

# 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.

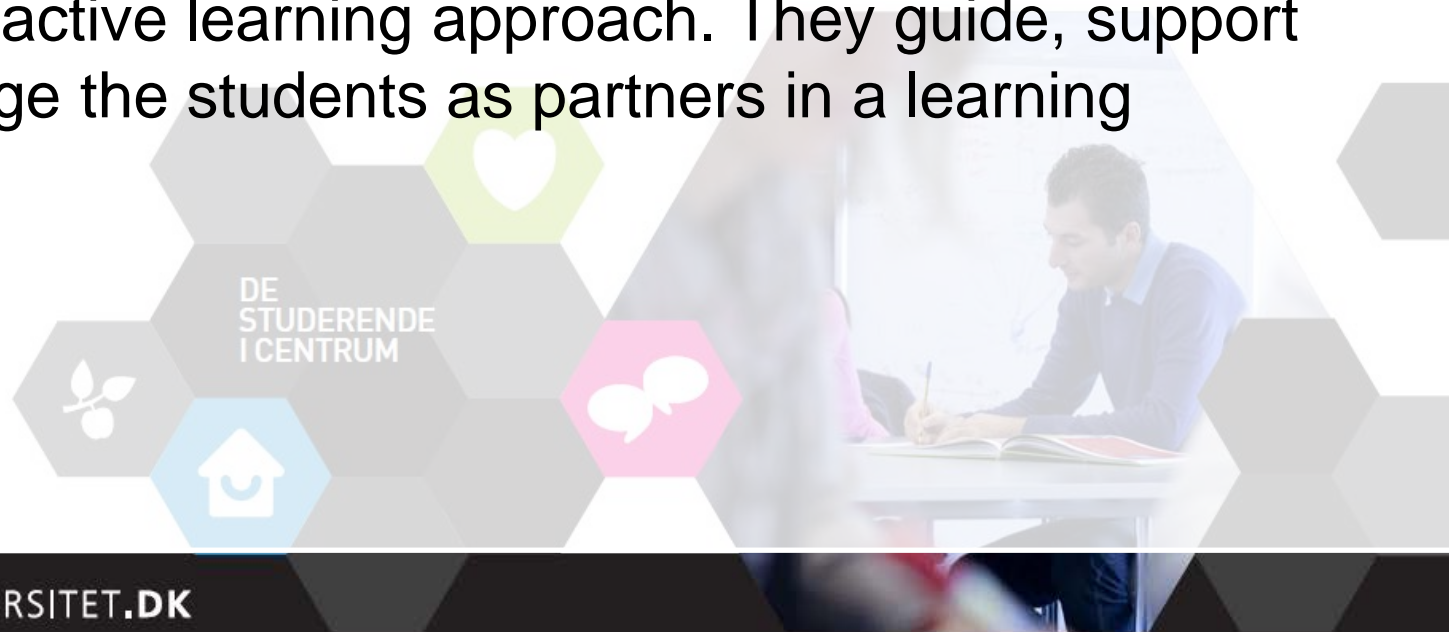




# Different roles

*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



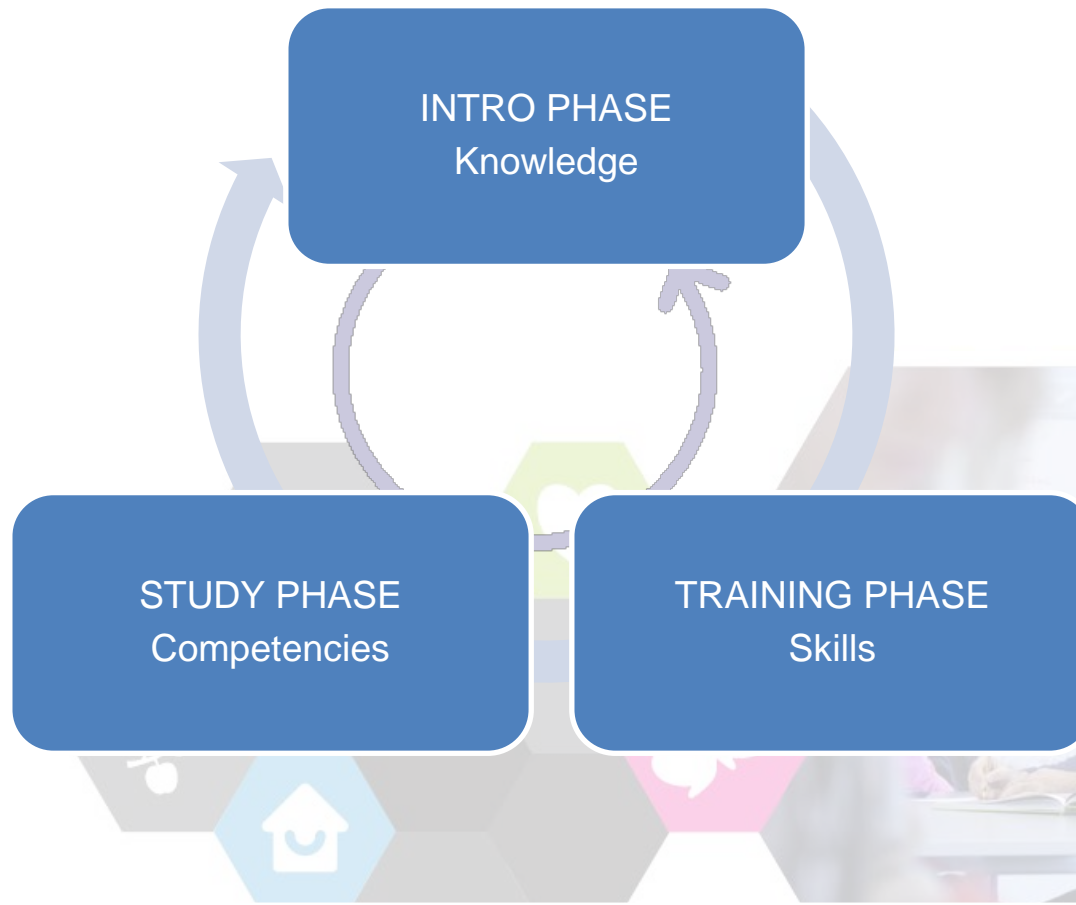
# From principle to practice

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.

# Faculty of Science



# Faculty of Science

## The three phases in teaching



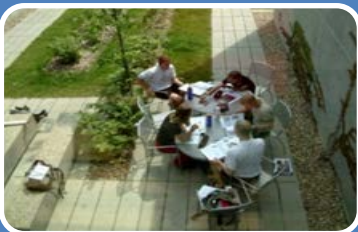
### YEAR GROUP – INTRO PHASE

- 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

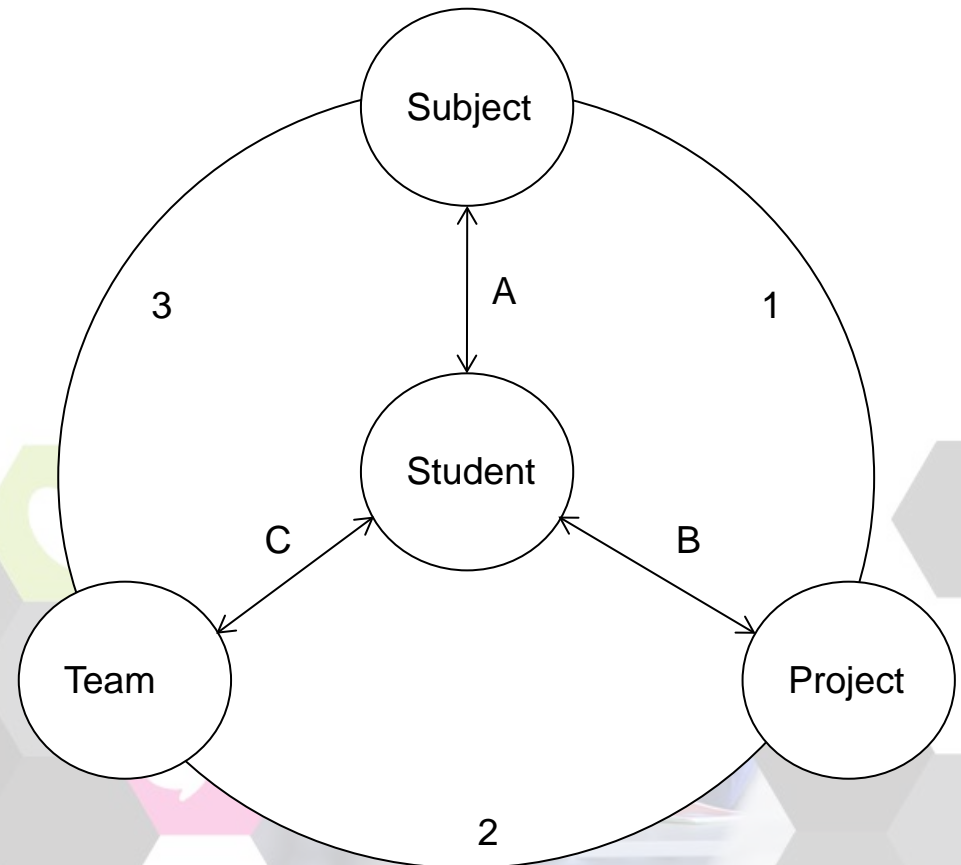
- Follow up on intro phase and training phase
- Deepen the understanding
- Prepare for the intro phase

# Faculty of Engineering

## The Engineering Education Model (DSMI)

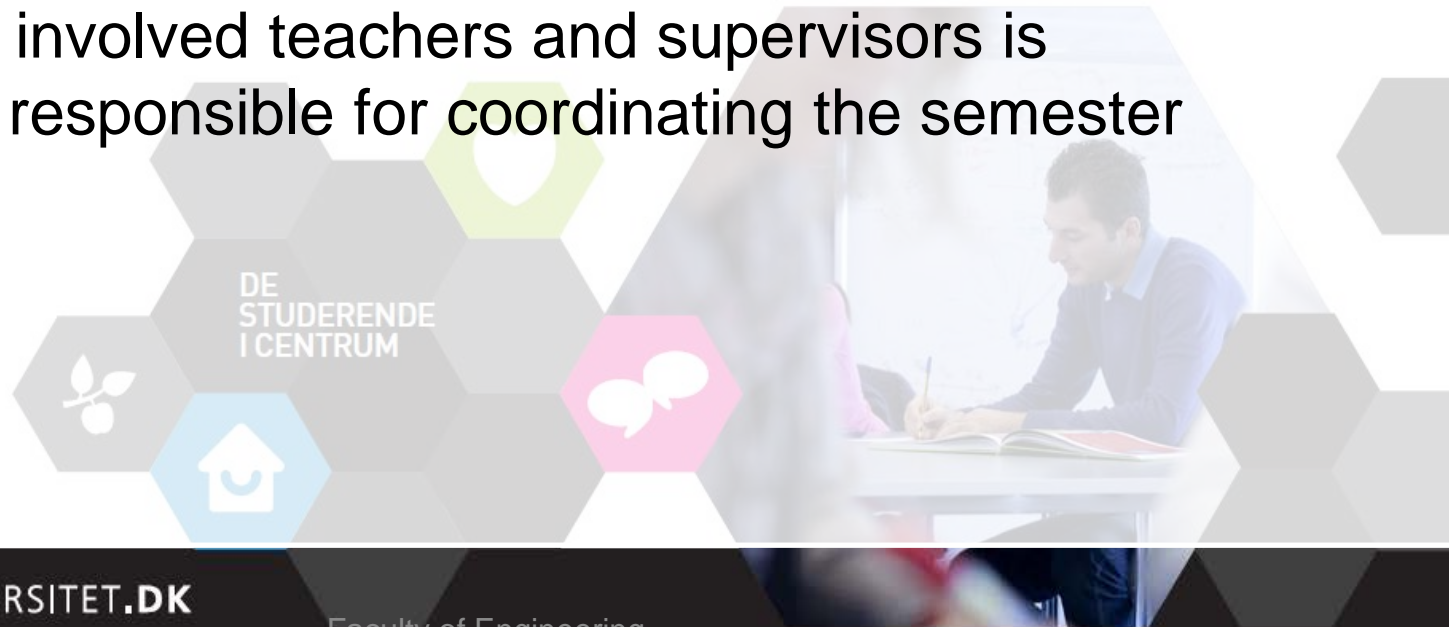
The student will interact with the three elements.

- **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



# Faculty of Engineering

- 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





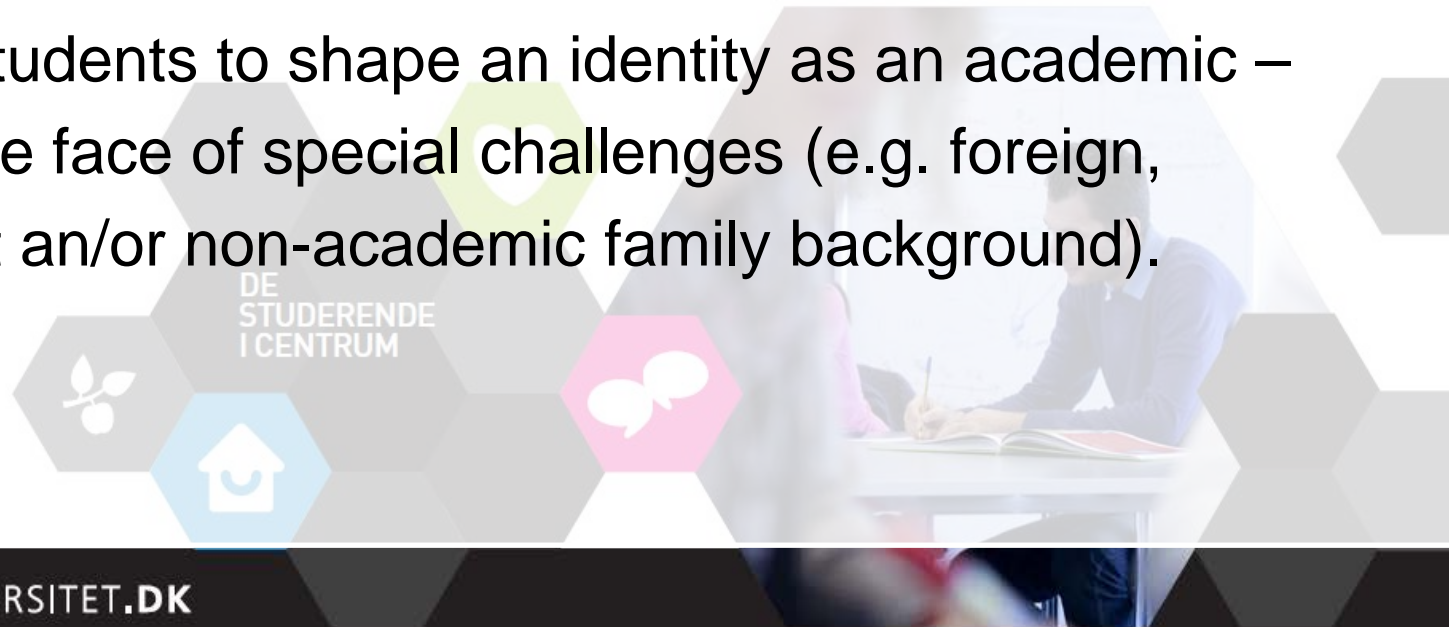
# Faculty of Engineering

- 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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

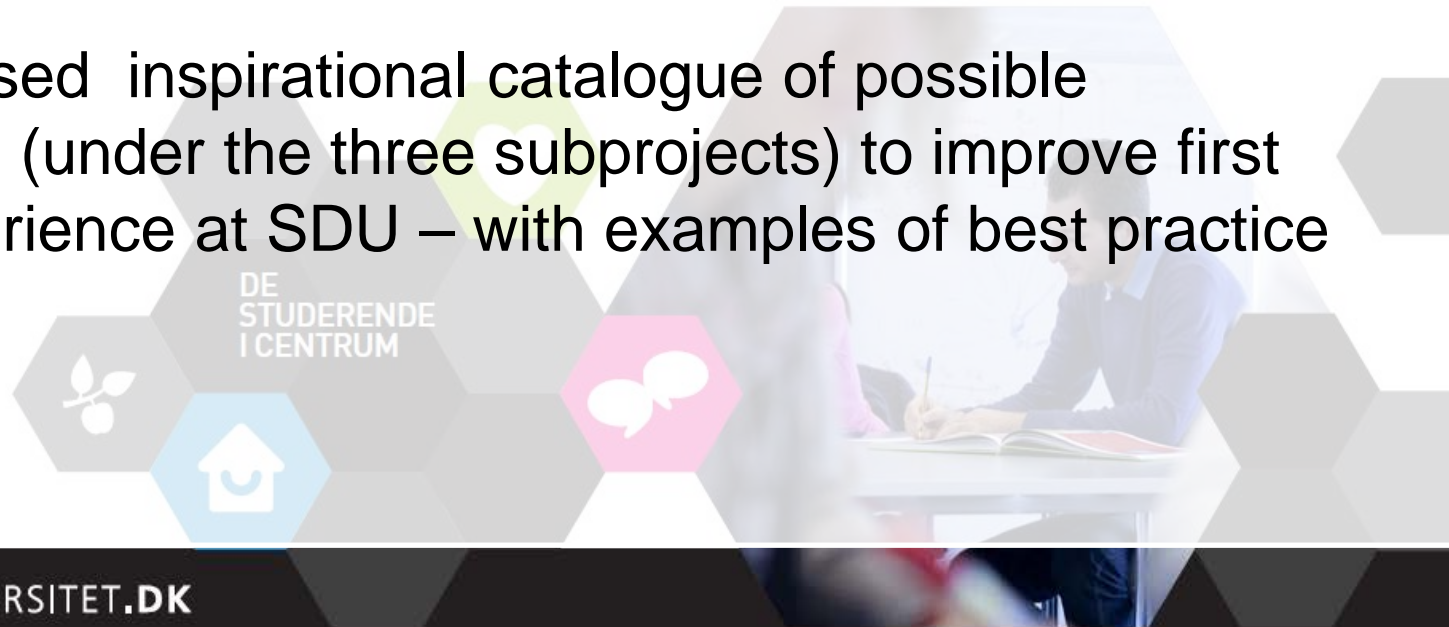
B. Studystart

C. Study support activities after studystart



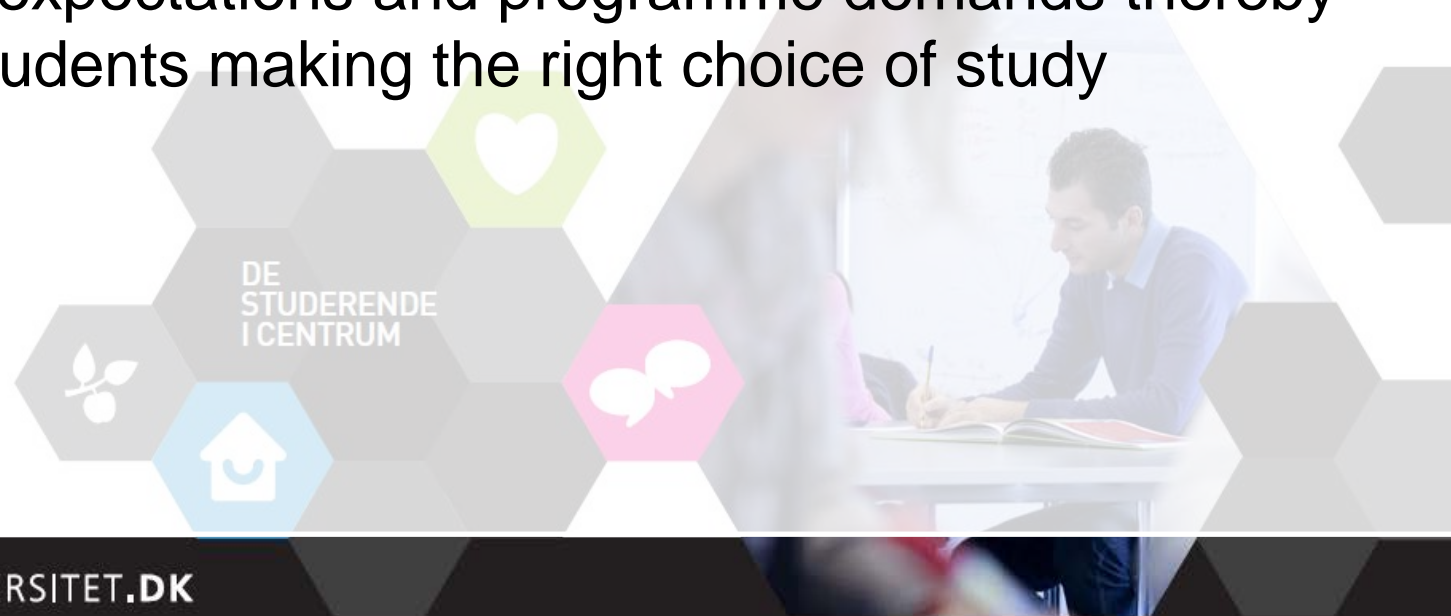
# Concrete deliverables of project

- 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\\_SDUFakulteterne/Teknik/Politik%20og%20strategi/DSMI\\_eng.ashx](http://www.sdu.dk/~media/Files/Om_SDUFakulteterne/Teknik/Politik%20og%20strategi/DSMI_eng.ashx)

