

Recommendations for study environments regarding continued focus on students' well-being during the Covid-19 crisis

To ensure the continued well-being amongst AAU students, AAU Student Guidance are aware of which special challenges the students are experiencing due to the Corona-crisis. The below is an attempt to shed some light on the different themes, which currently seem to be central for the students and also which actions are in demand and can be implemented locally at the different studies.

We know that you all are working very hard to make alternative teaching solutions work. However, we still get inquiries in AAU Student Guidance showing that, there are a few places where there still are some challenges regarding the practical organization, as the students must find a balance between study-life and private life that now melt together. The inquiries are specifically regarding the form and execution of the lectures. In addition, for some groups of students, there can be challenges regarding maintaining structure and motivation in their everyday life. Regarding that, there may be a need for you to offer students supplementary supportive actions such as opportunities to be included in professionally founded communities, which can assist in structure and maintaining motivation and momentum.

On that background we have formulated five recommendations which we hope you will include in your considerations regarding maintaining a good study environment and thereby contributing to general well-being amongst the students.

1. Focus on the form of the teaching

We encourage that the studies continually are attentive to in which form the students can access the teaching. We have examples of inquiries where students are frustrated over just getting slides for a lecture without any streaming or voiced explanation as to how to understand the slides nor any possibility to ask questions to the lecture. This is frustrating to the students who experience it as lacking and it contributes to feelings of anxiety regarding being able to pass the examination for certain modules. We recommend a special focus on utilizing the digital possibilities that can support accessibility and learning. It could be interactive webinars where group discussions are possible or a Q&A session via chat – in essence, any activity that activates the students and creates opportunities for students getting their questions answered.

2. Flexibility regarding being able to access the teaching

In these days, private life and study life are melting together. Some students have to give care to children and at the same time follow study activities such as lectures. Regarding that, we have some inquiries where students are frustrated about having to access the teaching adhering to a rigid schedule, which in some circumstances is incompatible with the other obligations the students have. Therefore, it is recommended that the teaching to the extent that it is possible, is organized and implemented so the students can access the teaching at different times – for example through video recordings, slides accompanied with a soundtrack, or similar, which is made available.

3. Explicit contact information and options

The situation is ever evolving and like everyone else, the students get information from many different sources, which can leave them sitting with questions and or worries. Therefore, we encourage proactive clarity in regards to whom the students should contact in which situation and regarding which issues.

4. Professionally founded virtual communities that contribute to structure and maintenance of motivation

For some students maintaining structure in everyday life may be experienced as difficult and their motivation may diminish. Here the studies are encouraged to consider various professionally founded virtual communities, e.g. virtual study groups where the curriculum is discussed or other such actions. This may come quite natural for some whereas others may be in need of some encouragement and support.

5. Cooperation with student-worker guidance counselors

We also want to encourage that the student-worker guidance counselors at your studies are included as a resource. Make arrangements with them to support the theme “communities individually” and discuss ideas with them about how-to. Could they e.g. offer “have a cup of coffee with your student guidance counselor once a week” virtually by sending a Skype link to the students? A different possibility could be a weekly video column where the student-worker guidance counselor focuses on relevant and study specific themes.

Tips:

Along with these recommendations, we have gathered some tips and exercises for creating a good structure in everyday life where study life and private life melt together (separate file). You are welcome to share them with your students and student-worker guidance counselors.

AAU Student Guidance is available for guidance daily. See office hours on www.studentguidance.aau.dk

On behalf of AAU Student Guidance

Lisbeth Kappelgaard and Lene Agger