



Opening speech, Faculty of Arts Education Seminar, 13 January 2016

I'd like to start by welcoming everyone – students, academic staff and administrative staff – to the first education seminar held by the Faculty of Arts as part of our reconfigured quality practice. The aim today is to share all our good ideas about improving the faculty's education and teaching activities. Based on all the good presentations during the day, I am convinced that we will go home with plenty of inspiration. I'd like to thank everyone who has agreed to share their experiences, ideas and viewpoints with us.

At the faculty we have a long tradition for making improvements and resolving any problems that might arise in connection with our teaching, thanks to the evaluations we have been carrying out for many years. For instance, without all these evaluations I don't think we would have so many academic regulations! The large number of academic regulations at the faculty might not be the best quality parameter. But at least they bear witness to our deep commitment to making improvements. And the process of institutional accreditation gives us the opportunity to show how deep this commitment really is. Institutional accreditation has inspired us to review our quality assurance activities. In this context we have been required to analyse all our quality policies and practices. And the desire to do everything in our power to improve the quality of our degree programmes is part of the faculty's DNA, so it's hardly surprising that this analysis work has led to a range of improvements in our quality work.

One of the main initiatives involved the creation of a new annual cycle for the faculty's quality work. The main elements of this annual cycle are as follows:

- sending data packages to all heads of degree programmes in our academic environments each spring, leading to local discussions of the statistics and the preparation of plans of action based on analyses of the state of our degree programmes
- annual discussions each autumn between the vice-dean and the heads of selected degree programmes, and evaluations based on a five-year rotating plan to ensure that all our degree programmes are subjected to an accreditation-style inspection within any five-year period
- an education seminar, the purpose of which is to inspire our quality work by considering selected examples of ways in which problems have been tackled and the best way of organising our degree programmes, teaching etc.
- an annual faculty report to reflect the state of our faculty, containing a plan of action for the activities that may be worth launching at faculty level



The activities involved in this annual cycle should preferably be implemented in the order I have mentioned. Unfortunately, owing to the process involved in appointing a new vice-dean, we were forced to reorganise the annual cycle a bit because there wasn't time to organise the discussions and rotating evaluations. That's why we haven't been able to meet until today, and I'd like to apologise to the students in particular because this year we were forced to have our education seminar in the middle of the exam period. This is of course inconvenient, and it will be changed next year so the timing suits everyone.

The process of institutional accreditation is another opportunity to make improvements, and it's vital that we take it very seriously. In particular, we must ensure that the allocation of roles is crystal clear. Everyone needs to know what they're responsible for and must take the appropriate action. And not least: we must ensure that we actually do what we promise to do. But I'll be coming back to this point in the near future as we prepare for our accreditation exam. The main focus for us today is on gaining inspiration to make our quality work as good as it can be.

We have chosen three themes which are of particular relevance at the moment throughout our organisation: "ensuring a better match", "the subject/study environment – how to retain our students", and "active enrolment and completion times". And if you can sense the presence of the study progress reform behind these themes, you're not entirely mistaken! The goal of reducing our average completion time by 4.7 months is probably the greatest challenge facing us at the moment, which is why we have focused on themes that can help us to achieve this goal in various ways.

The discussion of the three themes has been organised as follows: there will be three brief, ten-minute presentations dealing with various angles on the respective themes, followed by five minutes of questions from the floor for each presentation. There will be time for a longer, joint discussion after each session. I look forward to hearing all these interesting presentations, and hope you will all contribute your views and good ideas to the subsequent discussions. I will have the pleasure of guiding us through the discussions of the three themes. And let me just end by welcoming you all once more to our education seminar.

Niels Lehmann
Acting Vice-Dean for Education, Faculty of Arts