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| Recipient(s): Course coordinators – BSc and MSc in Economics and Business Admistration. | | Memo |
| **A good course description** |

The purpose of this memo is to bring focus to the importance of having good course descriptions in all courses, including, not least, good descriptions of each course’s learning outcomes. Course descriptions ought to be short and precise so that the recipient reads the entire description, yet at the same time must contain sufficient information about the course. Thus, the course description is important for several reasons:

* It must motivate the students
* It contains essential information about the course
* It helps the students create realistic expectations for a specific course
* It must form the basis of the course responsible’s selection of teaching and examination types
* It must form the basis of the awarding of marks

Below, please see the description of the formal framework of the course descriptions, the general learning purpose of BScB and MSc in Economics and Business Administration as well as examples of how to work with the learning purpose in each course.

# The formal framework of the course descriptions

The course descriptions are a formal part of the academic regulation and an element in the determination of the framework of a degree programme. Concomitantly, the learning purpose stated in the course description forms the basis of the awarding of marks. Please refer to the regulations below from the Examination Order (BEK no. 1062 of 30/06/2016) and Grading Scale Order (BEK no. 114 of 03/02/2015), respectively.

*Examination Order*

2 (1) ”The objective of the examination is to assess the extent to which the student's qualifications comply with the academic objectives stipulated for the subjects or subject elements of the programme in the curriculum.”

2 (2) ”In the curriculum for the individual programme, the university lays down precise descriptions of objectives and criteria for assessing the fulfilment of such objectives for the individual subjects or subject elements as are concluded with an examination.”

*Grading Scale Order*

9 ”The assessment of the student’s performance or proficiency must take place on the basis of the academic requirements specified for the relevant subject, subject element or programme element (awarding of absolute grades).”

10 (1) ”The grading must be based on an overall assessment of the extent to which the student’s performance or proficiency meets the intended learning outcomes for the subject, subject element or programme element as laid down in the ministerial orders or curriculum for the individual study programmes, etc.”

# Learning purpose of BScB and MSc

The qualification requirements of bachelor’s and master’s degrees are presented overleaf in ”Qualifications Framework For Higher Education”. A distinction is made in the Danish qualifications framework between knowledge, skills and competences, which is defined as follows:

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING includes both knowledge about and understanding of a subject, that is, whether one can relate his or hers knowledge to a specific context and explain it to others. Knowledge can be both practical and theoretical.

SKILLS define what one can do or execute. They can be both practical, cognitive, creative and communicational.

COMPETENCES define the ability to apply knowledge and skills in a given context. Here, ”responsibility” and ”independence” are central concepts.

For further information about the qualifications framework, please refer to the homepage of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science:

<https://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks/other-qualifications-frameworks/danish-qf-for-higher-education?set_language=en&cl=en>

Table 1. Qualifications framework for bachelor’s and master’s degrees

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| **Qualifications framework for bachelor’s and master’s degrees** | | | |
| **Level** | **Knowledge** | **Skills** | **Competences** |
| Bachelor | Must possess knowledge of the theories, methodologies and practice of a profession or one or more subject areas.  Must be able to understand and reflect on theories, methodologies and practice. | Must be able to apply the methodologies and tools of one or more subject areas as well as apply skills related to work within the subject area(s) or in the profession.  Must be able to evaluate theoretical and practical issues as well as explain the reasons for and choose relevant solution models.  Must be able to communicate academic issues and solution models to peers and non-specialists or collaboration partners and users. | Must be able to handle complex and development-oriented situations in study or work contexts.  Must be able to independently participate in discipline-specific and interdisciplinary collaboration with a professional approach.  Must be able to identify their own learning needs and organise their own learning in different learning environments. |
| Master | Must possess knowledge at the highest international level within the research field.  Must have made a significant contribution to the development of new knowledge and understanding within the research field based on scientific studies. | Must master the scientific methodologies and tools of the subject area(s) as well as master general skills related to work within the subject area(s).  Must be able to evaluate and select among the scientific theories, methodologies, tools and general skills of the subject area(s), and set up, on a scientific basis, new analysis and solution models.  Must be able to communicate research-based knowledge and discuss professional and scientific issues with both peers and non-specialists. | Must be able to manage work situations and developments that are complex, unpredictable and require new solution models.  Must be able to independently initiate and carry out discipline-specific and interdisciplinary collaboration and assume professional responsibility.  Must be able to independently take responsibility for their own professional development and specialisation. |

The general learning objectives of BScB and MSc in Economics and Business Administration, stipulated in the academic regulations, build on the qualifications framework’s requirements regarding knowledge and understanding, skills and competences.

## **Bachelor’s degree**

The programme provides the graduates with usable professional skills that enable them to handle business administration issues in both public and private-sector companies and organisations.

After completing the programme, the students have acquired knowledge of the theory, methodology and practice of business administration, which qualifies them to:

* understand and reflect on theories, methodologies and practice
* assess theoretical and practical issues and apply relevant analysis and solution models
* handle complex issues in study and work-related contexts
* formulate/communicate specialist issues and solution models
* participate in academic and interdisciplinary collaborations in an independent manner
* identify own learning needs and plan own learning.

(New qualifications with the distinction between knowledge, skills and competences has been approved by the Board of Studies and are about to be translated into English)

## **Master’s degree**

The research-based MSc programme in Economics and Business Administration builds on the competences and insights acquired on the BSc programme in Economics and Business Administration.  
  
The degree programme provides the graduate with specialist knowledge within the disciplines of the programme that gives the graduate high academic qualifications to develop relevant solutions to business administration problems in companies and organisations in the public and private sectors.

The degree programme also qualifies the graduate for further studies, including PhD studies.

The Master’s Degree programme in Economics and Business Administration provides the student with:

*Knowledge*

which within the field of economics and business administration is based on internationally recognised research. The graduate is able to comprehend and reflect upon this knowledge on a solid scientific basis as well as to identify relevant practical and scientific research problems. This means that the graduate has acquired:

* General knowledge and understanding of the founding characteristics and basic principles of economics and business administration across business disciplines.
* An in-depth and domain-specific understanding of central concepts and theories within the chosen specialisation.
* An in-depth knowledge of the scientific methods and tools of the various disciplines.
* An understanding of the assumptions underlying particular concepts, theories, methods and tools.
* A certain knowledge of the scientific methods relevant to the field of specialisation.
* An ability to reflect on the limitations and implications of the acquired knowledge.

*Skills*

which within the field of economics and business administration take point of departure in a methodological consciousness and adeptness. This means that a graduate is able to independently and systematically:

* Identify complicated business administration problems and contexts.
* Analyse complicated business administration issues with the identification and use of relevant practical and scientific sources.
* Provide argumentation at a high academic level, critically reflect upon reached decisions and possible solutions and subsequently select between different business solutions.
* Incorporate social aspects when solving business matters and taking into account the social context of the business when selecting between solutions.
* Make academically well-founded recommendations and decisions.
* Communicate and formulate specialised disciplinary issues clearly, accurately and in a comprehensible language, orally as well as in writing.
* Discuss professional and academic issues with both specialists and laymen.

*Competences*

which within the field of economics and business administration take point of departure in the ability to work in a well-structured and targeted manner across the different business disciplines as well as an ability to manage complex and unpredictable work situations which demand new solutions. This means that the graduate is able to:

* Work independently and systematically - alone or in collaboration with others.
* Swiftly comprehend new issues and complex business problems.
* Plan, control and complete the systematic collection, management and dissemination of existing knowledge within different business disciplines.
* Plan, manage and complete empirical studies at a high academic level and in a professional manner, alone and in collaboration with others, with a view to producing new knowledge within different fields and uncovering complex issues.
* Reflect and argue independently, analytically and critically at a high academic level.
* Independently structure and take responsibility for their own professional development and specialisation.

# Learning outcome and description of learning objectives in each course

Several attempts have been made to lay down quality criteria for the preparation of learning objectives/outcomes, among others by Signe Skov in the book Læringsorienterede Kursusdesign (Learning-oriented course design) (Samfundslitteratur, 2015):

1. Competence-oriented learning objectives

* Focus: What the students can accomplish when they have completed the course in question
* Recommendation: Use active verbs that are tangible and precise and address the students as subjects in the learning objectives

2. Relevant learning objectives (alignment and progression)

* Focus: The learning objectives must reflect connexion with the degree’s general description of academic competences and show a progression as to the students’ learning and development of competences

3. Clear and understandable learning objectives

* Focus: Brief and focused learning objectives, free of implicit expressions and concepts
* Recommendation: The learning objectives must be comprehensible to students that have not yet started the course

4. Examinable and documentable learning objectives

* Focus: Tangible descriptions of the competences and the evaluation criteria

5. Learning objectives that are the foundation of teaching, supervision and examination

* Focus: Learning objectives, which can work as guideposts for the students’ learning process
* Recommendation: The learning objectives should not be too broad or general because that would impede them from functioning as guideposts. Neither should they be too long or rich in details, thus working as a check list

6. Realistic and weighted learning objectives

* Focus: Connexion between the ECTS points of a given course and the workload expressed in the learning objectives
* Recommendation: 10 ECTS points equal approximately 300 working hours to be distributed between preparation, teaching and examination, etc.

Analogously, Frederik Voetmann Christiansen offers a piece of good advice as to the wording of the learning objectives of the course:

1. The descriptions of learning objectives must describe the students’ possibilities for action
2. Divided into knowledge and understanding, skills and competences, for example
3. Should not be a description of the academic content
4. The description of learning objectives must be measurable, thus enabling the students to know when they have met the learning objectives of the course
5. Therefore, choose the right action verbs

- Consider using a taxonomy as a starting point. Bloom’s taxonomy, for example

1. Consider the interrelation between objectives, teaching and examination
2. Consider the course’s role in the degree and take into account in what semester the course is taught (bachelor, master)
3. Remember there are many users of the course descriptions (students, external lecturers, external examiners and external parties, e.g., in connection with accreditations) and therefore the wording in the course descriptions should not be implicit

(Source: Adapted from Universitetspædagogik [2013] by Lotte Rienecker, Frederik Voetmann Christiansen et al.)

For each course, it is essential that the learning objectives and the criteria of the assessment of learning outcome are not detached from the academic context. Here, it can be an advantage to focus on the core concepts, which equal the theory and the concepts that the students must know and understand in a given course.

Furthermore, John Biggs’ SOLO taxonomy might serve as inspiration for the elaboration of the learning objectives in each course. For a brief overview see: <http://www.johnbiggs.com.au/academic/solo-taxonomy/>

# From learning objectives to marks

It is important to lay down clear and measurable learning objectives since the exam evaluation must be based on a complete evaluation of to what extent each student meets the learning objectives. It is important that the learning objectives are worded in such a manner that it is clear for the student what the basis for the marking is.

Also, please make sure that there is harmony between the exam and the learning objectives in a way that the exam invites and enables the student to show that he or she has become able to do what is expected and specified as the learning objectives of the course. In relation to exam complaints, it is essential that the learning objectives are so precise that we can refer to that which is expected the student has learnt in the course in question.

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