

Technical and design education in the Czech Republic

In 1894, Tomas Bata formed a shoe making company in Zlin, in what is now the Czech Republic. In a few decades it became one of the largest manufacturers in the world. Bata realised the importance of training and in the early 1930s established a school to provide both general and technical education. It was reorganised



in 1949 and incorporated into the official state education system. Approximately 30 students graduate each year with a Maturita qualification that enables them to study at the Tomas Bata University in Zlin.

The University has three sections, with the Technology Faculty containing the Shoe Technology department, led by Professor Petr Hlavacek. The emphasis of the courses has changed as shoe production has declined and moved offshore, as in the rest of Europe. The department has now turned its studies towards solving health and special needs problems connected with footwear. It has, for example, developed prophylactic shoes for diabetics, which are produced under licence within the country, some examples of which are shown here.

The University is accredited under the Bologna Declaration and offers studies at Bachelor, Master and PhD (Doctorate) levels. Students are offered choices of different research projects and study fields to make their course more interesting. Places were recently given to some Vietnamese students, including a

year of intensive Czech language training before the degree course commenced. Some lectures are also offered in English, and it is hoped to increase the number of international students – particularly as they are not charged course fees.

A new Faculty of Multimedia Communications was established five years ago which includes a section devoted to shoe design. 2004 saw the first group of students complete their Bachelor degrees. During their studies, they participated in footwear exhibitions and competitions in Bologna, Düsseldorf and Brno, and were successful in winning some awards.

The International School of Modern Shoemaking (ISMS) was started 10 years ago based on the Bata philosophy of intensive courses focused on practical skills. These included a half-year intensive course for overseas students where accommodation was part of the deal. The ISMS has now become part of the university and is making further improvements to its courses. Higher Studies are also flourishing and there are now fourteen students studying at PhD level. Each has an individual research project that covers a large field of shoe-associated topics. 

