

## How to Uni: Blended Study Start for Engineering Students

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Keywords* –study start, blended learning, online pre-activities

Please indicate clearly the type of contribution you are submitting:  hands-on,  explore,  poster.

### **Background**

The Faculty of Engineering (TEK) at the University of Southern Denmark decided to work with blended learning as part of the study start for new engineering students beginning with the fall semester/August 2021. An online “study start course”, “How to Uni”, was developed and set up in the university’s learning management system and was accessible to students well ahead of their on-campus study start.

The background for setting up the course is to ensure that students gain crucial knowledge about the university and the faculty, and to aid in their preparation to become university students. Logistically, moving part of the study start online would also allow TEK and the students to make the most of the time period from when students accept their place in a programme until the on-campus study start activities begin. It would also allow for tutors, mentors, 1<sup>st</sup> semester teachers a.o. to spend more time actively engaging with the students during the on-campus study start, as the information best suited for one-way communication was moved into a pre-activity.

As a pre-activity, the online study start course aims to raise awareness among the new students on important issues such as study competencies, motivation, and specific aspects of engineering education at TEK, thus providing prerequisites for them to participate actively at their engineering programme. The different course elements have been deliberately selected to ensure an adequate distribution of online and face-to-face activities, relevant use of particular online tools, options for learner-content/learner-learner interaction, and facilitation of flexible self-regulated learning, as recommended in the European Maturity Model for Blended Education, EMBED (Valkenberg et. al, 2020), and in accordance with the underlying principles for teaching and learning at SDU (SDU, accessed 2021) and TEK (DSMI, 2015). More specifically, the course includes five learning paths with a number of texts, videos, tests and discussion boards.

### **Set-up:**

The hands-on session will include a 20 min presentation of selected parts of the online study start course and the thoughts behind it, as well as data on course completion and student evaluations of the first run-through in August/September 2021. The theoretical context will be the EMBED blended learning framework (Valkenberg et. al, 2020).

### **Hands-on activity:**

After the initial presentation, the participants will reflect on and discuss their own potential use of online pre-activities as part of one of their courses. The proposed structure is:

- The participants have 5 minutes to reflect on their own (potential) use of online pre-activities, using the information from the initial presentation and the EMBED framework as a starting point.

- The participants share their reflections with each other using an ‘inside outside circle’ method, which allows them to develop their reflections in collaboration with others.
- The participants are divided into groups to discuss the potentials and pitfalls of using online pre-activities.
- The groups share their potentials and pitfalls with each other and the presenters.

**References:**

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