the panel**

The panel structure is similar to the one that has been successfully used in earlier panels related to the curriculum efforts promoted by ACM/AIS. For each topic there is an initial brief background description that is immediately followed by presenting the panelists with key questions related to the topic. The panelists provide brief answers. After that, the discussion is opened to the audience. Both questions and comments from the audience are strongly encouraged. Once all topics have been covered, the panelists provide final comments and the panel facilitator summarizes the results of the panel.

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