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| Course descriptions under the Study Board for Economics and Business Administration |

The purpose of this memo is to highlight 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 should motivate the students
* It contains essential information about the course
* It helps the students create realistic expectations for a specific course
* It should form the basis of the course coordinator’s choice of teaching and examination types
* It should form the basis of the awarding of marks

Below is a description of the formal framework of the course descriptions as well as further advice on how to work with the learning outcomes for each course.

# The formal framework of the course descriptions

The course descriptions are a formal part of the academic regulations and thus form part of the regulatory framework governing degree programmes. According to the University Programme Order (BEK no. 20 of 09/01/2020) “learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills and competences” must be provided for all courses. Concomitantly, the learning objectives stated in the course description form the basis for the awarding of marks. Please refer to the regulations below from the Examination Order (BEK nr. 22 af 09/01/2020) 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 outcome and description of learning objectives in each course

When you develop learning outcomes for knowledge, skills and competences in your course, it is important to carefully consider how you can create alignment between the learning outcomes, teaching activities and exam form of the course. Thus it is important to carefully consider how the learning outcomes can be assessed at the exam and how the student’s learning is facilitated throughout the course.

When applying a learning-oriented approach, a good starting point is to ask what you want your students to be able to do upon completion of the course. It is also important to consider how the learning outcomes of individual courses support the achievement of the overall learning outcomes of the degree programme (see appendix), and how the course fits with the remainder of the programme. This necessitates dialogue with other course coordinators, programme coordinators, the Director of Studies and perhaps the Board of Studies.

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

1. Competence-oriented learning objectives

* Focus: What the students *can* when they have completed the course
* 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 coherence with the degree programme’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 serve 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 detail as they might work as a check list

6. Realistic and weighted learning objectives

* Focus: Connection between the ECTS points of a given course and the workload expressed in the learning objectives
* Recommendation: 10 ECTS points equal approximately 270 working hours to be distributed between preparation, teaching and examination, etc.

While an overall indicator of quality is that the learning outcomes are meaningful in connection with the student’s learning, it is important to remember that there are many users of course descriptions (students, external lecturers, external examiners, external stakeholders such as prospective employers and accreditation bodies etc.) and, therefore, the wording in the course descriptions should be comprehensible to all.

For each course, it is essential that the learning objectives are not detached from the academic context. Here, it can be an advantage to focus on the relevant 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 assessment 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 accordance between the exam and the learning objectives in such 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 what the student is expected to have learnt in the course in question.

# Formal framework at BSS

At BSS, we use a template for the approval of new courses. As can be seen in the instructions to the template, there is a division between the academic content and the learning objectives in the form of a qualifications description. The qualifications description must include a description of the learning objectives.

/January 2021

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