

Study Introduction and First Year Experience as Part of a new Strategy

Students in Focus

University of Southern Denmark



Presenters

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Plan of talk

1. The university project: *Students in focus*
2. Underlying principle: Active learning
3. Two examples of education and study start models at SDU
4. The university subproject on improving study start (work in progress)



What is *Students in Focus*

- A strategic focus area aimed at enhancing learning, the study environment, and student services in order to provide optimal opportunities for all students to develop their full potential
- Holistic: covering all aspects of the student's learning environment
- A mixture of top-down and bottom-up
- More than 20 projects at around €5
- Time frame: 2012-2015



The challenge: Students in focus

- Increase student satisfaction with the experience of SDU
- Focus activities on the STUDENTS and their learning outcomes
- Become able to handle the challenge of an increasingly diverse group of students and societal demands of growing complexity
- Retain students, shorten the duration of their studies and create graduates ready for the job market
- Obtain a clear educational profile of SDU

Vision and objectives

Vision for 2015:

Students see themselves as part of an open, qualifying, and inspirational learning environment

Objectives:

Inspirational learning

Motivational environment

Service that helps



Programmes & Projects

STUDENT LEARNING:

Underlying principle of active learning • Methods of assessment, learning, and feedback – new perspectives • Practice-oriented teaching • Study introduction and First Year Experience • Learning environment and educational technology • Job creation and entrepreneurship • SDU Talent

STUDENT INFO:

e.g.: One point of access to information

STUDENT LIFE:

e.g.: IT 24/7

VIS - values, incentives and staff development:

e.g.: Recognition of teaching skills

Underlying principle: Active Learning

- The underlying educational principle at SDU will now be
 - Active learning
(and teaching that activates)*
- Students, staff and management are jointly responsible for the implementation of this principle.

Different roles

Students are part of a learning community, they are active in their studies, they are outreaching and investigative and ready to learn

Teachers organise teaching and learning activities that support the active learning approach. They guide, support and challenge the students as partners in a learning community



Different roles

Administrative staff – in cooperation with teachers and students – create and maintain a framework in which active learning can take place

Management renders visibility to and secure the fulfillment of the underlying principle. They actively support the necessary organisational and educational framework

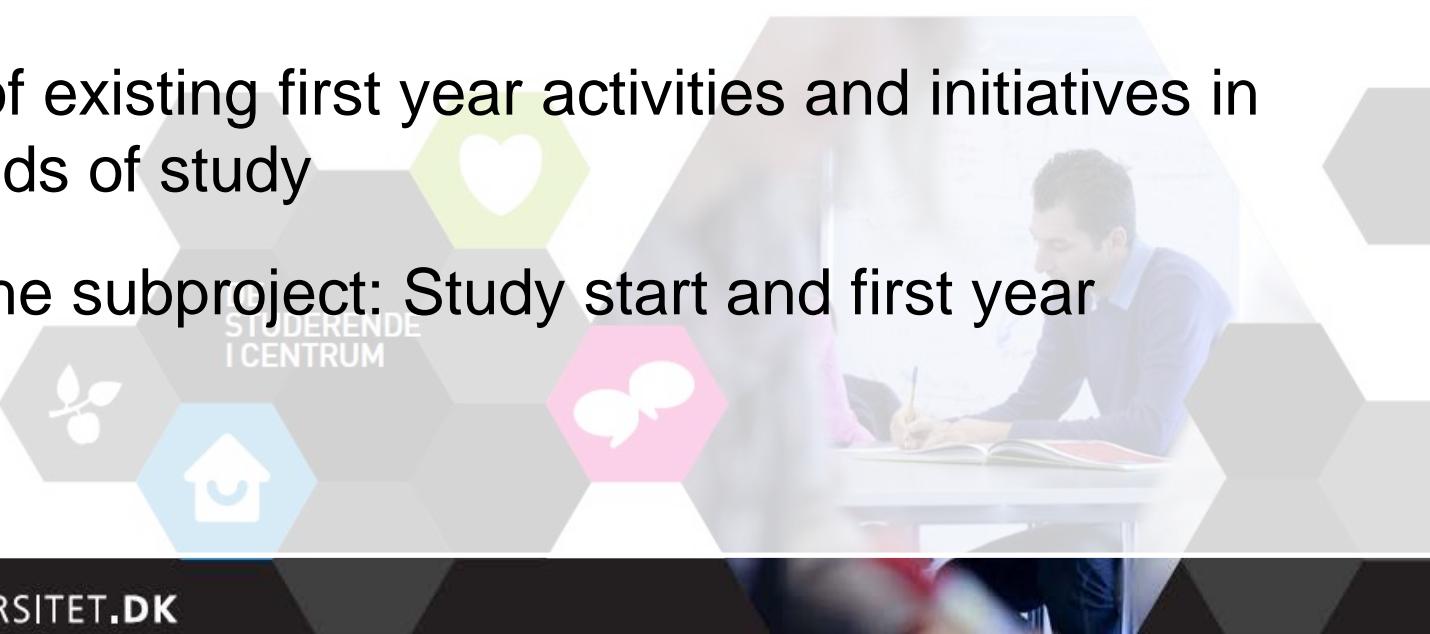


From principle to practice

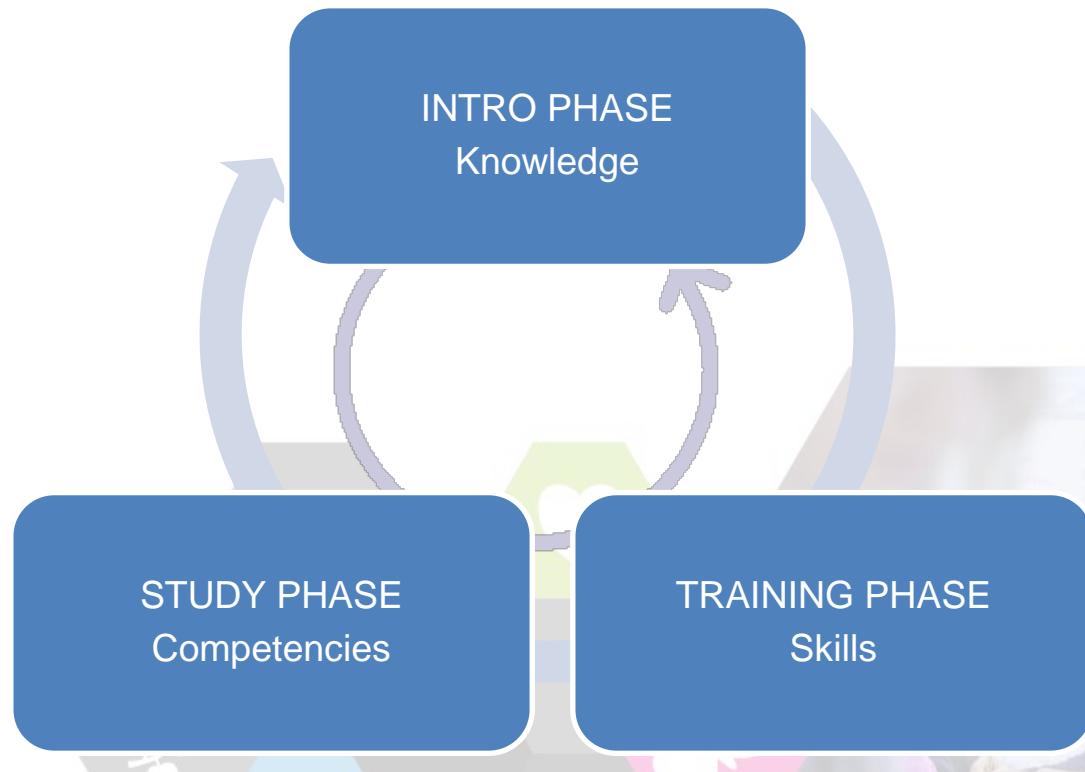
At a university with 5 faculties, 6 campuses, a turnover of 340 mill. € and 26.000 students – how can a single model of study start and a single principle of teaching and learning be implemented in all study programmes?

We now look at:

- 1) Examples of existing first year activities and initiatives in different fields of study
- 2) Outline of the subproject: Study start and first year experience.



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The three phases in teaching



YEAR GROUP – INTRO PHASE

- Concepts, theories, models and ideas are introduced
- The subject matter is put into perspective
- Difficult subjects are brought into focus



CLASS – TRAINING PHASE

- Develop and train skills
- Problem solving
- Experimental work



STUDY GROUP – STUDY PHASE

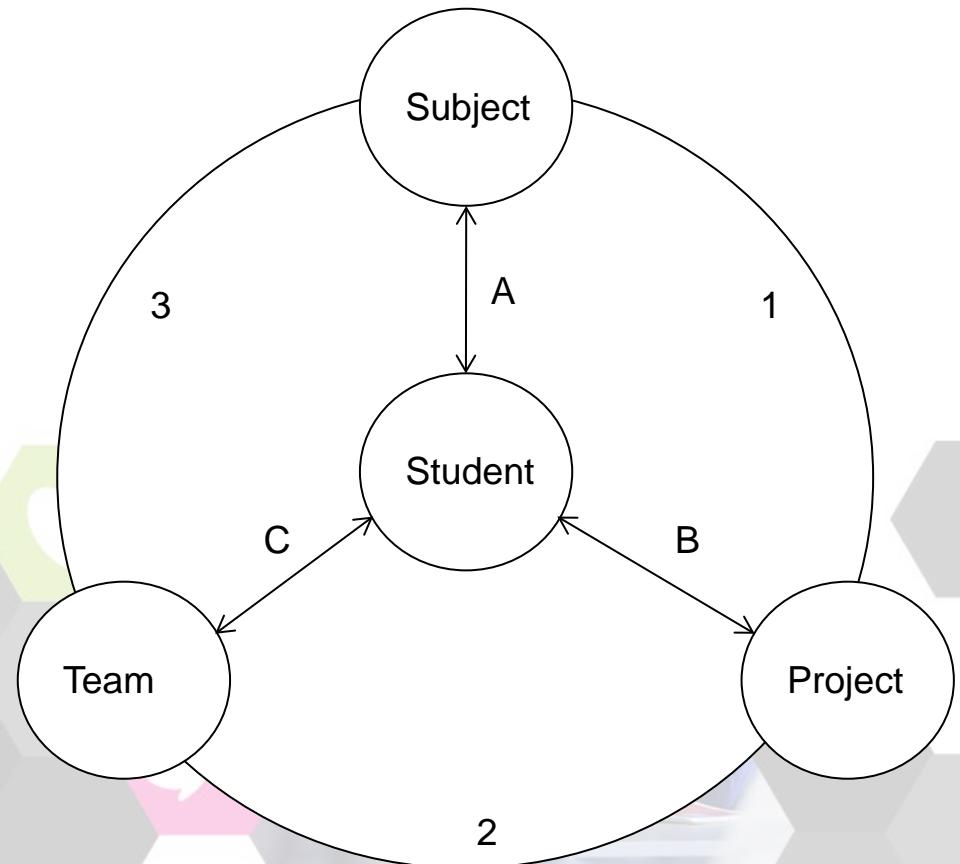
- Follow up on intro phase and training phase
- Deepen the understanding
- Prepare for the intro phase

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The Engineering Education Model (DSMI)

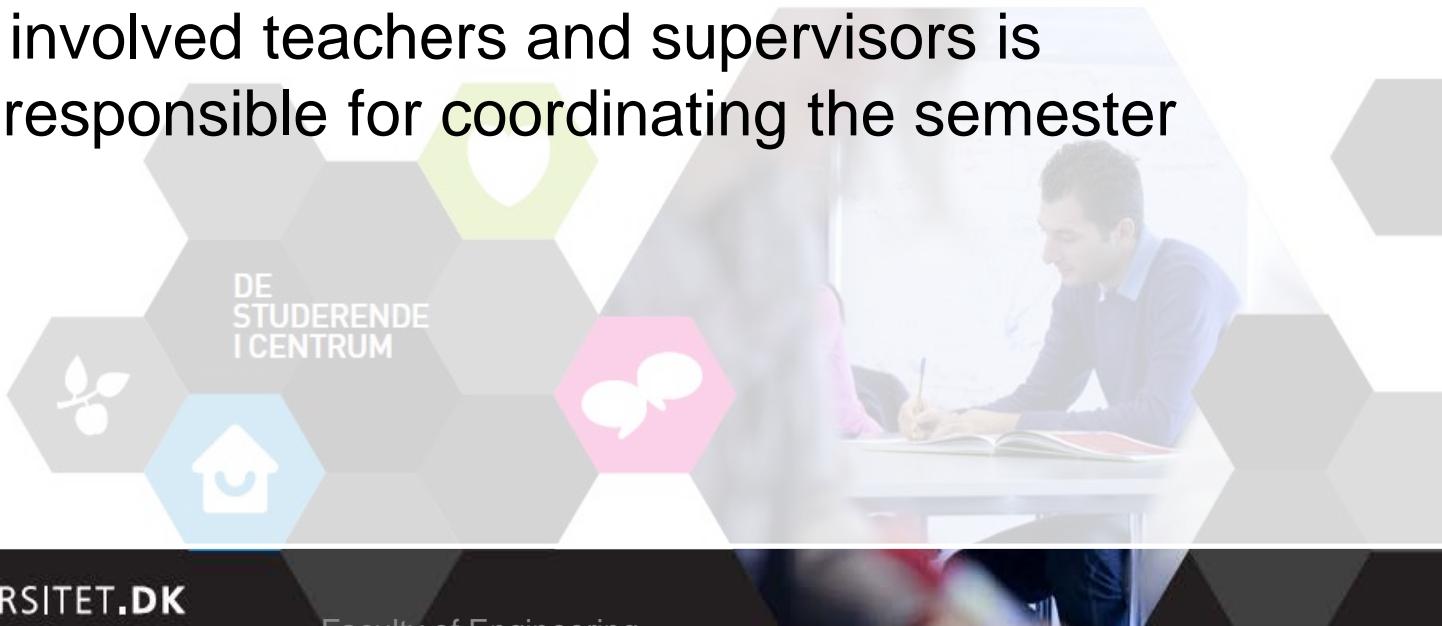
The student will interact with the three elements.

- **Subject:** Study activities in delimited courses of study
- **Project:** Interdisciplinary and application-oriented problems in a project context
- **Team:** Group of fellow students with whom the student participates in a study-related context



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- The four first semesters are organized around themes supporting the semester's competency targets and with a semester project of at least 10 ECTS points
- A semester coordinator is appointed to each semester. And a planning group with participation of the semester coordinator, involved teachers and supervisors is constituted, responsible for coordinating the semester activities



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- Compulsory student portfolio with both teacher and/or peer feedback to ensure a fast and relevant assessment which helps students to focus on what is difficult. Gives the teacher a way “to spot” problems = higher student retention.
- Study (subject) progression is ensured with regard to subjects and semester themes
- The 5th semester project is an “Experts in Teams” project with students from at least two different engineering programmes. The project include entrepreneurship and/or innovation.

Project Studystart

Overall goals of the project:

- Finding and implementing new solutions to the challenge of integrating students into the life as an academic – socially and academically
- Helping students to shape an identity as an academic – even in the face of special challenges (e.g. foreign, immigrant an/or non-academic family background).

Project Studystart

Three subprojects:

- A. Admission
- B. Studystart
- C. Study support activities after studystart

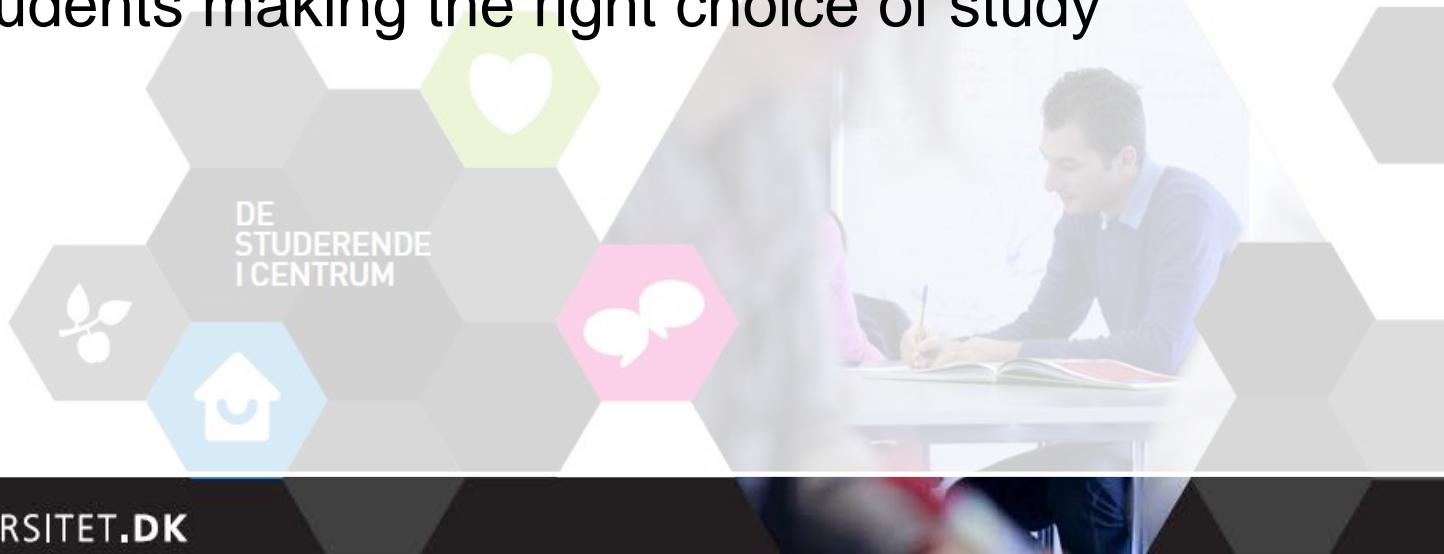


Concrete deliverables of project

- Draft of new strategy for studystart at SDU
- Ambitious proposals for a revision of SDU quality policy on studystart – including the introduction of mandatory elements in the study start of all programmes at the university
- A web-based inspirational catalogue of possible measures (under the three subprojects) to improve first year experience at SDU – with examples of best practice

A. Admission

- Review of admission procedures – new possibilities?
- Implementing best evidence interviewing and other test methods for selection among applicants
- Focus on using admission procedures for alignment of student's expectations and programme demands thereby helping students making the right choice of study



B. Studystart

- Finding and implementing activities aimed at fostering an identity as an academic – ways of breaking the "academic code" and promoting relevant group identification (especially for students with special challenges)
- Special introduction programmes for foreign guest students – courses on Danish university culture and culture in general, social integration into Danish student life

B. Studystart

- Study skills courses
 - study techniques, abilities to schedule time, use of library resources, LMS and other IT systems, knowledge of university formal procedures etc.
 - focus on the right timing of the different elements of the study skills course and their integration with the rest of the curriculum
- Ways of practicing the underlying principles of active learning from the outset of all study programmes

B. Studystart

- Introducing the academic integrity code – understanding plagiarism etc.
- Determining the proper role of student tutors in study start activities
- Introducing early exams (with ECTS, within the first month after study start) with formal feedback to help determine ability for university studies and foster a good work ethics from the outset
- Using IT tools to improve study start

C. After studystart

- Followup on the study start – supervision meetings with students falling behind, followup study skills courses when needed
- Cohesion and progression – ways of helping the students see the progression between courses and semesters
- Making explicit the career perspective from year one of studies



Thank you

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More on the teaching model at SDU's Faculty of Engineering:

http://www.sdu.dk/~media/Files/Om_SDU/Fakulteterne/Teknik/Politik%20og%20strategi/DSMI_eng.ashx

