



# How ~~not~~ to design, deliver and promote an MA in Web Design

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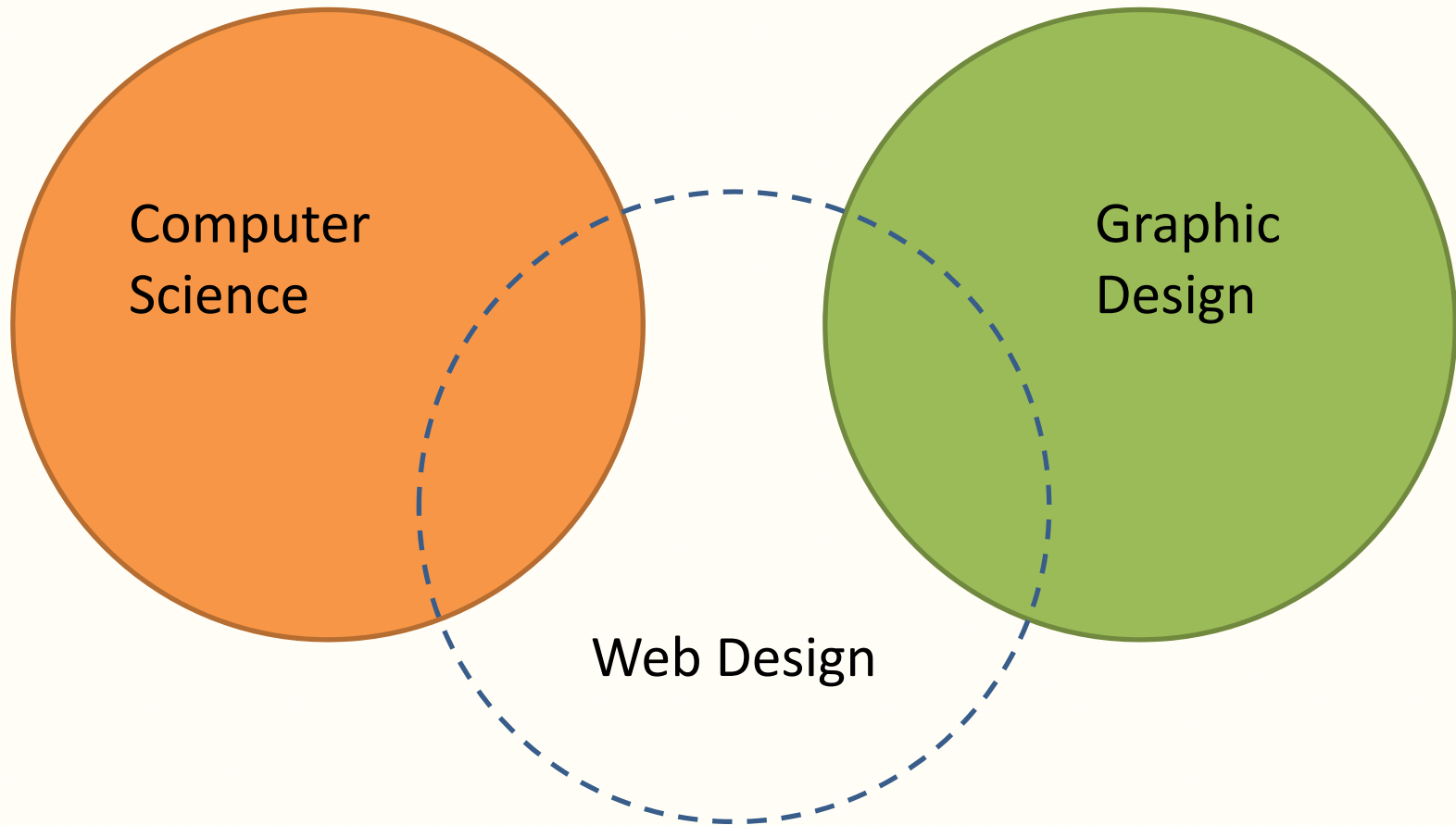
# MA Web Design & Content Planning

- School of Architecture & Construction.
- Department of Communication Media for Design.
- Programme written & validated in 2000.
- First cohort in September 2003.
- Full-time & part-time modes.
- This year 10 students will graduate.
- 18 new students starting (60 applications).
- Currently there is a teaching team of 6.

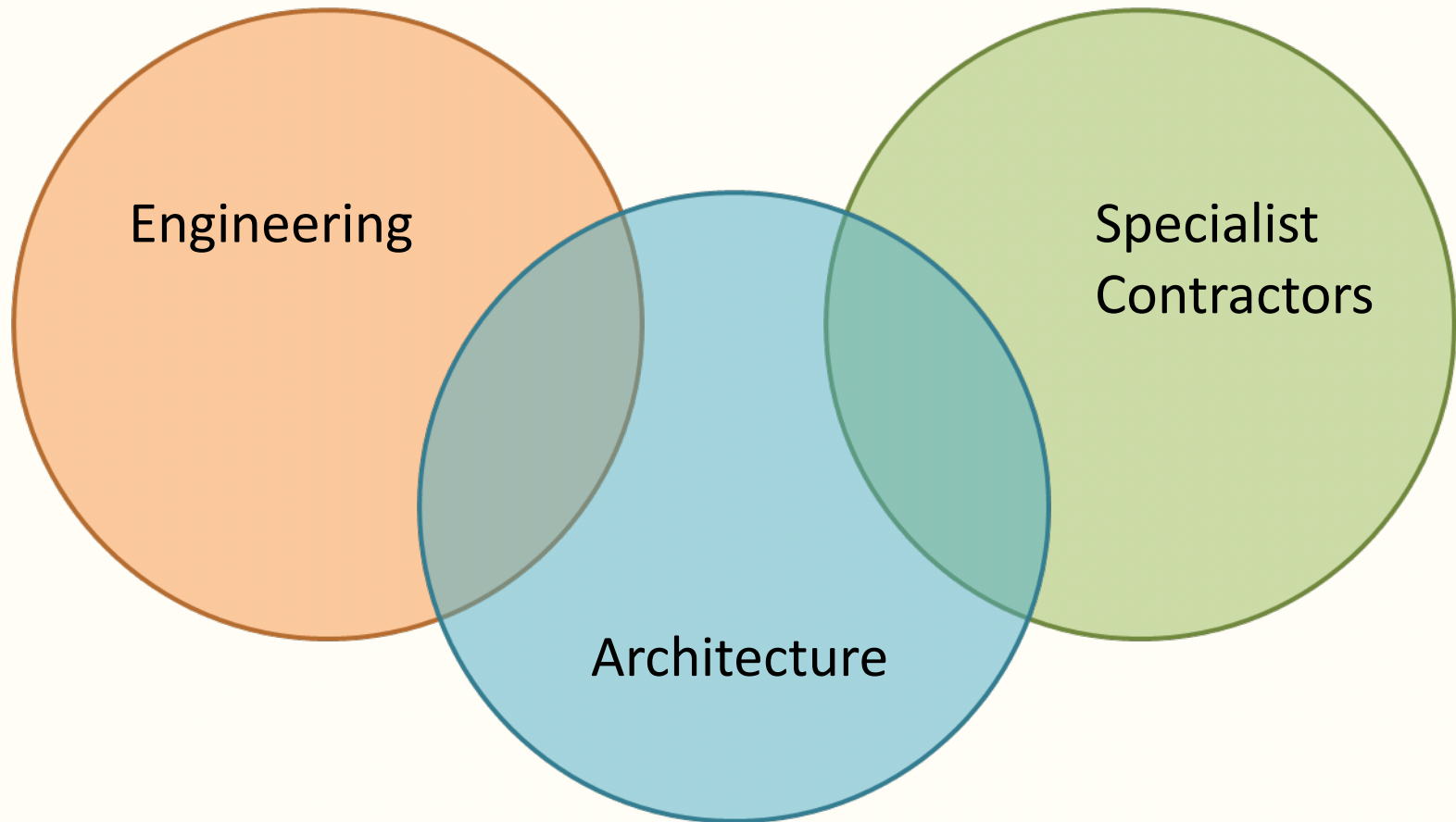
# Why bother?

- Early adopters of the web and interested in the potential for information/content sharing.
- Both run moderately successful websites and felt we had some experience we could share.
- There was a gap in the market for MA.
- We felt we could do it better than the other programmes on offer.

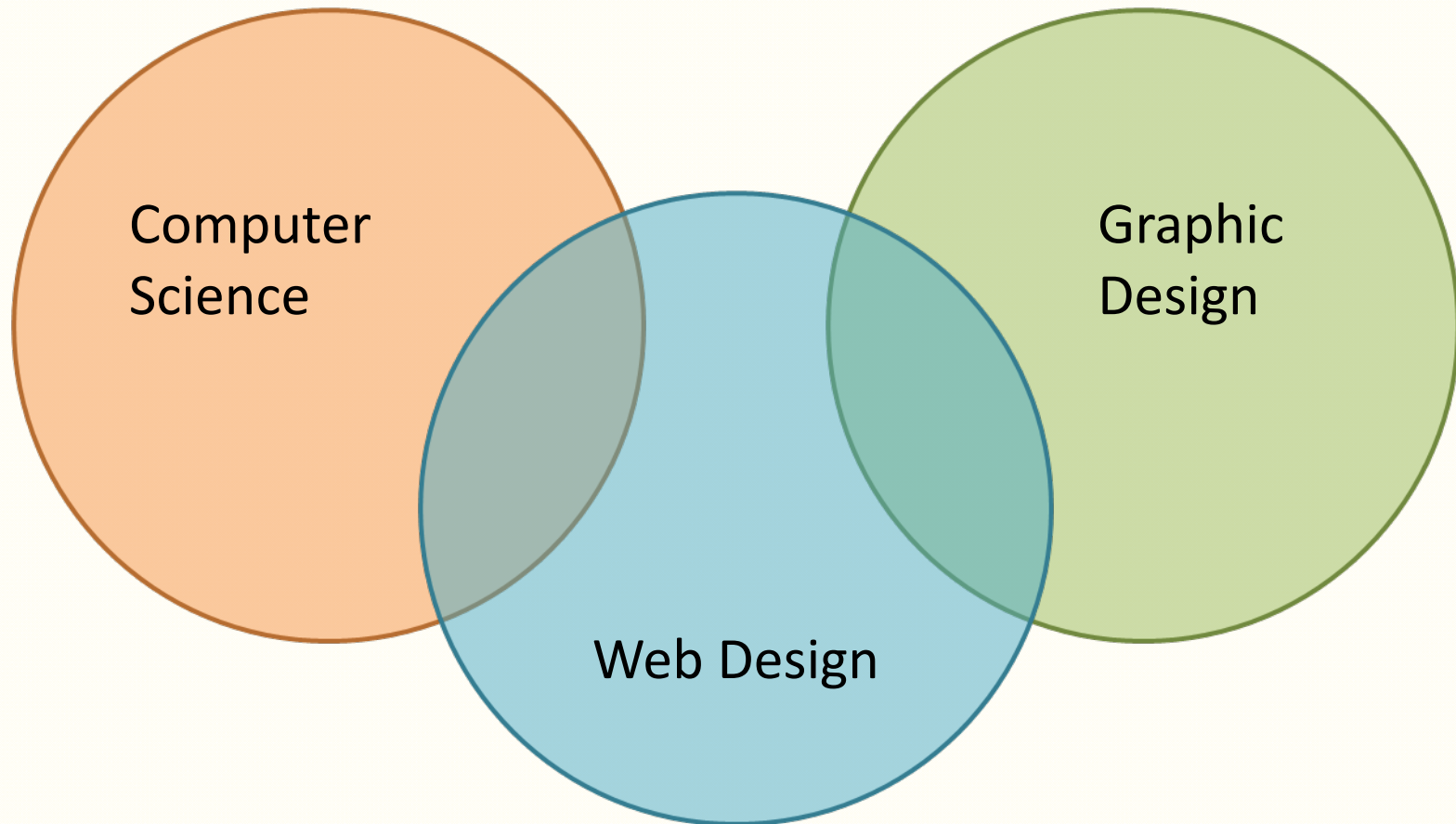
# Find a better way of doing it




# An analogy from the built environment




# Website Architecture



# Do <sup>not</sup> think of a “good” name

- MA Website Architecture 
- Internal political problems
- External misunderstandings
- In 2008 we changed the name
- MA Web Design & Content Planning

# Do adopt an Ancient Roman

- It's good to have a philosophical framework when planning a new programme.
- In keeping with our architectural background, we chose **Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (Vitruvius)**  the Roman writer, architect and engineer.
- We thought that a website was much like a building...

# Vitruvian principles

- In his *Ten books on architecture*, Vitruvius states that a structure must exhibit:
- *Utilitas* (Commodity) = Function, UX...
- *Firmitas* (Firmness) = Web Standards, HTML...
- *Venustas* (Delight) = Aesthetics...
- To which, we added...
- Business

# Do ask: who is the programme for?

- 10 years ago, we thought that all professional organisations would need individuals with web design skills.
- Lawyers would become eLawyers.
- Teachers would become eTeachers.
- Journalists would become eJournalists.
- So, we designed the programme for professionals who needed these skills.

# Do analyse who actually turns up

- To some extent our approach worked but it had a wider appeal than expected.
- Currently, our students fall into 3 main groups:
  1. Existing professionals who want to add web design to their skill set.
  2. Self-taught web designers who want a formal qualification.
  3. People looking for a career change.

# Do consider mode of teaching

- Most of our students work full-time.
- Therefore a “blended” teaching mode is best.
- Face-to-face on one day per week.
- + online activities = forum, blogs etc.
- Perhaps a VLE could help...

# Do <sup>not</sup> use your university VLE

- It seemed sensible to use our VLE (WebCT)
- Sadly, it's only benefit was to demonstrate how *not* to design a user interface and how *not* to code a website.
- We soon rejected the VLE and decided upon DIY instead.

# Do ask: how will teaching be delivered?

- We use a range of teaching/learning activities:
  - Lectures
  - Seminars
  - Studio critiques for project work
  - Workshops
  - Set reading (online and offline)
  - Online discussions
  - Essays and blog posts

# Dealing with the pace of change

- The web design subject area changes quickly.
- Course content often looks out-of-date 12 months after it was designed.
- There are 2 key issues arising:
  1. How can I keep programme documentation up-to-date?
  2. How can I keep *myself* up-to-date?

# Do make programme & course documentation flexible

- Be as non-specific as possible.
- Describe aims and outcomes rather than topics.
- For example:  
“Students will learn how to code webpages using current industry standard methods.”
- Is better than:  
“Students will learn how to code webpages using XHTML 1.0 Strict and CSS 2.1.”


# Do make programme & course documentation flexible

- 12 months later:  
“Students will learn how to code webpages using current industry standard methods.”
- 12 months later:  
“Students will learn how to code webpages using XHTML 1.0 Strict (and maybe a bit of HTML5) and CSS 2.1 (but using some CSS3 techniques).”  
Oh no, “progressive enhancement” isn’t specified in the course description - are we still allowed to teach that?


# Do not think you can keep yourself completely up-to-date

- There is no point assuming you can keep on top of everything.
- Accepted norms and standards can easily change with the publication of a blog post while you're delivering a lecture.
- Consider your role to be *team leader* rather than *teacher* and learn with your students.
- Gathering information requires the efforts of all students and teachers – provide a mechanism to facilitate this.

# Do ~~not~~ promote the programme yourself

- Do not rely on your university to promote your programme.
- Take the opportunity to practice what you teach and build your own promotional website.
- It can have a dual purpose – use it as a teaching aid.
- Applications have increased 4-fold since our website launched. 

# Do ~~not~~ promote the programme yourself

- Provide as much information about the programme as you can – including access to teaching/learning materials.
- Prospective students want to know what they're getting for their hard-earned cash.
- Applications have increased 4-fold since our website launched. 
- The DIY approach is best.

Do ~~not~~ consider a tacky catchphrase

- *Earn while you learn*
- Some of our students have now earned more from the websites they created during our programme than they paid in fees.
- We're currently considering how best to capitalise on this fact.

# Do think about the future

- We still have plenty to do:
  - Provide more web business content.
  - Interface with the industry.
  - Deliver the programme in an online mode.
  - Lots of things I haven't thought of yet.

A copy of this presentation can be found at:  
[www.websitearchitecture.co.uk/webteachingday/](http://www.websitearchitecture.co.uk/webteachingday/)