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Expectations to students to be made clear

Danish UAS institutions implement Study Activity Model

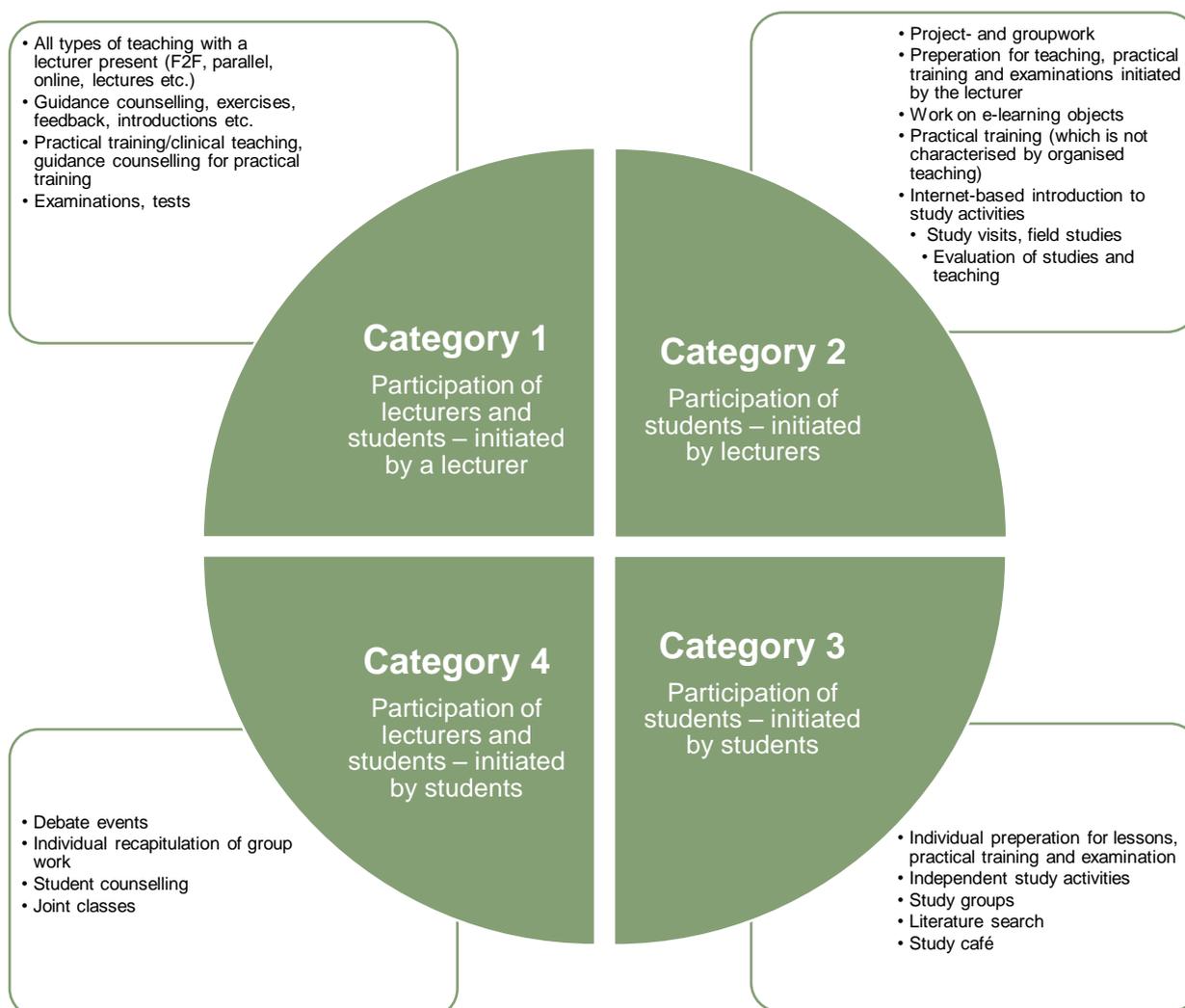
The Danish university colleges now strengthen the dialogue with their students by creating a clearer image of what is offered in terms of learning, teaching, academic approach and activity under the new joint study activity model, SAM. The new model is designed with a view to increase the learning efficiency of the students through better focus on expected academic activity. The implementation has already started.

The university colleges educate teachers, nurses, constructing architects, social workers, and a big number of other competent professionals for careers in both the public and private sector. Common to all programmes is that the level of study activity is intense and that they are full-time study programmes.

The idea behind the joint study activity model is to provide for all programmes a single academic tool which can shape the study expectations of the students in relation to study intensity. The model clearly demonstrates which study activities, academic activities and learning types that are employed in professional higher education at a university of applied sciences, and also the student workload expected by the institution for each single study activity. This will be an improved starting point for the dialogue with the students.

In support of independent study activity

For the university colleges it is important that students develop competencies to handle job situations with big responsibility after they graduate. This is why students are trained during the programme in both independence and professional skills. Progression is therefore evident so that towards the end of the programme students experience much more planned independence and challenge than at the outset – and the students end up demonstrating more acute individual responsibility while they are expected to solve problems on their own and study in a very independent fashion. The model therefore makes it evident how the 40 hour workload – which is the prerequisite minimum for a student in higher education - is divided on various learning and study activities. This will enable the students to strengthen their academic activity throughout the programme.



The four categories

The study activity model is divided on four categories which take departure in whether the study activity was initiated by the student or by the lecturer, or whether it is a study activity involving a lecturer or only students. The two 'axes' form a total of four categories of study activity in which the students and the lecturers can establish a dialogue.

- The first category involves activities initiated by a lecturer and engaging both students and lecturers. This can be classroom teaching, lectures, supervisor presentations, team counselling or similar.
- The second category involves activities initiated by a lecturer, but engaging only students. This can be class or team meetings without supervision, study activity days, internships, study visits or similar.
- The third category involves participation of lecturers and students, initiated by students. This would be forum sessions, presentation of study projects, theme days or similar.
- The fourth and final category is for events initiated by students – with participation of other students. This could be independent study and study preparation, completion of study products or similar.

An answer to the discussion on teaching hours and quotas

Originally, the study activity model was developed in response to the ongoing discussion of preparation and teaching quota negotiations in higher education. The discussion was out of focus since higher education is much more than classroom performance. The discussion on academic learning and classroom preparation does deal with an important activity, but the new study activity model serves to demonstrate the multitude of learning formats experienced by students at a university of applied sciences.

Traditional classroom activity therefore, in the model, is only one of four categories, a category which also includes lectures and supervision. The model thus serves to demonstrate how professional higher education also focuses on internships, student preparation, presentations, written assignments, field observation, innovative projects and other specialized study activity.

A tool for further development of education

Already in 2012 the model was introduced nationwide at the Pedagogical Social Studies programmes, and in the autumn of 2013 the Danish university colleges started implementing the model in all programmes. Besides strengthening the dialogue with the students, the model is also good tool for the internal organization and development of the applied programmes, and on top of that the model is an important element in designing institutional development contracts with the Ministry of education. In future, lecturers will be able to use the model to strengthen the applied focus on the various learning spaces, both where the lecturer is present and active, but also the learning spaces where the lecturer helps students to study. Both approaches contribute to the overriding goal of the model: to establish what and how much the individual student will learn during the period of study.

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Facts about the Danish university college study activity model

The Danish university colleges have jointly developed a model which demonstrates the overall structure of the study activity in the applied programmes and their institutions. The study activity model is divided on four categories which take departure in whether the study activity was initiated by the student or by the lecturer, or whether it is a study activity involving a lecturer or only students. The two 'axes' form a total of four categories of study activity in which the students and the lecturers can establish a dialogue. Students are

required to invest a complete workload in all four categories so that the end result is equal to full-time study activity.

The idea behind the joint study activity model is to provide for all programmes a single academic tool which can guide the dialogue on how to structure study activity. Apart from strengthening the dialogue with the students, the model is also useful in the internal planning and development of applied programmes at the university colleges. Below you will find a detailed description of each category:

The four categories of the model:

- **Participation of lecturers and students – initiated by a lecturer.** This can be in the form of lectures, sessions, classroom lectures, study guidance or similar. In this category lecturers are expected to take the initiative. Students are expected to take active responsibility for obtaining knowledge of professional concepts, theories and models via participation in lecturer-inspired activities and contribution to a productive learning environment for all involved.
- **Participation of students – initiated by lecturers.** This can be in the form of class or team meetings without a lecturer, study days, study visits or similar. In this category, lecturers are expected to take the initiative. Students are expected to take active responsibility to obtain knowledge and professional skills. The active participation consists of preparation, training of concrete professional skills and finding solutions to assignments, physically or virtually. Professional training also involves cooperative processes which contribute to creation of a productive learning environment for all participants, if necessary across specializations and disciplines.
- **Participation of lecturers and students – initiated by students.** This can be in the form of forum sessions, presentations of study products and outcomes, theme days or similar. In this category, the students are expected to initiate the activity. The students are expected to actively take responsibility for obtaining knowledge about and skills in professional concepts, theories, methods and information search via independent work management alone and/or in groups. This process is supported by skills in documenting results of study processes via written or non-written products and outcomes.
- **Participation of students – initiated by students.** This can be in the form of independent study alone or in cooperation with other students, including study preparation, completion of study products or outcomes, or similar. In this category the student or students are expected to take the initiative. Students are expected to actively take responsibility for obtaining study and professional competencies via participation in activities initiated by students, and in the process creating a productive learning environment for all involved.