

Pro-Rector for Education

Education in a digital everyday life:

What have we done so far?

As rector has already mentioned, we have had to transform our work methods very quickly this spring and would like to take this opportunity to praise all students and staff for the way you have handled this transition.

We have shown the ability to quickly convert to online teaching and learning.

We are in a special situation and it has been demanding. Thank you very much for the huge effort!

Currently we are in the first full digital exam period at NMBU with 300 digital exams, and I have heard from the Department of Academic Affairs that it is going quite well. The exams methods vary from hand-in assignments in Canvas, exams in Wiseflowt o digital oral exams on Zoom.

As previously mentioned by Rector, we have also managed to offer a number of online courses in the June Block as skills enhancement measures for people who has lost their jobs.

On behalf of the Department of Academic Affairs, I would like to express my gratitude to the faculties and departments in University administration for excellent cooperation and great efforts to achieve this.

I am also impressed by many teacher's creativity in designing digital teaching and assessment this spring. We have gained useful new experience and knowledge for later, when in a corona-free everyday life soon will return.

We will take a look back now that the classes are finished for the spring, as the newly gained experience og provides room for improvement. What worked? What didn't? How can we better facilitate assessments in a digital context?

I think we have a lot of leeway with regard to alternative forms of assessment. The advice from educators is that we should move from classical assessment of learning to assessment FOR and AS learning. The best learning is through frequent and well-intentioned corrections in the learning process and so that the assessment becomes part of the learning. Together NMBU can stay in the forefront of online teaching.

I recommend that you take a look at the Department of Academic Affairs and The Learning Centre's web-pages <https://www.nmbu.no/en/news/node/39878> ;
<https://www.nmbu.no/en/employees/learning-center/node/22791>

For students useful information is found here:

<https://www.nmbu.no/en/students/administration/news/node/39887>

Challenges

The COVID-19 situation has also shown us what challenges a digital work life can offer.

Psychosocial Learning Environment

Working digitally and in isolation is challenging. It requires great self-discipline and the ability to

structure everyday life. Zoom cannot replace the Bodega, Mini-UKA, the academic discussions at the faculties. We are social beings, and we must become even better at taking good care of each other. Our teachers must make sure that all students are seen and heard, even though it is difficult in the digital classrooms. At the same time, the digital meeting places may provide an opportunity for direct follow up if you discover someone who is “struggling”.

This newly gained experience is also important to take into the next semester and the new students. Hopefully the autumn semester will not be fully digital, however we have to think ahead and create a good psychosocial learning environment and a social life for our new and old students.

The start of the new semester will be different. The BBQ at Pentagon will be postponed, and the matriculation ceremony will not happen on Storplenen this year, but the semester will start, and the student buddies are ready to welcome the new students. The courses will be partly digital and partly on campus for the new students.

Fieldwork and lab-skills

Not all classes can be digitized. Skills training in the clinics, lab-work and field work must be physically trained in a real situation. This is a challenge we are aware of. I am impressed by the creativity and flexibility of both staff and students.

An example is the veterinary students who are prepared to spend their summer doing their training if the infection control allows it.

What happens next?

When it comes to teaching and classes in August and the autumn, we plan for a flexible solution. We need a plan for this. The situation may allow a gradual physical opening of campus and classes, which also requires a plan. Plans and decisions are required for both the teachers and those staff who plan schedules and room solutions. This is demanding. Perhaps there will be hybrid solutions where some student groups are present on campus and the rest participate through ZOOM.

Exchange

is canceled for countries outside Europe for the coming semester both in and out. Whether exchange to Europe is possible will be decided no later than June 1.

For international degree students on the English study programmes we plan for a fully digital semester.

The consequences are that there will be less international students on campuses next semester.

I am sure that we through this will be able to develop our studies to become even better.

With that, I would like to thank you all very much for your efforts and wish you all the best!

