



Educational Environment Assessment 2020

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Introduction

CBS prepares an educational environment assessment every three years.

Under the Danish Educational Environment Act, the assessment must contain the following elements:

- > an account of the educational institution's physical, psychological and aesthetic environment,
- > a description and evaluation of any educational environment problems,
- > a proposed action plan setting out the rate at and order in which the problems ascertained are to be resolved,
- > proposed guidelines for following up on the action plan.

This report has been prepared by a multi-disciplinary task force and contains an overall assessment of the educational environment in the past three-year period, an assessment of current challenges and a proposed action plan for the coming period. The report has been compiled on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data.

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Evaluation of the 2018–2020 action plan

CONTINUED CLASSROOM IMPROVEMENTS

CBS has always focused on aesthetics, and the CBS campus is known for its design. Because physical settings influence our behaviour and learning, CBS also pays close attention to how the physical context impacts the study, teaching and learning environment. Several campus premises have been enhanced; maintenance has followed a systematic plan; and a special theme group tasked with developing and planning CBS's study, teaching and learning environment has been set up. CBS has also emphasised renewal, an emphasis reflected, for example, in the conversion of classrooms into areas that can facilitate other pedagogical learning modes requiring a greater degree of group- and dialogue-based teaching. With the help of analysis, space allocation plans and situation categories, the classrooms have been optimised, renovated and remodelled as needed.

- > A large amount of old equipment has been replaced, and all classrooms in the east and west of the campus have been optimised – *Dalgas Have*
- > Three old interpreting suites have been discontinued and the rooms renovated and refitted – *Dalgas Have*
- > A new computer room with capacity for 30 students has been established and can also be used for exams – *Dalgas Have*
- > New teachers' desks and to a large extent new audiovisual equipment in classrooms in both east and west – *Dalgas Have*
- > Old blackboards in classrooms have several places been removed and replaced with whiteboards – *Dalgas Have*
- > Optimisation of number of seats, new equipment and teachers' desks in two classrooms – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > Renovation of an auditorium, including new, easier-to-operate equipment – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > Electricity installed in desks in most classrooms – *campus in general*
- > Installation of 1-2 places for wheelchair users in all classrooms – *campus in general*

Improving the physical design and furnishing of study rooms: SP, DH, Kilen

The improvements to the study environment have especially aimed to provide new, better group study rooms and exam facilities. The study environments play an important role for in-depth study and social gatherings as well as for group- and dialogue-based team work. As such, these facilities are in great demand and thus heavily used. A continuous focus has also been put on ensuring that the interior design is conducive to creating positive behaviour – a room's function must be easy to recognise from its design and equipment, and such features as lighting should help evoke a particular atmosphere.

- > New equipment and lighting for 14 group study rooms – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > Establishment of eight new supervision rooms – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > New equipment for seven group study rooms – *Dalgas Have*
- > Establishment of two new group study rooms in the staircase area plus a work niche – *Porcelænshaven 16 A+B*
- > A third-floor reading room not being used to best advantage has been redimensioned to provide space for four group study rooms – *Porcelænshaven 16 B*
- > A total of 10 new exam rooms as well as the refitting and renovation of other exam rooms – *Solbjergvej and Dalgas Have*

Rethinking the design of existing rooms: studios

The spotlight has been turned on created learning environments that advance CBS's pedagogical visions, with the aim being to create a new pedagogical learning environment every year. Involving specialists, teachers and students in this development process has been a high priority. New types of equipment are being tested, and the experience gathered will be incorporated in the future campus concept and its planning.

- > The establishment of 'Performance Studio' has given CBS three different studio teaching environments at *Porcelænshaven 16 B*
- > Establishment of a brand-new group- and dialogue-based classroom with a capacity of 48 – *Porcelænshaven 24*
- > Two classrooms have been equipped with new group tables for more group- and dialogue-based teaching – *Dalgas Have*

AESTHETIC FRAMEWORK – ART

Art strategy

In 2019, an art strategy was developed that sets out the principles for the art committee's future work and fleshes out the future perspectives for art at CBS from 2019-2024. By focusing more strongly on art in research, education, new partnerships and the physical environment, CBS intends, among other things, to:

- > promote art as an integral element of new buildings
- > allocate 1.5% of construction costs of new buildings and major renovation projects to art
- > open the CBS Art Collection to the public
- > work with CBS Art Club to offer guided art tours
- > invite external arts organisers with existing audiences to use CBS's facilities and art collection
- > develop new intuitive, interactive art works in public spaces
- > actively curate the art collection and digital catalogue
- > focus on presenting and providing information about the works in the collection
- > use the campus for external art exhibitions and events

Exhibitions

During Copenhagen Art Week 2018, CBS partnered with DIAS, the Danish Institute of Advanced Studies, to exhibit five interactive art works belonging to a larger digital exhibition also displayed in the Copenhagen Metro. CBS's digital art exhibition has continued to display new works that can help stimulate current, cultural and political debate.

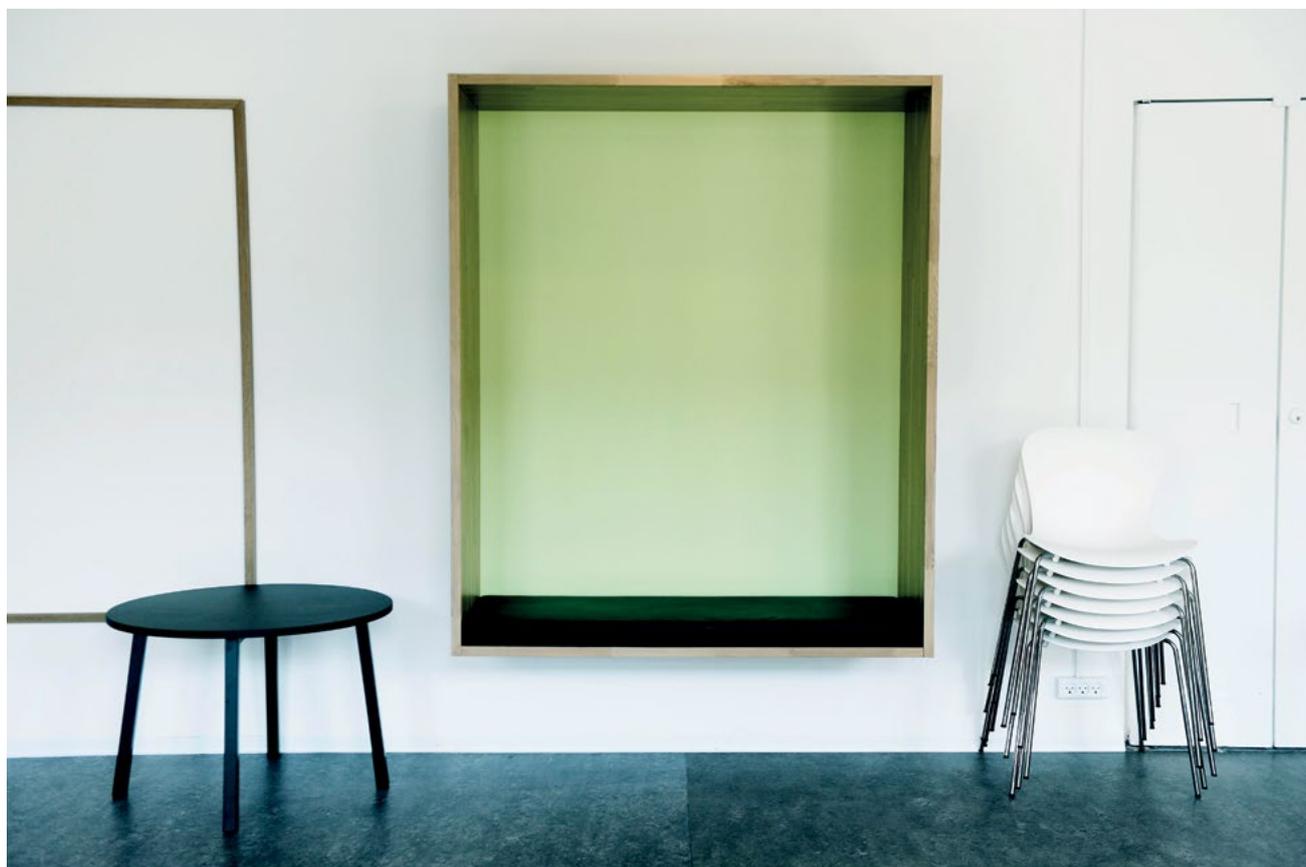
SOCIAL SPACES – WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM GRADUATE HOUSE? CAN WE CREATE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS?

With almost every inch of CBS floor space already in use, finding the square metres to create new social environments for students has been challenging. Nonetheless, a few small initiatives have been possible in various parts of the campus. Some creative thinking and newly developed furniture have gone a long way in meeting the new goal of designing more comfortable areas in exam rooms, lounge zones and the library, as well as providing better service.

- > Establishing a new waiting area outside exam rooms – *Solbjergvej 3*
- > Developing design solutions and furniture for new waiting/sitting areas to be established in walkways – *Dalgas Have and Solbjerg Plads*
- > Establishing the CBS Library Forum, a flexible study and lecture zone in the library basement – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > Establishing the CBS Library Kiosk, a 24/7 service in connection with 24-hour library opening hours – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > The entire ground floor of the library now benefits from new counters, functional zones, a lounge area, wall-mounted furniture and a new exhibition – *Solbjerg Plads*
- > Incorporating art in the remodelling and renovation of the Faculty lounge – *Dalgas Have*
- > Establishment of new lounge area for students – *Dalgas Have*

CAN STUDENT INNOVATION HOUSE BOOST THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT?

Student Innovation House (SIH) is an initiative that enterprising members of CBS Students came up with when CBS acquired Frederiksberg's old police station for student purposes. SIH has been dubbed the 'Station', but has had little opportunity as yet to contribute to the social environment.



The following are examples of future possible uses:

- The Station has been established as an informal academic environment and social meeting place where CBS students from all study disciplines can get together. The Station is expected to help boost the number of students that have both academic and social ties to fellow CBS students taking other programmes. At the Station, CBS students can be included in a community of students from a range of other universities and educational institutions. The Station is expected to foster academic and social relationships between CBS students and other students. A diverse multi-disciplinary space will help improve the social environment for CBS students.
- The Station will give students the chance to test their academic proficiency in a practice-oriented setting with peers studying other disciplines. This work is expected to help CBS students bolster their academic self-confidence and belief in their own abilities. These academic communities will also contribute positively to the social environment at CBS.
- Traditionally, CBS students join one or more of the school's 92 active student organisations. The Station's ambition is to create a collective forum for those organisations interested in working across universities, thus enabling the organisations to continuously share knowledge and resources for the first time. Student organisations contribute positively to the universities' social environments, and the Station gives these organisations a social and physical anchor point.
- The Station's physical facilities include activity-based work areas, co-working spaces, conference lounges and a Zen zone for contemplation as well as several kitchenettes. In this way, the physical surroundings underpin the connection between the academic and the social environments. Alternating between areas for reflection and for activity, the interior layout thus accommodates students' need to spend time and work in the study environment.

It should be noted that the Station supplements the social environment and is intended to provide inspiration, but does not eliminate the need for other social environment initiatives at CBS itself.

LESS PRESSURE, MORE LEARNING – A GRADE-FREE BUT CHARACTER-FORMING FIRST YEAR

A number of initiatives have been launched under this banner. The first was the **'grade-free first year'**. The term 'grade-free' means students are not graded according to the Danish 7-point scale, although they get a pass/fail mark and ongoing feedback.

Two CBS programmes are conducting pilots testing the use of this assessment type instead of the 7-point scale grading system. They are the new BSc programme in Business Administration and Digital Management, which has a grade-free first semester, and the BSc in Business Administration (Psychology) – BSc (Bus. Admin. Psych) – whose entire first year is grade-free. Both pilots were launched in the summer of 2018, so the significance of their impact has yet to be fully determined.

To date, the absence of grades seems to be positively affecting students' approach to learning in the sense that the focus has shifted from surface learning ('what they need to know to pass the exam') to a greater emphasis on deep learning, which was an important aim. The feedback students receive during their studies replaces grades. As regards students' stress

level, different stress measurements have produced varying results. Although no immediate conclusions can be drawn, students appear to experience less stress during exams, but also possibly more stress because they feel uncertain about how well they are doing. More thoroughly processed data from the two pilots is expected to be available in spring 2021. Appendix A provides a status of the first experiences with the more extensive pilot on the BSc (Bus. Admin. Psych) programme.

The International Office and Academic Affairs are working on another initiative, in this case a new model for **selecting exchange students**. The aim was partly to enable BSc (Bus. Admin. Psych) students to apply for an exchange programme, given that they have no first-year grades on which to base an application, and partly to generally reduce the importance of grades when students are selected for exchange programmes. In the past, students at CBS were selected for exchange programmes solely on the basis of first-year grade point averages. In 2019, CBS introduced a general assessment for use in selecting exchange students. This assessment comprises student citizenship, which accounts for 15%, and an academic assessment, which accounts for 85%.

Student citizenship concerns student engagement and active participation in student life at CBS. CBS Students was closely involved in setting the criteria for and implementing this element precisely to ensure its relevance in terms of daily student life. The element includes activities that contribute to the student environment at CBS. Student citizenship may account for a maximum of three activities in the defined categories. The academic assessment consists of the student's first-year grade point averages or some other form of academic evaluation.

The procedure for selecting exchange students is a pilot project that will be evaluated once more experience has been gained. Although grades should be less in focus, students have tended to figure the system out, and their competitive mentality often transfers to activities such as student organisation work. We are therefore still in an experimental phase.

Finally, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have worked on a significant initiative, **Study Start**. Despite a number of initiatives, Study Start 2019 did not pan out satisfactorily, and extensive changes were therefore made to the 2020 programme – including the cancellation of the induction camp (the COVID-19 pandemic has since made the activity unnecessary for this year).

The initiative started with defining eight inspiration points for good induction programmes (before we changed the terminology), the principles of Study Start and an analysis of the Study Start programmes in 2018 and 2019.

Against this background, CBS set up a Study Start 2020 project group, which consisted of members of the programme administration, programme management and students. At the start of 2020, the project group organised workshops with students, programme directors and programme managers, after which it drew up recommendations for a new Study Start framework at CBS. This framework was designed on the basis of workshop feedback and the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 Study Start programmes. In March 2020, CBS's Senior Management decided to implement a new Study Start framework at CBS, as recommended by the project group and the director of programme administration. The new framework was subsequently implemented for Study Start 2020.

'Principles for Study Start' is attached as Appendix D.

FEEDBACK, EXAMS WITH EMPHASIS ON LEARNING

Feedback initiatives are continuously being introduced in all subjects. This feedback goal is expected to be reached on time as planned.

Continuous feedback

Since the last UMV, CBS has intensified its focus on feedback during courses in order to improve student learning. The Dean of Education has engaged in ongoing dialogue with students on this question. CBS has defined feedback as ‘continuous feedback on the students’ activities (compulsory or elective) that addresses how students can improve their performance and prepare themselves to achieve the learning objectives defined for the given course.’

A catalogue of ideas has been developed to help the programmes select different feedback methods. The programmes can freely choose the method that works best for them. All courses are to include at least one formal feedback activity, an aim to be reached during the semester before 2021 (this is a requirement for full-time programmes only). At present, 40% of all courses provide continuous feedback. Although 41% of the courses currently include some form of feedback, these activities require slight adjustments to meet CBS’s general criteria. 19% of the courses offer no feedback.

In some areas, feedback initiatives are associated with initiatives concerning the increased use of blended learning. CBS expects to achieve the goal of continuous feedback for (almost) all courses in 2021.

STRONGER INITIATIVES FOR VULNERABLE STUDENTS

A disability policy was recently drawn up (Appendix C). Efforts have been made as regards special educational assistance (SPS) as well as anti-harassment and other campaigns.

Students with impairments

In the spring of both 2018 and 2019, a user survey of existing SPS recipients was conducted. The following challenges became apparent:

- > lack of visibility (many students were unaware that SPS counselling existed);
- > lack of attention to the target group;
- > many feel lonely and have difficulty talking about their challenges. Impairments are often associated with taboo. This applies to all forms of impairment;
- > some impairments are harder for students to talk about/ask for help with than others – mental health conditions in particular.

SPS recipients also often have special requirements at exams (for example, extra time, special rooms), which they can formally request to be met. The students have had difficulty understanding this dispensation process, often experiencing bottlenecks and finding themselves tossed back and forth between departments.

Efforts to improve the area

Increase visibility and provide easier access:

- > Information campaign on my.cbs.dk
- > Postcard – ‘Do you need special support?’
- > SPS walk-in at Student Hub every Monday
- > Make an appointment to have a conversation. Previously, an SPS counsellor’s office would be open for an hour a week, but students

rarely took advantage of this opportunity. Now they book appointments for a conversation. This works far better, and we talk to many more students than we used to.

Break down taboos:

- > Campaign about mental health challenges: ‘One in 10 students battles with mental health challenges’
- > Course held by the Mental Health Foundation Denmark about mental health conditions (E20)
- > Dyslexia campaign: ‘Did you know that 1 in 14 people has dyslexia?’

Make the application process easier for dyslexic students:

- > Closer cooperation and more dialogue between the study board case worker and the SPS team. Among other things, we have decided that the study board does not need to see documentation of a student’s dyslexia, but should instead contact the SPS team. This saves the student from having to send documentation to several different places.
- > Targeted communication efforts in the area: better e-mails and information on my.cbs.dk to make it easier for students to understand how the process works.

Offers for students who have experienced transgressive behaviour and harassment

In the wake of the #MeToo movement in 2017, in early 2018, CBS introduced an offer for students who have experienced transgressive behaviour or harassment. Students can contact specific CBS staff members who will extend an offer of a conversation or a series of meetings with a specially trained counsellor.

Harassment and transgressive behaviour are addressed through the following initiatives:

- > Swift help
- > Conversations with a counsellor
- > Dialogue (between the parties involved if appropriate)
- > Confidentiality and anonymity

Over the past two years, we have found that this model works in practice. Students appreciate the opportunity to talk to a person in a confidential space, an offer of swift assistance (also in relation to their studies), a referral for additional help and, not least, support and help with filing a report or complaint if they so wish.

Having conversations with the individual student is important, but to a great degree the work also involves shifting the culture and instilling good behaviour as a matter of course at CBS. Efforts to achieve this work include cooperation throughout CBS, campaigns focusing on good conduct and activities related to the role of Study Start coordinators.

The study environment survey described later in this report covers the experience of transgressive behaviour.

CONTINUE ADMINISTRATION’S FOCUS ON STUDENTS – EVALUATE AND IMPROVE MY.CBS

Developing my.cbs.dk on the basis of student needs and continuous feedback is an ongoing undertaking, and much progress has been made since 2017. Most importantly, we expect the launch in 2021 of a new, more up-to-date platform, Sharepoint Modern, to give students even better service. This new platform centres on swifter response time, simpler navigation, greater ease of use and improved design.

Evaluations of the study environment

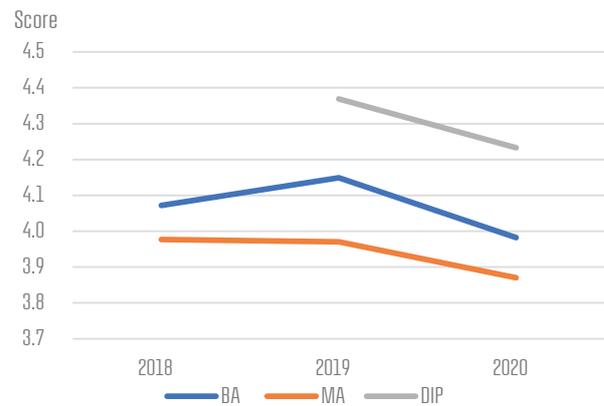
THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT CBS

Students are generally positive. Between 70% and 90% would recommend their study programme to others; approximately 80% generally feel comfortable with their programme; and even more think CBS offers a good academic environment. Students had a stronger sense of belonging to their study programme than in 2018. However, several study environment indicators developed negatively in 2020, a trend that to a certain extent can probably be attributed to the COVID-19 situation. One such indicator is whether students can recommend their study programme.

Finally, it should be mentioned that students are more satisfied with the administration than they were in 2018. How students experience administrative service significantly impacts their study experience as a whole, and this parameter has seen several years of positive development.

COVID-19 is a unique challenge, but otherwise, the trend is satisfactory.

Figure 1: I highly recommend my study programme to others



Source: Annual evaluations and final diploma evaluations

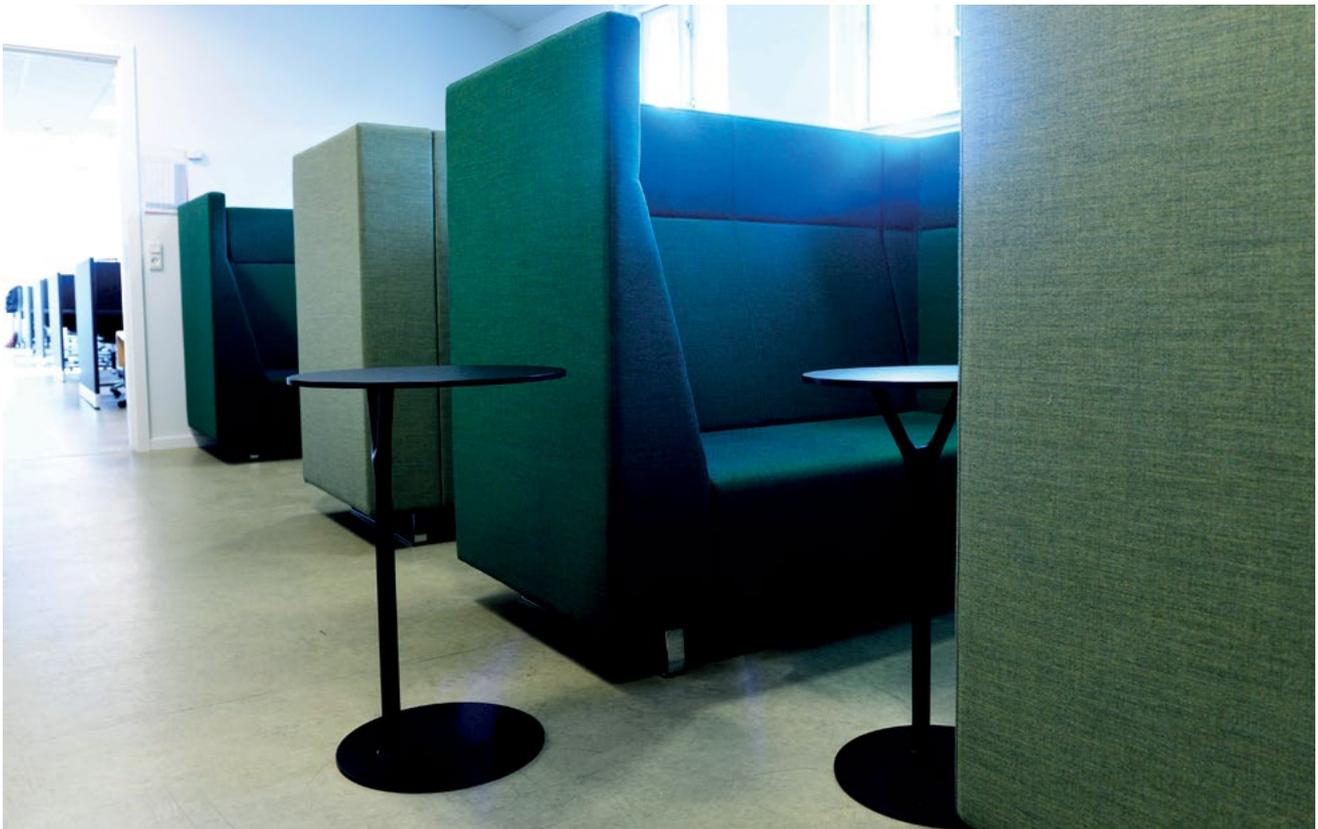
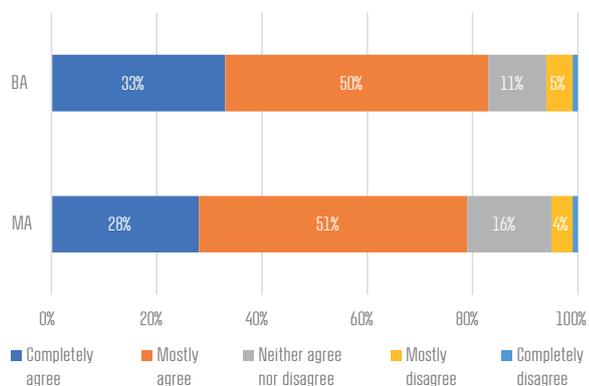
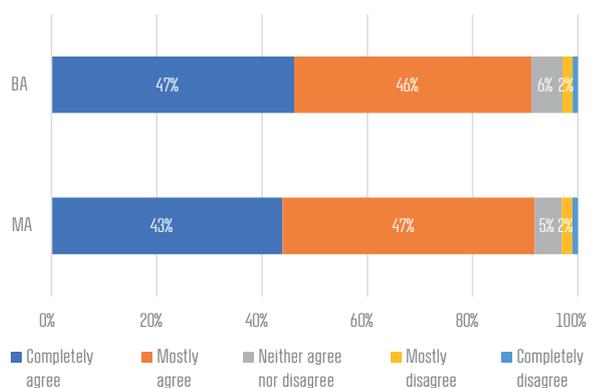


Figure 2: In general, I feel really comfortable with my programme



Source: Uddannelseszoom 2018

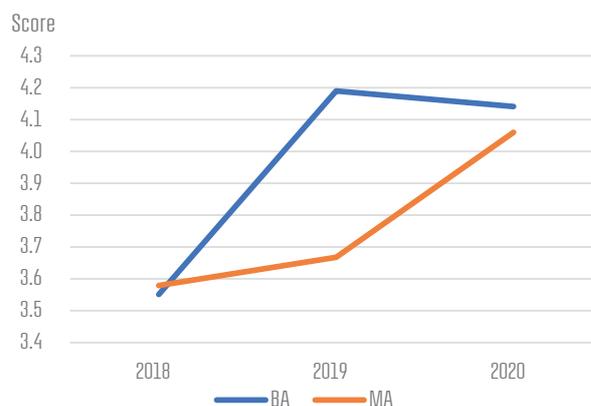
Figure 3: The academic environment is good



Source: Uddannelseszoom 2018

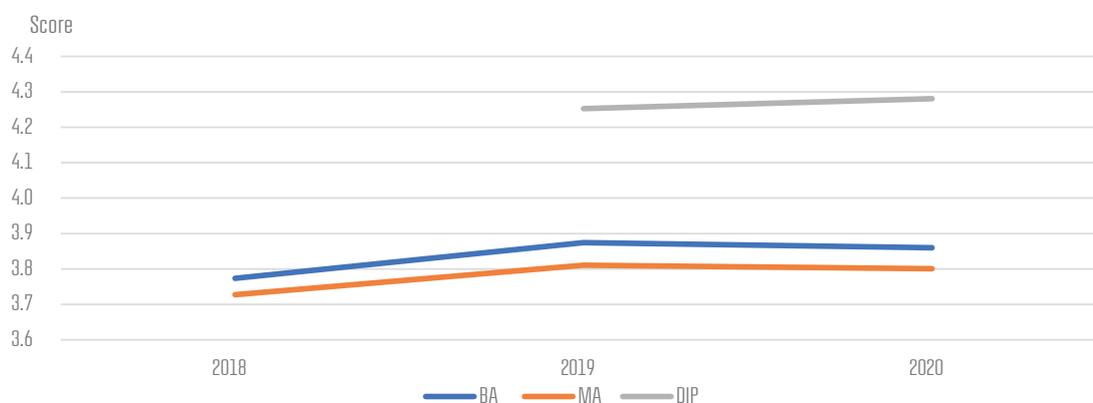
The study environment is systematically evaluated through CBS's annual evaluations and final evaluations of the graduate diploma programmes. In certain areas, information is collected from the 2018 national 'Uddannelseszoom' survey and study start evaluations of CBS. The questions appear from the figure titles and are typically answered on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree.

Figure 4: I have a sense of belonging to my study programme (1st year students)



Source: Annual evaluations and Diploma end evaluations
 Note: 2018-19: The question was only posed to 1st year students; 2020: The question was posed after the programme's induction week

Figure 5: Overall, I am satisfied with the service from the administration



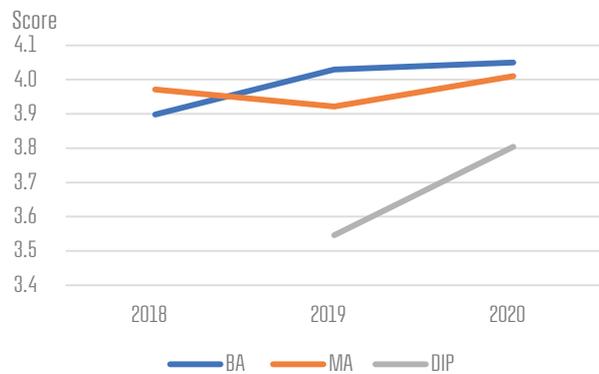
Source: Annual evaluations and final diploma evaluations

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT CBS

Most students are satisfied with both the classrooms and the other physical facilities at CBS. However, students taking full-time programmes were more satisfied than graduate diploma students. By and large, the rooms are the same, so the difference in satisfaction may stem from the fact that graduate diploma programmes are fee-paid, and students therefore tend to expect top-quality physical surroundings. However, satisfaction with the graduate diploma programmes rose significantly in 2020.

Satisfaction with the physical surroundings rose relative to 2018, and both level and development are generally satisfactory.

Figure 6: I am satisfied with the appearance of the classrooms



Source: Annual evaluations and final diploma evaluations

Figure 7: I am satisfied with the other physical surroundings at CBS



Source: Annual evaluations and final diploma evaluations

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AT CBS

Students taking bachelor's degrees were less satisfied with the social environment in 2019 than in 2020, a downturn attributable to COVID-19. The level among master's and graduate diploma students remained relatively constant in the 2018-20 period, with about 60-70% agreeing that they enjoyed a good social environment at CBS.

About 60-70% of students say the social environment increases their motivation to study, which confirms the importance of a good social environment and the potential benefits of further efforts to improve it.

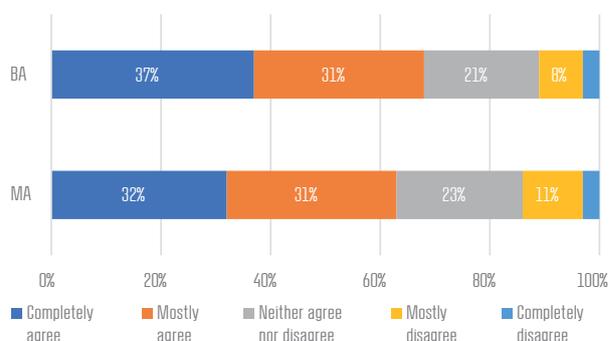
The assessment of the social environment is satisfactory, but there is scope for improvement. Although some of the dissatisfaction can be attributed to COVID-19, upholding a good educational environment under these conditions is still challenging.

Figure 8: The study programme's social environment is good



Source: Annual evaluations and final diploma evaluations

Figure 9: The social environment increases my motivation to study



Source: Uddannelseszoom 2018

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT AT CBS

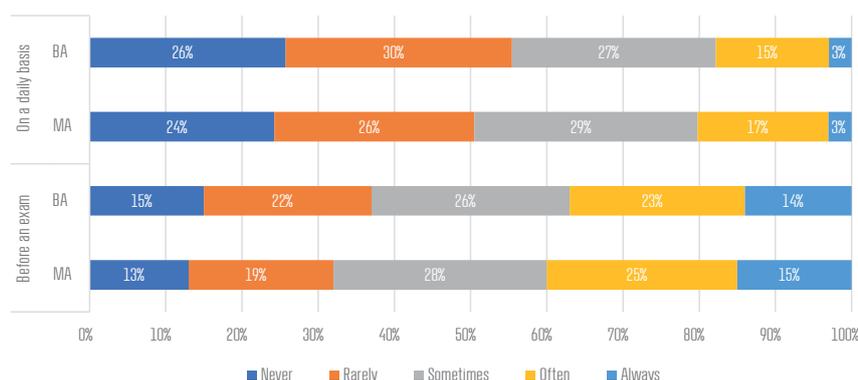
As regards the psychological environment, data is only available for the full-time programmes, because these responses are collected through Uddannelseszooom, which does not include part-time programmes.

More than half of students occasionally or more often experience stress before exams (60-70%). This is higher than during normal study time, when approx. 50% nonetheless still feel stressed. Between 35% and 45% of students state that they have felt lonely during their studies.

A separate investigation is being made of whether students experience transgressive behaviour at the start of their study period. Approx. 10-15% of students state that they have attended social activities that they found transgressive or inappropriate.

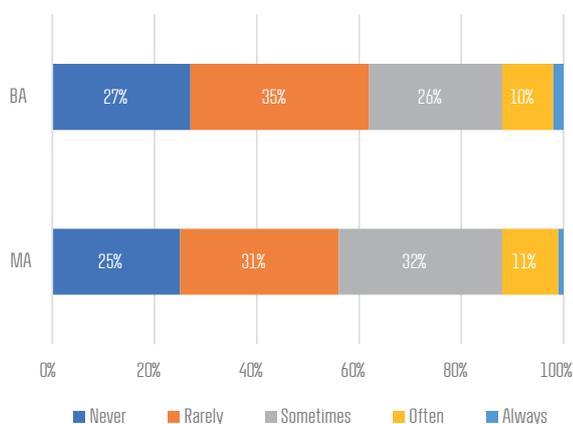
In 2019 this figure was significantly higher for the bachelor programmes. We believe this is due to experiences during the induction courses. In 2019, it was found that induction courses had to be fundamentally changed, after several years of adjustments had failed to eradicate problems of non-inclusive and transgressive behaviour. Accordingly, an entirely new Study Start concept was introduced in 2020, and although COVID-19 restrictions hindered the proceedings, it was gratifying to see that the percentage of bachelor students who experienced transgressive behaviour has fallen significantly compared with 2019. However, overall, the evaluations show that the psychological environment has challenges. CBS's data is no worse than that of other universities, but it is concerning that so many students experience stress on a daily basis, that some feel lonely, and that some are still exposed to inappropriate or transgressive behaviour.

Figure 10: Have you experienced strong stress symptoms?



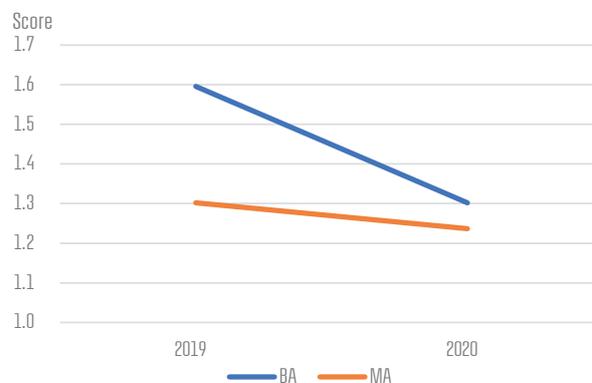
Source: Uddannelseszooom 2018

Figure 11: Have you felt lonely during your study programme?



Source: Uddannelseszooom 2018

Figure 12: To what extent have you experienced social activities that overstepped your boundaries or were otherwise inappropriate?



Source: Study start evaluations

Note: The question is answered on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all, while 5 is to a very high degree

Themes

The period under review and the educational environment have both been evaluated and, on this basis, themes set up for more detailed analysis and discussion. The themes are primarily a description and documentation of a problem area. Initiatives will be proposed in the action plan.

COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE STUDY ENVIRONMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a complex effect on students' academic and social environments as well as on their well-being, and one should therefore not reduce this effect to a set of simple, generalised headlines. Rather, a patchwork of effects – great for some while insignificant for others – has unfolded, and the degree of these effects on students all depends on such factors as their study experience, background, housing and living conditions, and personality. As such, the effect of COVID-19 on the study environment is difficult to quantify.

Broadly speaking, however, the length of time a student has been studying is known to be crucial:

- > For many **newly started** bachelor students, the reduced time on campus, with less physical teaching and contact with other students, complicates the transition to university life. They find it harder to build a network and take longer to learn and master the university's working approach – problems that third-semester students experience to a lesser degree. The combination of large classes coupled with restricted classroom space at CBS poses a challenge, because it puts a cap on how much campus time students can be offered (typically about 50%). For various practical reasons, one programme has only been able to offer students 20-25% face-to-face teaching, a situation that has caused significant frustration and dissatisfaction among first- and second-year students.
- > Many third-year students have had their exchanges or internships cancelled. For some, the disappointment has been so great as to affect their pleasure in studying.
- > COVID-19 has generally had less impact on **master's students** and their studies. Students writing their dissertations have even tended to find themselves less stressed and more focused.

However, the consequences are apparent in the social environment, where loneliness and social isolation in particular have figured more prominently than normal. This applies equally to withdrawn and introvert students, who may currently find it harder to make friends and form networks, and to

socially active, extrovert students who are hard hit by the unaccustomed isolation. Moreover, some students are anxious about COVID-19, and although most students would like to spend more time on campus, some are dissatisfied that not everything is done online.

In 2020, CBS experienced a success – COVID-19 notwithstanding – in that we could arrange a five-day induction programme for new bachelor students that allowed them to spend most of the time with their fellow students. New students stressed the enormously positive importance of this, both academically and socially.

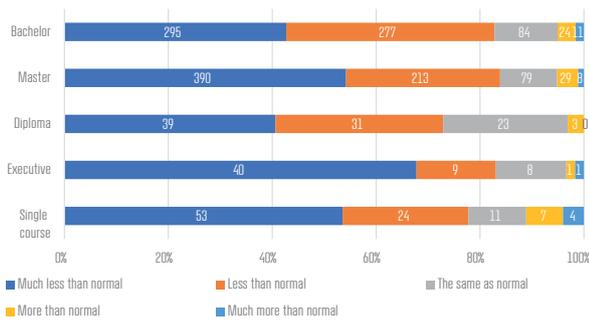
In the **academic** environment, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed bigger challenges than normal in terms of group formation and discussion. Furthermore, students increasingly mention the lack of motivation as a substantial challenge. This applies both to newly started students and to those who feel 'worn down' by two semesters of restrictions.

A picture is emerging across all student groups: when students contact CBS with problems about stress, anxiety, motivation, perfectionism, loneliness, depression or other issues that also arise in normal circumstances, COVID-19 often exacerbates an already challenging situation. The Student Counselling Service is having the same experience: COVID-19 is seldom the primary reason that students contact the service, but for many it plays a reinforcing role.

Another trend is the significant reduction in students' understanding and goodwill from the spring to autumn period 2020. In spring, most were very understanding and even grateful that teaching and exams could go ahead at all. In autumn, however, students became more resistant, and, as such, the continual adjustments mandated by authorities were often met with limited understanding. Several students expressed their anger and frustration with, for example, having to take an exam in an exam hall, or with the fact that CBS was 'simply' following the health authorities' recommendations – others were angry and frustrated because they had too little face-to-face teaching.

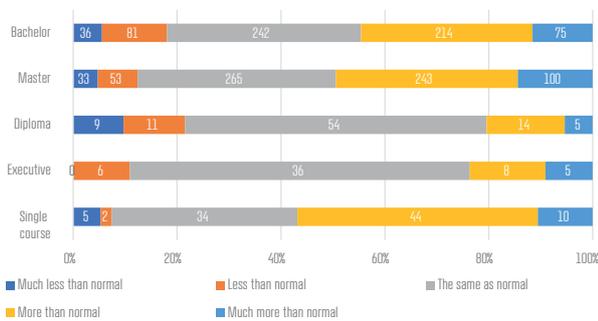
A CBS research project looked into students and their experience of the COVID-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020. The questionnaire survey showed that many students had been extra challenged socially and psychologically during the lockdown. The survey did not take into account whether graduate diploma students, for example, had already enrolled in an online programme.

Figure 13: How much contact did you have with your fellow students during COVID-19?



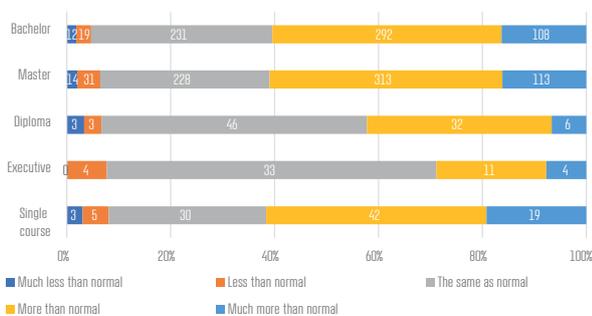
Source: COVID-19 teaching experience task force at CBS

Figure 14: Did you experience severe stress symptoms while studying during COVID-19?



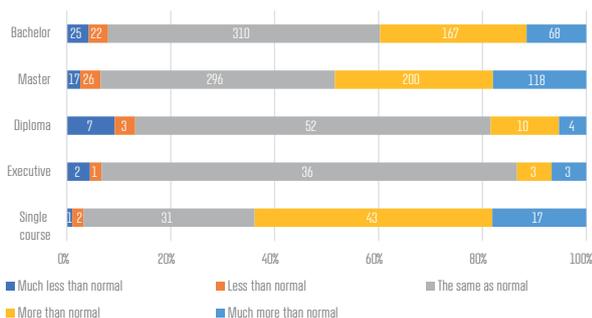
Source: COVID-19 teaching experience task force at CBS

Figure 15: Did you feel lonely during COVID-19?



Source: COVID-19 teaching experience task force at CBS

Figure 16: Did you feel anxious during COVID-19?



Source: COVID-19 teaching experience task force at CBS

SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Student life often poses greater challenges for international students. These challenges lie both in **specific matters** (for example, having to familiarise themselves with Danish exam formats) and in **the overall complexity** generated by the sum of multiple specific challenges. International students have to get used to a new country, a new city, a new university and new ways of studying, while also forming new social relationships and dealing with the practicalities of daily living. Although ranking among those who fare best academically, international students are overrepresented among those who find student life tough-going.

The biggest challenges for international students include:

- Accustoming themselves to the high level of independence traditionally required in the Danish academic system
- Gaining a foothold in the Danish job market, both when seeking a student job and when looking for later employment
- Creating social and academic networks and becoming familiar with Danish youth culture and its strong focus on alcohol – international students are more often lonely and feel uncertain about the social game rules and opportunities
- Family crises and other events in their home country can preoccupy students who are far from home, with limited recourse for action
- Academic crises can quickly develop into fundamental doubt about the wisdom of having travelled to Denmark and CBS to study
- The sum of practical challenges can be overwhelming: finding products in the supermarket, navigating Copenhagen, making a dental appointment, finding out about banking, student education grants and tax requirements and much more.

In 2020 CBS focused more keenly on including international students in the Study Start programme – for example, when it comes to alcohol and forming networks. The preliminary evaluation of the Study Start programme indicates it has been a success.

COVID-19

Enquiries from students clearly show that COVID-19-related challenges are a big concern for international students. This includes problems with loneliness and getting used to Danish culture and ways of studying. It also includes anxiety and uncertainty – about navigating the reality of COVID-19 in a foreign country and worrying about one’s family and friends back in the home country. In addition, the quarantine rules, coupled with the limited possibilities for converting on-campus exams to digital format, can make family visits a formidable undertaking, especially during the Christmas holidays.

LONELINESS

Student loneliness is nothing new. However, loneliness has become a growing and ever-more complex problem in recent years. In the past, most believed that if students were part of the social community, their fellow students would provide the necessary academic network. Today, one more frequently sees that students with an active social student life may still lack an academic community. At the same time, more students are academically well integrated but have no strong social relationships.

Consequently, we need to distinguish between academic and social loneliness – although the two can often be connected. Accordingly, CBS's Study Start activities have more strongly highlighted both the academic and the social aspects of student life during the induction days and Study Start campaigns as well as in other activities organised in the first year of study.

Loneliness and the connection between academic and social factors must be expected to become a more prominent theme for CBS in coming years – even more prominent than study start issues and the current COVID-19-situation. CBS wants to break down the taboos about loneliness and give students the courage and the tools to build stronger relationships. Loneliness is a new focus area where much progress remains to be made.

A SUSTAINABLE STUDY ENVIRONMENT – WELL-BEING

'Student well-being' is considered an important element of the overall strategy CBS plans to implement. A focus on student well-being is not new to CBS: what is new is the idea of developing an overall strategic perspective for the work. These efforts are spurred by the current pressure due to COVID-19, the general societal pressure on young people and, lastly, the particular challenges that CBS as a university faces because of its large classes and low contact between teachers and students.

In recent years, CBS has already taken steps in selected areas to address student well-being over the longer term. The following are examples of three such areas: **the Study Start programme**, the work to stop **harassment and transgressive behaviour** and the new project concentrating on contacting students **at risk of dropping out or delaying their studies**.

Over the past three to four years, CBS has made massive improvements to the Study Start programme for bachelor students. Changing the long-entrenched traditions in this area has taken time, but 2020 saw some major transformations. **The Study Start programme** is now more inclusive, accommodating, for example, international students, introvert students and students who are more academically than socially motivated. The induction days offer more academic content and place greater emphasis on the links between academic and social life as well as the importance of good teamwork. Alcohol now plays a considerably smaller role, and the cultural focus of those welcoming the new students has been fundamentally adjusted to the needs of the less strong and self-confident students.

The traditional introduction camp has been replaced by academic seminar days not held until the start of the second semester, and more activities for new students are organised throughout the first year. CBS also uses Study Start campaigns to draw attention to themes such as community spirit, cooperation, respect for other people and their personal boundaries, and a healthy alcohol culture. The evaluations of the 2020 Study Start programme were positive, confirming that CBS has made the right changes to provide a Study Start programme that, although less raucous and more inclusive, is still fun and engaging. In 2021, the Study Start programme for master's students will also be the focus of improvements that can put it on a par with the corresponding activities for bachelor students.

Since the spring of 2018, a group of three student guidance counsellors have acted as advisers and counsellors for students who have experienced any form of **harassment or transgressive behaviour** (including racism and bullying). These specially trained counsellors also offer longer-term

counselling, if needed. The experience gained has been encouraging, and the response from affected students has generally been that CBS has created a safe and confidential space that constructively helps them move forward as well as provides support in situations where incidents have to be reported, for example. As well as providing personal counselling, these counsellors also help, for example, to prepare campaigns or content for the Study Start programme. One aim of this work is to actively use the knowledge that emerges from the individual counselling sessions to create a healthier and more inclusive study environment.

A special initiative to reach out to students **at risk of dropping out or delaying their studies** started in the autumn of 2020. A special group of staff have been personally contacting students who have been delayed or whom study data shows to be at some other risk. The individual counselling that staff offer often leads to students being referred to the Student Guidance Services, for example. The project is also expected to generate knowledge about the factors that may cause delays – knowledge that can be used as a preventive measure for creating a healthier study environment. Although this initiative is new, we can already see that students have embraced it. CBS's act of reaching out to these students is perceived as kind and caring – and, for many, this specifically means that study problems otherwise left untouched are addressed.

STUDENT-RUN ACTIVITIES

Student-run activities and societies play an important role at CBS. CBS makes it a priority to support such activities rather than to offer a broad raft of events it has organised itself. Accordingly, it must provide good conditions under which students can run these activities, an aim it strives to support in various ways.

One student says student-run societies are the key to feeling a sense of belonging to CBS:

'Nothing organised by "the official CBS" has given me a sense of belonging to a specific student environment. Students and the student organisations (including unions), however, do all that.'

However, these activities have been particularly hard hit by COVID-19. Most have been cancelled or downsized, and, with students spending much less time on campus than usual, recruiting students to participate in the activities has also become more difficult.

Rules permitting, social student activities could be included in initiatives to (re)create a good social environment, but identifying activities that can be implemented while complying with the COVID-19-restrictions will be a major task. Responding to a question about whether students missed anything during the campus lockdown in spring 2020, a student wrote the following:

'Social life, student organisations with various events from week to week, like talks, competitions, promotions – everything that makes studying and working at CBS more than reading and going to exams.'

The quotation underscores the importance of student-run activities for the educational environment at CBS.

Recommendations

CBS AFTER COVID-19

The pandemic appears to have had serious consequences for the educational environment and to have hit CBS hard – both because social contact largely takes place outside the classroom and because the physical premises preclude a framework for optimal teaching space. In the transition phase, CBS will have to create a better educational environment under the continuing restrictions while also restoring some of what students have lost during their ‘online year’. This holds especially true for those who have only studied at CBS under COVID-19 restrictions.

ON CAMPUS, ONLINE AND HYBRID

COVID-19 has further accelerated the conversion of teaching to digital platforms. Accordingly, CBS intends to investigate and work with the implementation of new digital solutions in classrooms, thus enabling more and better options for doing digital teaching on campus, online or with a hybrid of the two. This can be achieved through the creation of more classrooms with streaming options, ‘broadcast rooms’ enabling the teacher to see all the students on individual screens, digital mirroring rooms that allow students to be taught across universities and other solutions that support both physical and online learning spaces.



TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS/ AUDITORIA INTO NEW PEDAGOGICAL LEARNING SPACES

In future, smaller classes will be in focus, along with more hours of face-to-face contact and greater variation between on-campus, online and hybrid teaching as well as more learning spaces for group- and dialogue-based teaching. CBS will therefore investigate and work with ways of converting and modernising the traditional classrooms and auditoria into new pedagogical learning spaces. For example, some of the auditoria at Solbjerg Plads will become the hub of a pedagogical transformation. The wider variety of classrooms will mean that the classroom booking system must be updated to prevent (further) capacity problems.

WELL-BEING AND HEALTH

Many factors are important for a good and healthy study, teaching and learning environment – physical and psychological. The physical framework contributes to a good learning environment through such means as good architecture and indoor climate. CBS has a beautiful, aesthetic setting in which student life can unfold, but the school must continue to develop and work to provide the best study conditions. Continuous efforts are needed to improve the acoustics, lighting and ventilation of campus buildings as well as green campus areas and our conduct in general – all elements that indirectly promote better learning conditions for students, their health and their well-being. These improvements can be realised through daylight control in auditoria without daylight and acoustics and sound improvements (AV) to help dialogue- and group-based teaching to run more smoothly. Other enhancement measures include a greener campus both inside and out and sustainability that is integrated into our daily activities.

STUDY ZONES, INFORMAL MEETING PLACES AND DIVERSITY

The coming period will see continued efforts to improve ‘social spaces’ and offer a greater variety of physical meeting and study areas for students to use between classes. The categorisation and identification of study zones will continue, and the types of rooms that CBS either lacks or has in over-abundance will be examined, along with such factors as floor-space ratio. Additionally, more informal meeting and study areas need to be created, inside and out, including the option for more group study rooms and workshop areas, studios with a range of IT/AV equipment, student cafés and so on. CBS should also examine the possibility of taking greater pedagogical and social considerations into account in the room allocation. The aim to efficiently use space limits the work with improving ‘social spaces’. This ambition is therefore long-term, and a point of reference in the further development of CBS’ campus.

INCORPORATING ART INTO STUDY, TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES

CBS sets great store on maintaining a high level of ambition and ensuring that art and decoration play a role on campus. Based on the new art strategy, the vision centres on bringing art into study programmes and research, on establishing new cooperation partners and on conducting specific art projects on campus. The work will address the integration of art into building structures and the importance of art for the physical learning space – for example, lighting-based art installations or decorative elements with an acoustic effect. Artistic works on campus may be permanent or temporary and should involve and inspire students and their studies.

LONELINESS AND WELL-BEING

Part of CBS’s new strategy aims to actively promote student well-being. The strategic initiative will be based on two perspectives: better support and outreach activities for vulnerable students, and a general improvement of the programmes’ social environment. The transitions that students undergo on their CBS journey will serve to focus and guide the organisation of this work. The project will span from students’ thoughts about whether CBS really is for them and the start of student life to the transition from bachelor to master and ultimately on to the first job as a CBS graduate.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students are in a special situation, and the general help afforded them does not always meet their needs. Our recommendation, based among other things on experience from Exchange Students, is to look more closely at how international students’ first period at CBS can be improved. A good study experience and integration will conceivably also increase the probability of students staying in Denmark after completing their education.

STUDENT-RUN ACTIVITIES

Experience shows that student-run activities are vital to students’ social environment, particularly at CBS where students have relatively little contact with teachers. Student-run activities already play a big role, but have suffered under the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend that CBS seek to support the resumption of these activities and generally strive to create frameworks that further promote student-run activities.



Further work and follow-up

The recommendations contained in this UMV were presented to and adopted by Senior Management in February 2021.

In future, the task force that prepared this report will monitor the implementation of the action plan. The group will meet once or twice a year to review progress and prepare an annual report on this for Senior Management.

Any group member that leaves will be replaced by an individual from that member's department or organisation.



Appendices

A. GRADE-FREE FIRST YEAR AT HA(PSYK), CBS – FIRST OBSERVATIONS

We have now completed the first semester of our grade-free first year experiment, which will run for three years. Hereby a report on the project, with less attention given to the background of the experiment, and more to our first observations on how it works in practice.

Rationale:

We have had an (for CBS) exceptional study culture at HA/CM(psyk), where our students are known for supporting one another. They pride themselves on being psyk students and on contributing to the ‘psyk spirit’. The past years, though, students have voiced a worry about the ‘psyk spirit’, noting that a counterproductive performance mentality is sneaking in, challenging curiosity, willingness to speculate and experiment, and so on. Students have expressed regret that they are becoming extremely exam-focused and less interested in learning. Similarly, teachers have been frustrated that so much energy is devoted to questions like ‘is this relevant for the exam’, ‘how are we being tested’, etc.

Initiatives:

The grade-free first year is meant to be a strong signal of the value we have articulated (in the study board with participation of additional student groups): ‘engagement in learning’. Our hope was that students would be able to transfer the energy normally spent on ‘performing’ to energy spent on ‘learning’.

We did not want to leave our students in a vacuum without any assessment of their activities and their level, so along with replacing grades with pass/failed, we introduced a range of new assessment activities. For instance:

- > Replacing a 4 hour sit in exam with 2 x 5 pages written product with feedback by teachers + group project with oral exam
- > Replacing a 4 hour sit in exam with an individual 5 page-essay with rubrics-based written feedback
- > Replacing a group synopsis (with individual oral defence) with an individual 10-page written product with individual feedback (and two elements of the assignment handed in and commented on during the semester)
- > Replacing a 4 hour sit in exam with 12 sets of homework (calculation problems) throughout the semester, where 10 need to be passed (plus 5 tests where 3 need to be passed)
- > Introducing 5 statistics tests where 3 need to be passed (as preparation for the 4 hour sit in exam). Part of the learning is through peer grading the tests.

Besides these examples, we are making a lot more use of peer grading and teacher-guided peer feedback in groups, and we continue with the various kinds of feedback we had already integrated in our teaching.

First observations:

We are aiming to measure the effect of our experiment in various ways (what will the GPA of students be when they begin to get grades on the 3rd semester (compared with previous years’ 3rd semester students); what happens to drop out rates; what happens to student satisfaction, etc. But until now, we only have qualitative data and anecdotal evidence, which I will share here:

The experiment was very well received by the new students. At the introduction to the experiment they were asked to raise their hands to indicate whether they were happy with the increased focus on feedback and decreased focus on end-performance, or if they would prefer grades as the feedback form. More than 100 students indicated that they were happy with the feedback focus and less than a handful indicated they would have preferred grades. This is also what we hear from our intro-people and ‘psyk guides’ (mentors) – the new students are immensely relieved that they do not have to worry about grades; they worry enough about adjusting to university life, academic thinking, and a number of other dimensions of student life.

Teachers report back that they see a marked difference in both the level and the type of engagement in the classroom. Students are much more active, and they seem to attend practically all classes. They are less concerned with the outcome/exam part of the courses and more engaged in what is brought to the table. This goes for cognitive psychology and microeconomics alike. No teachers have seen a decline in engagement and they generally report that the ambience in the classroom has changed for the better. Additionally, for instance in cognitive psychology, the academic level of students’ work has increased this year, according to the teacher. She believes this has to do with the new feedback form (written feedback on products).

Besides my interaction with the new students and the reports I am getting from mentors and teachers, we have received feedback from the dean’s office (Annemette Kjærgaard and colleagues, who have carried out focus group interviews with the new students). These are their main points (as reported on a study board meeting):

Positive elements mentioned by students

- > Their program takes seriously the issues that students are voicing and act upon them
- > Less competition and fewer ‘sharp elbows’
- > Time and energy for finding one’s own method of studying

- > No longer worried about the grades that will show up on 3rd semester
- > More daring, not that scared of appearing unknowledgeable
- > Few thoughts about their position in a hierarchy of good and bad students, no stress about singling out ‘the best’ students for group work
- > More time to just be alive and have a social life within the program

Room for improvement mentioned by students

- > Although peer feedback is valued, some prefer teacher feedback.
- > Not all teachers are equally good at giving feedback – students suggest that we learn from the best
- > It is unclear what the purpose of their ‘feedback journal’ is. (The journal is another grade-free first year initiative, not described here).
- > Some might work less hard than they would have done if they were to be given grades, but most prioritize their work and dive deeply into particular texts and themes
- > Even without grades, it is still hard to work in groups and still frightening to have to take exams (even if they are pass/fail)
- > It is unclear what the grade-free first year means for their chances of going abroad on exchange.

In my view, the most problematic aspect of the grade-free first year is exactly the lack of clarity regarding the exchange application process and how we will succeed in sending our students out on their fifth semester.

The second issue that students might complain about in the end is about being Guinea pigs. A project of this scale cannot be perfect – too many changes are being made at the same time and too many people are involved. Just one small example: teacher team kept saying different things about the requirement to pass the exam (students’ work had to be above 02, above 07, or meet the course objectives). Such things happen, even if it has been said again and again that the pass/fail level has to be set in relation to the learning goals, not the conventional grading scale.

Ursula Plesner

Programme Director, Associate Professor, PhD
February 2019

B. FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT STUDENT WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Student Counselling Service:

The fact that higher education students in Denmark are experiencing low well-being and stress is well documented. Figures from the Danish National Health Profile show that the percentage of 25–34-year-old students suffering high levels of stress rose from 29.2% in 2013 to 41.3% in 2017. Among 16–24-year-old students, this figure increased from 23.2% to 30.5% in the same period. Based on responses from over 100,000 students, recent figures from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science show similar trends, with almost one in five students indicating that they always or often experience strong symptoms of stress in their daily lives.

A survey conducted by the Mental Health Foundation Denmark of 1,500 young people between 16 and 24 has also shown that 41% of this student population are only satisfied with their performance if they get a 10 or 12, the two highest grades possible. Similarly, 42% agree or strongly agree that high academic achievement is necessary for a good life. Loneliness is another major issue prominent among many students. According to a survey from the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), 58% of students can be described as being either periodically lonely or lonely. Lonely students are more likely to consider dropping out of their studies. They are also less inclined to discuss their study materials and to feel that they can turn to fellow students for help.

Over the years, mental health problems among higher education students and the associated challenges have become an issue of greater international focus. International studies show that students are at high risk of experiencing low mental well-being and that these challenges are on the rise. Although causal connections are hard to prove, a number of studies point to negative connections between mental health problems, academic performance and dropping-out. Furthermore, students with mental health problems tend to lack a strong sense of belonging to their study and are more likely to consider dropping out. Greater international awareness of this has sparked intense interest in interventions promoting well-being in institutions of higher education in countries like the UK and Australia. This realisation has also crystallised in Denmark, where University College Absalon, for example, has addressed student well-being, engagement and retention as part of a strategic initiative to achieve its academic goals for and with its students.

<https://docplayer.dk/157076791-Naar-det-perfekte-tynger-studenterraadgivningens-aarsskrift-om-studietrivsel-2019.html>

Disability policy for CBS students

CBS takes its responsibility as an inclusive institution of higher education seriously and as such is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students.

A disability policy promotes equal opportunities and aims to provide an inclusive student environment that is accessible – physically, academically, educationally and socially – to everyone.

CBS's disability policy is based on the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilitiesⁱ, which seeks to ensure an inclusive education system. CBS thus follows current Danish legislation, which is modelled on the Convention.

The policy applies to all students who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that can hinder their participation in the educational system on an equal basis with others.

Vision

CBS strives to be an institution of higher education where the inclusion of students with impairments promotes diversity and strengthens the community, thus giving everyone the opportunity to realise their abilities and potential.

Values

- Inclusion: CBS is to have physical, educational and social space for everyone.
- Diversity: All people are unique, and their different strengths, resources and skills make a positive contribution to the community.
- Community: CBS must provide a framework that best enables everyone to thrive and realise their potential.

The vision and valuesⁱⁱ are the foundation for the following three overarching objectives:

1. Physical accessibility with a universal design

The physical environment at CBS should provide physical access for all students and on equal conditions. The physical layout should enable students with disabilities to participate fully in student life, and give them the opportunity to foster their own personal academic and social relationships without being constrained by the design of the physical surroundings.

2. Academic/educational accessibility and disability compensation options

Academic and educational programmes and activities must as far as possible be planned to take into account any needs students with disabilities may have. Any aids and other assistive measures required by these students will be provided to ensure they get the full benefit of the

teaching and can participate on an equal footing with their fellow students. Teachers and support staff should be aware of the challenges and special needs of students with disabilities and attentive to how structural factors underpin an inclusive student environment and culture.

3. Social accessibility and full participation

Social events and activities should be planned to ensure that everyone, regardless of disability and special needs, can participate fully and thus enjoy all the benefits of the community while also contributing to it. There must be transparency about having a disability and the special needs that accompany it. CBS wishes to signal the importance of creating an inclusive community that embraces and values diversity.

The objectives are described in greater detail in an independent action plan that also contains a catalogue of ideas and suggested initiatives for putting the disability policy into practice at CBS.

i

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>)

ii

The vision and values are the result of a multidisciplinary CBS report involving internal and external stakeholders as well as the Danish Association of Youth with Disabilities (www.sumh.dk)



Principles of Study Start

Study Start

The aim of Study Start is to help new students academically socialise during the first year of their bachelor studies – a process intended to enable them to master the art of studying and make them actively co-responsible for staying committed to studying and their learning objectives.

Study Start must address all aspects of student life and support the students in finding a realistic and healthy balance between studying and academic requirements and possibilities and social life at and outside CBS.

Study Start should be one coherent course of events, in which the individual student is invited to participate wherever needed.

Clear expectations that make sense

1

- The Study Start framework must be clear in advance, so that the individual student can match his or her expectations and opt in or opt out.
- The students must be presented with an outline of initiatives and activities to be carried out in the first year.

Step by step – on time

2

- Activities and initiatives to support academic socialisation must be scheduled on a step-by- step basis within a limited period of time, e.g. the first day, the first month, the first 3-6 months and the first year, and added whenever the information is relevant to the students.
- The Study Start programme must be designed in activity modules and made available to the study boards. The modules must reflect the individual needs of the programmes and be based on these principles.
- There must be a well-balanced connection between academic and social elements.
- The study board is responsible for ensuring academic quality and coherence through dialogue and collaboration with the involved parties.

Academic focus and involvement

3

- The focus will be on learning, academic progression and structure in the student's encounter with his or her new programme.
- The students must acquire knowledge within systems, study techniques and exams that take place within an academically relevant context.
- The study board is responsible for introducing the students to academic conduct, academic writing and academic reading and for implementing these elements in the teaching activities.
- The study board is responsible for involving course coordinators and programme lecturers in Study Start.

Social focus and feeling comfortable

4

- Study Start must address and consider the fact that different students have different needs and qualifications, and that some student segments may need special attention.
- Study Start must ensure a good and comfortable framework for student life and establish a strong basis on which students can take responsibility for each other.

Diversity and inclusion

5

- Study Start must be an inclusive process where diversity is considered a strength.
- The group of volunteers and employed students must be diverse in order for the individual student to feel represented.
- Academic and social activities and initiatives must strike a balance between plenary, group and individual activities to allow for diversity in types of learning.
- It is recommended that the students are placed in predetermined learning groups in order to ensure inclusion.
- Social activities during Study Start must focus on students establishing long-term relationships, which are vital to keeping them at CBS. It is the responsibility of the study board to establish a dialogue with the students about avoiding alcohol consumption during social activities, and to encourage students to find alternatives within the framework of CBS's alcohol consumption policy.

The Study Start Group: Maria Lind, Anne Lise Bendiksen, Lykke Håkonsson, Tasja Rodian, Tine Løvig Simonsen and Thomas Gylling, April 2019. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments.

