

---

# Social environments at university

Knowledge and inspiration for management,  
teachers and students

Also read the other two knowledge  
briefs in the series:



**Social environments at university**

Knowledge and inspiration for management, teachers and students

© 2026 EVA (The Danish Evaluation Institute)  
Reproduction is authorised provided the source  
is acknowledged

ISBN print: 978-87-7182-885-6  
ISBN www: 978-87-7182-884-9

Design : Essensen  
Printed at Stibo Complete A/S

The Danish Evaluation Institute  
T +45 35 55 01 01  
eva@eva.dk  
www.eva.dk

---

# Content

---

Introduction	4
Content of the brief	5
Structure of the brief	5
Basis of the brief	5

---

4 perspectives on social environments at university	6
<b>FIRST PERSPECTIVE:</b>	
The academic and social study environment is closely intertwined	7
Head of office: Common goals for the programme across staff groups can strengthen well-being	10
<b>SECOND PERSPECTIVE:</b>	
A sense of belonging develops in relation to implicit and explicit ideals of who fits in	12
<b>THIRD PERSPECTIVE:</b>	
Study start and other transitions are critical times for developing a sense of belonging	16
Associate professor: A strongly inclusive study environment emerges in teaching	21
<b>FOURTH PERSPECTIVE:</b>	
Participation is essential for the sense of belonging	23

---

The 4 perspectives on social environments – in brief	28
--	----

---

List of references	30
--------------------	----

---

# Introduction

---

How can university programmes promote learning outcomes, well-being and completion? This is the big question that EVA has set out to answer with a series of studies of students' experiences of attending university as well as a series of three knowledge briefs based on research points and knowledge about the social environments of teaching and the organisation and physical environment of university education.

The work on learning, well-being and increased completion is particularly relevant, as in recent years universities have welcomed increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds. When about one in four young people is admitted to university, the students also have several different academic and personal prerequisites for starting a university programme. How, then, can universities ensure a high academic level and get all students involved so that they thrive while studying and ultimately complete their programme?

EVA's study of students' learning outcomes, well-being and completion shows that there are four factors that are particularly closely related to both grades, well-being and drop-out rates at universities. In Danish, we call them the FEST factors, and they cover *Academic engagement (F)*, *(self)-Efficacy (E)*,

*Collaboration (S)* and the sense of *Belonging (T)* in the programme. The results suggest that the four FEST factors are of great importance to how students perform.

This highlights the importance of universities prioritising teaching, organisation, the study environment and the physical environment in ways that provide the FEST factors with the best possible conditions. Many educational institutions are already engaged in efforts to strengthen the study environment that support learning outcomes, well-being and completion – including in relation to an increasingly diverse student population.

However, experience of these initiatives is rarely systematically examined. The goal of the three knowledge briefs is to gather and present existing knowledge and research on the ways in which universities and study programmes can enhance students' learning and development, well-being and completion through initiatives related to the study environment and teaching and bring this into discussions within the programmes while highlighting particular considerations and points of attention.

---

---

Based on research and literature in the field, we have found and categorised four perspectives that can serve as benchmarks when working with social environments in university programmes across disciplines and faculties.

---

## Content of the brief

“The social environments” is an overall term for the social relationships and communities that develop and arise in connection with the programme within and outside of class teaching. This applies both to the formal and informal relationships that arise, for example in classes, in study groups, at academic and social events, meetings in councils and boards as well as through spontaneous meetings in the hallway or in the canteen. The social student environments are thus about student relationships and communities with other students, tutors, mentors, teachers, counsellors, administrative staff and other university staff.

---

## Structure of the brief

Based on research and literature in the field, we have found and categorised four principles that can serve as benchmarks when working with social environments in university programmes across disciplines and faculties. At the end, the principles are summed up and supplemented with questions for reflection that can be used for joint consideration.

---

## Basis of the brief

The literature forming the basis for this brief is drawn from both classical contributions to university education and recent research. The literature search is based on several complementary approaches to ensure a broad and systematic knowledge base. Focus has been on recent, recognised research in higher education with a broad general didactic aim. The selection of literature is qualified and supported by recommendations from an expert group that has identified both specific researchers and key publications.



## The FEST Factors

EVA's analyses show that four factors are closely associated with academic achievement, well-being, and completion.

The four factors are:

- F Academic Engagement**  
Academic engagement concerns students' interest in the academic content, whether they perceive it as relevant and useful, and the extent to which they actively work with the material.
- E Efficacy (self-efficacy)**  
Efficacy refers to students' belief in their own abilities and their expectation of succeeding academically.
- S Collaboration**  
Collaboration concerns students' experience of the general level of academic collaboration within their programme.
- T Belonging**  
Sense of belonging refers to students' experience of feeling that they belong in their programme and that they are part of a broader academic community.

Read more about the FEST factors in:  
*Hvad fremmer fagligt udbytte, trivsel og gennemførelse på universiteter?*  
(EVA, 2026a)

---

4 perspectives

---

on social environments

---

at university

---

---

# FIRST PERSPECTIVE

## The academic and social study environments are closely intertwined



The academic and social aspects of the study environment are closely intertwined in practice. First, the academic aspects are often the focal point of the social activities and relationships within the programme, and the content and organisation of the academic material are therefore important for the social environments (Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022). For example, the number of classes and the organisation of the academic elements have an impact on how and how often students meet other students and staff. Second, the social environments, including students' ability to form good relationships, are important for their motivation and academic engagement (EVA, 2020b).

Having a sense of belonging to the programme plays a central role in students' socialisation and learning processes. It is therefore a key consideration in the development of the social environments of university programmes to ensure a good framework for students to develop a sense of belonging, i.e. feeling attached to a place and to others, participating in a meaningful shared purpose and being recognised and valued as members of a community (Healey & Stroman, 2020, p. 1; Wulf-Andersen et al., 2023, p. 9). Lack of belonging can develop into dissatisfaction and negative emotions such as shame, stress, loneliness and feelings of inferiority (Larsen et al., 2023; Wulf-Andersen, 2023, p. 6).

---

### Education involves the development of academic identity

For many, the transition to student life is a major upheaval, involving moving away from home for the first time, perhaps far from their home region and previous relationships (Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005, p. 714). It can be an exciting, but also demanding, period when students need to invest extra energy to find their feet, not just in their programme, but also in a completely new life (Hansen & Elving, 2020, p. 82; Trautwein & Bosse, 2017, p. 378). The process is also about finding their way into the academic identity that they have chosen. The aca-

demical identity associated with the programme plays a significant role for many students both in their choice of programme and during the course of their studies. Students choose their programme, among other reasons, based on whether they can see themselves in the academic identity that characterises them as a graduate, for example engineer, anthropologist or lawyer (Holmegaard, Madsen, & Ulriksen, 2014; Illeris, 2002; Madsen, 2018; Thomsen, 2008).

The academic identity is formed in communities of practice with others in the programme (Hasse, 2008; Wenger, 2021). Within the programme, students are socialised into an academic community of practice with other students, teachers and researchers who share certain methodological, theoretical and practical traditions, knowledge bases and approaches. Entry into the community of practice takes place through *legitimate peripheral participation*, whereby the individual student learns the practices of the community and gradually moves towards a more central position within it (Lave & Wenger, 2012, p. 37; Wenger, 2021, pp. 121–122). Through this learning process, the individual student's identity is formed. In other words, students develop an academic identity as they become more and more experienced in the traditions and norms of the community of practice.

---

### The sense of belonging is essential for well-being and learning outcomes

It is important for students' integration into the community of practice of the programme and the subject that they are able to develop a sense of belonging to the community of practice and the associated academic standards right from the start and continuously through the programme. Students' sense of belonging means that they feel welcome and valued in one or more student communities that are meaningful to them, and that they can identify with the academic and social identity promoted by the programme.

---

It is well documented in research that a sense of belonging to a programme and having meaningful social relationships with others in the programme supports both completion, learning and well-being.

It is well documented in research that a sense of belonging to a programme and having meaningful social relationships with others in the programme supports both completion, learning and well-being. When students have a sense of meaningful social relationships with others that they can use for sparring or support, it can help counterbalance academic challenges and negative emotions such as stress and frustration associated with academic aspects. (Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011; Dingel & Punt, 2023; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Pintrich, 2003; Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022; Wilcox et al., 2005).

A previous study prepared by EVA (2020a) also shows that students with extensive social ties, i.e. who have a sense of belonging to or being affiliated with a group of other students in the programme, have higher academic engagement and completion. In addition, collaboration,

dialogue and interaction on the academic material in itself helps support both academic engagement and social belonging (EVA, 2020a, 2026a).

Social environments that support academic interaction and students' ability to form relationships can thus have a positive impact on their academic engagement and motivation to complete their programme (Healey & Stroman, 2020; Holmegaard et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2023; Ralund, 2022; Tinto, 2015; Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022; Wulf-Andersen et al., 2023).



### Questions for reflection

- ? How are academic activities and social communities linked in our programme in practice?
- ? How do we think of the study environment as a common concern across subjects, teaching, study administration, counselling and other staff groups that meet students every day?
- ? Where and when do students typically meet each other and teachers throughout the day – and what kind of environment do we create for these meetings?
- ? To what extent do teaching, group work and other academic activities function as pathways to social relationships and the sense of belonging?
- ? Are there students who find it more difficult to access the communities through the academic activities we offer?
- ? How can we work more consciously with academic practices as a framework for both learning, relationships and the development of academic identity?



## Attention points for heads of study and teachers

This first perspective emphasises the importance of students experiencing a sense of belonging to their programme through participation in academic and social communities.

- 1 The academic and social study environments are closely intertwined.** Academic activities often form the focal point of social interaction and relationships, and the content and organisation of academic material are therefore important for the social environments. It is consequently important for teachers and heads of study to consider how academic activities are designed as part of the overall study environment, since they frequently shape students' social relations and activities.
- 2 The extent and organisation of teaching influence how often students meet each other.** Consider whether the number of teaching hours and the way the academic components are organised are the most appropriate, or whether adjustments could beneficially be made to better support stable meeting points for students.
- 3 Social environments and relationships are important for motivation and academic engagement.** Students' ability to form good relationships in the social environments supports their motivation and engagement in the programme. Therefore, consider how the social environments in the programme allow students to form good relationships and focus on getting everyone into the community – even those who do not seek it out themselves.
- 4 Belonging is central to the socialisation and learning process.** It is important to pay attention to the development of a sense of belonging in connection with the different programmes' social environments, and the sense of being excluded from the academic and social communities in a programme can lead to dissatisfaction and loneliness. Therefore, consider how the programme's social environments can prevent students from being excluded. Strive to identify students who are excluded from the communities so that early intervention can be provided with help and support for those who need it.
- 5 Education involves the development of academic identity in communities of practice.** The transition to becoming a student is also about the pathway to an academic identity. The academic identity is formed in communities of practice with other students and through legitimate peripheral participation, where students gradually learn the practices of the community and gain a more central position. Therefore, consider how you give students the opportunity to be included in the programme's community of practice and the associated academic standards, for example through participation, where they gradually get to know the community's practices and gain a more central position.

HEAD OF OFFICE:

## *Common goals for the programme across staff groups can strengthen well-being*

It is my job to ensure the students' overall experience of the programme – from timetabling to examination formats and opportunities for Friday cafés, says Rie Troelsen, Head of the SDU Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU).

### What is an important perspective when you want to strengthen student well-being?

“ The physical, social and academic opportunities of the programme must go hand in hand with its common objectives. It is my job to ensure that the students see the programme as a whole – from timetabling to examination formats and opportunities for Friday cafés. It may sound obvious, but in my experience, this connection is often not clear, because all staff are busy with their own area, and there is

typically no time set aside for teachers, technical staff and counsellors to meet and discuss how, for example, classes and exams are best organised, considering what is at stake for the students. Therefore, we at the SDU Centre for Teaching and Learning are working, among other things, to establish networks, forums and courses where different stakeholders – teachers, counsellors, student advisers and technicians – can come together to discuss objectives and aspirations for the programme's social environment.

### What outcomes can emerge from such networks and discussions?

“ In one of our courses for counsellors, it emerged that some did not know where to refer students when they were unable to answer their questions themselves. Together with the student counsellors, we therefore prepared an overview of where counsellors can turn, both internally at the university and externally, when students raise questions they are unable to answer, such as study services, special educational support or a psychologist. Hopefully, this will mean that more students experience being met and supported in their questions and challenges before these become overwhelming and affect their well-being during their studies.



#### WE ASKED:

Rie Troelsen, Head of Office and Head of SDU Centre for Teaching and Learning, responsible for planning and facilitating overall teaching and learning at the university.

---

### What connection do you see between teaching and well-being?

” At SDU, we have activating teaching and active learning as our guiding principles. This means that group work and other forms of collaboration are integrated in the teaching and, as I see it, this promotes closer relationships among students and with the teachers. Part of the responsibility for more activating teaching also lies with the individual teachers. It is about not being afraid to set aside time for group discussions and collaboration on products and vary teaching and working methods so that everyone can feel included. In addition, it is important to schedule strategic breaks so that students have time to talk.

### Do you have any examples of specific actions you have tested to strengthen well-being?

” We are aware that study start plays an important role in overall well-being and have therefore strived to promote the social environment from the very beginning. An example is from The Faculty of Engineering, where new students who cannot attend on the first day are given a virtual tour. This allows them to meet their fellow students and get a sense of the programme's physical environment and social communities. Another well-being initiative is the project *My digital competence portfolio*, which runs at The Faculty of Science. Here, teaching involves workshops and reflection activities, and an interactive digital platform helps students reflect on their competences, strengthen their belief in their own abilities and reduce stress.

---

” We are aware that study start plays an important role in overall well-being and have therefore strived to promote the social environment from the very beginning.

RIE TROELSEN

---

# SECOND PERSPECTIVE

## Belonging and participation are shaped by norms and notions of who fits in



Students develop a sense of belonging in interaction with notions of what constitutes the ideal type of the “ideal” student in the programme (Hasse, 2008; Ulriksen, 2004; Wong & Chiu, 2021; Wulf-Andersen, 2023). Notions about the “ideal” student relate to specific norms and expecta-

tions associated with study practice as well as personal interests, values, orientations and social engagement. On the one hand, these norms and expectations establish a social framework that brings students and others together in communities within the programme. On the other hand, norms and expectations surrounding student communities may contribute to the exclusion of certain groups – for example, if there is a prevailing idea in a programme that men fit the ideal better than women, or vice versa (Madsen, Holmegaard, & Ulriksen, 2015).

Norms and expectations concerning the “ideal” student thus set conditions for whether and how students come to feel recognised as members of the academic and social community during their studies.

### Special academic and social codes for the individual programmes

Danish studies show that locally, the individual programmes have certain ideas about what it means to be, for example, an “ideal” science student, an “ideal” engineer or an “ideal” philosophy student (Gregersen & Holmegaard, 2022; Hasse, 2002, 2008; Madsen, 2018; Thomsen, 2008).

For example, if you study political science, you are expected to engage in both the social and the academic environment, keep up with current events and engage in activities outside the programme and purposefully strive to get a career. In philosophy studies, on the other hand, there is an idea that the “ideal” student lets his or her interest in philosophy permeate their lives and considers job opportunities after graduation as subordinate.

Expectations of how to be an “ideal” student can thus also relate to how to spend time outside the programme, for example, on career-oriented student jobs, in the Friday bar or immersing yourself in supplementary reading material.

---

### Programmes influence the notion of “the ideal student”

It is difficult to identify where notions of the “ideal” student originate, as they are often embedded implicitly in the formal or informal expectations that programmes hold of students, or that students hold of one another. However, programmes can strive to become more aware of the ideal types of students they promote by reflecting on what is recognised – and not recognised – as competent or good students.

---

### The struggle to become an “ideal student” can lead to stress and dissatisfaction

Students' sense of deviating from ideas about the “ideal” student can weaken their sense of belonging to the programme and have negative consequences for their learning. One example could be how to receive critical feed-

---

Notions about the “ideal” student relate to specific norms and expectations associated with study practice as well as personal interests, values, orientations and social engagement.

back and its learning potential. Norms and expectations about the “ideal” student can also change within the same programme depending on the situation. For example, teachers' expectations of students may vary depending on the form of teaching. In group work, teachers may expect students to already possess certain collaborative competences, whereas in lectures, students may be expected to be able to listen, take notes and remember what is being said. In these cases, it is a good idea to be clear about what is expected of students, and at the same time strive to ensure that students have the right conditions to fulfil these expectations, for example by scaffolding the teaching.

---

## Minorities may experience challenges with belonging

Students who perceive themselves as minority students may face particular challenges in developing a sense of belonging to the programme (Kristoffersson et al., 2021; Nielsen, 2024; Souto & Lappalainen, 2024). Minorities can be about very visible conditions such as gender, ethnic background or visible disabilities, or about less visible conditions such as parents' education, invisible disabilities, sexual orientation, religion etc.

In programmes with a high gender imbalance, gender minority students may find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging. For example, a study by EVA shows that both men and women feel more lonely when they belong to a gender minority in their programme (EVA, 2024). In addition, the study shows that both men and women in male-dominated programmes drop out more frequently during the first year of study compared to other programmes. Especially female students in male-dominated programmes have a higher degree of dissatisfaction, are more stressed and have more negative emotions in relation to their programme than their male fellow students.

### What does it mean to be a minority student?

Research literature has a special focus on minority students with regard to certain background characteristics such as gender, age, ethnic and socioeconomic background, or whether students have a functional diversity. These background characteristics often have an impact on the possibilities of feeling a sense of belonging, but not always.

Which groups of students experience themselves as minority students varies across programmes and depends on the composition of the student population. It also varies which students perceive themselves as differing from notions of the “ideal” student. For example, students may have other conditions or characteristics that affect their ability to develop a sense of belonging to the community, such as their political position, whether they have entered via quota 1 or 2, have had a gap year or have attended a Danish upper secondary school.

Research also points to how subtle interactions and social environments for student communities can contribute to preventing students with ethnic minority backgrounds from feeling as part of the community during their studies, for example when ethnic minority students' “otherness” is high-lighted, if the teacher makes the student an involuntary “expert” when teaching about topics such as multiculturalism or inclusion (Souto & Lappalainen, 2024, p. 7).

---

In programmes with a high gender imbalance, gender minority students may find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging. For example, a study by EVA shows that both men and women feel more lonely when they belong to a gender minority in their programme.



### Questions for reflection

- ? What notions of the “ideal” student characterise our programme – academically, socially and organisationally?
- ? Where and how do these notions manifest in teaching, group work, feedback, evaluation and social activities?
- ? Which forms of participation, academic engagement and ambitions are most recognised and appreciated – and which are more subtle?
- ? What notions of academic success and “the good working life” are conveyed in the programme, and do they allow for different career paths and academic identities?
- ? Where can there be a mismatch between the expectations we place on students and their prerequisites for actually living up to them?
- ? How can we make expectations clear and at the same time create realistic opportunities to succeed, for example through scaffolding, clear frameworks and ongoing clarification?



## Attention points for heads of study and teachers

This second perspective points out the importance of focusing on participation opportunities for students and how to facilitate more ways of participating in the academic and social student communities.

- 1 Belonging is shaped by notions of "the ideal student".** Students' sense of belonging is developed in relation to both implicit and explicit norms for who "fits in". Therefore, consider what ideals characterise the academic and social communities of the programme and how they affect different students' ability to feel recognised. Ideas about the "ideal student" may favour certain groups. Therefore, regularly discuss within the teaching team and management whether there are students who are systematically excluded.
- 2 Make expectations clear – and create real opportunities to succeed.** Norms and expectations can vary between teaching methods and activities, e.g. between group work, project work and lectures. Therefore, be clear about what is expected of students in the specific context and work systematically to ensure that students have realistic conditions to meet expectations, for example through scaffolding, clear frameworks, examples and the opportunity for continuous clarification.
- 3 Prevent stress and dissatisfaction by normalising diverse ways of being a student.** When students sense that they deviate from the ideal, it can impair their sense of belonging and learning and increase the risk of stress. Therefore, strive to legitimise more ways to participate, learn and contribute, such as different roles in group work, different ways to prepare and different forms of academic engagement.
- 4 Minority students may face special barriers to belonging, even subtle ones.** Be aware that minority can be about both visible and invisible conditions. Therefore, strive purposefully to create an inclusive framework, and monitor patterns of loneliness, well-being and drop-out, especially in programmes where the student composition may be unbalanced.
- 5 Avoid turning students into involuntary "experts" on their identity.** When teaching involves, for example, topics such as multiculturalism or inclusion, minority students may be singled out as representatives of a group. Therefore, create didactic approaches that distribute perspectives and knowledge widely, for example through material, cases and structured exercises, so that no student is made responsible for "explaining" their background.
- 6 Take responsibility for the social framework of the student communities – also for those who do not seek them out themselves.** A sense of belonging occurs in relationships and social environments, but access is not equal for everyone. Therefore, consider how study and teaching practices actively invite everyone into the community, for example through organised meeting formats, clear roles, safe starting activities and outreach practices to students at the margins.

---

# THIRD PERSPECTIVE

## Study start and other transitions are critical times for developing a sense of belonging



Study start is important. When students start a new programme, they meet many formal and informal communities of a social and academic nature, both academic groups such as study or project groups, voluntary groups such as party committees or study boards, and the broader community of students in the same year and field of study. During the study start period, students form their first impressions of the programme, their teachers and fellow students, including which relationships they can use for support and sparring. At the same time, this is when students interpret the first signals as to whether they fit into the student community. These student communities are often associated with explicit or implicit norms, values and understandings which students must navigate and relate their identity to (Holmegaard et al., 2014; Ulriksen, 2004).

Moving from upper secondary school to university also means that students must learn new ways of working and integrating into an educational institution (Ulriksen, 2002, p. 174–175). Many of the experiences, competences and practices that students bring from upper secondary school must therefore be adjusted, negotiated and ascribed new meaning in relation to the new academic and social codes, requirements and expectations they meet when studying (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008, p. 10).

Therefore, the first year of the programme is very much defining for students' experience and sense of belonging and for how their programme continues (Christie et al., 2008; Hansen & Elving, 2020; Holmegaard et al., 2014; Hope, 2017; Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022; Wilcox et al., 2005), and students who have a poor study start are more

likely to drop out (EVA, 2017). And therefore, study start is a good place to take action in relation to ensuring good conditions for the development of a sense of belonging (Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022, pp. 208–209).; See also the knowledge brief on Organisation and Physical Frameworks at the University.).

---

### A good study start provides different opportunities for participation

New students start their studies with very different expectations of both the programme and their participation in the social community (EVA, 2021b, 2022). A successful study start therefore requires that the educational institutions create an environment that allows students to participate in different ways and in different types of activities. It is, for example, important to establish relationships in small groups early on, disperse social activities over the first semester and social activities that tend to be based on academic aspects, but without requiring academic performance early on.

When organising the study start, it should be considered that students have very different needs, motivations and prerequisites for participating in the social community. A central starting point is therefore to create more and different pathways to the community, so that participation can develop in different ways and at different speeds. This involves both activities in small groups and possibilities of large communities, as well as variation in the degree of social intensity. Another important point is flexibility in time. Social activities should not be concentrated exclu-

A central part of the work consists in the dialogue with senior volunteer students, who play an important role for study start as cultural and community promoters.

---

## Study start in the process of change

In recent years, universities have had an increased focus on framing the start of studies. This includes principles regarding alcohol, considerations about introductory social trips and other social activities as well as clear expectations of participation. A central part of the work consists in the dialogue with senior

volunteer students, who play an important role for study start as cultural and community promoters. At the same time, there is a growing focus on supporting an inclusive study start, so that students with different needs and backgrounds – such as less outgoing students – also feel welcome in the community.

sively at the beginning of the study start, but should be offered on an ongoing basis so that students who need to feel safe or need more time also have an opportunity to find their place in the community later. At the same time, there should be room for breaks and the possibility to withdraw without being marginalised.

It is also important to balance social and academic activities. For some students, the social community is closely linked to the programme, while others prefer social activities without academic requirements. A combination where social activities are based on academic settings without performance pressure can bridge the gap between different needs. Finally, it is important to signal and support inclusiveness and diversity. Study start should clearly communicate that there are many legitimate ways to be a student and that engagement in the community can differ. At the same time, the institutions can usefully support the students' own community initiatives, making sure, however, that they also consider other students' needs, which may differ.

---

## All study transitions require attention

In addition to study start and the first year of study, it is important to pay attention to other transitions within the programme, where similar dynamics can affect students' sense of belonging. On many occasions while studying, students must once again undergo a socialisation process of getting to know new people and new social and academic codes (see the box below for examples). It takes time to build relationships, shared values and a sense of belonging, and student preferences may change over the course of the programme. Therefore, it also requires ongoing attention to ensure that the social environments can continue to be maintained and made relevant to students throughout the programme.

---

## Students changing programmes need extra attention

Students changing programmes may have different prerequisites for navigating the university codes than those who come straight from youth education, but social and academic codes are also specific to the individual programme, and the student still needs to adapt. At the same time, students changing programmes often get credit for parts of their previous programme, which means that they complete the new programme in a different order than their fellow students and may to a lesser extent participate with the other students in all classes.

---

## The transition from bachelor to master's is challenging for many students

Many master's students face a break with the social relationships they built during the bachelor programme because they either complete it at different times or choose another candidate programme than the natural superstructure. In the master's programme, however, there is often no or a very short study start to support the students' socialisation process. The master's programme also often places higher demands on students, and students are expected to be able to work more independently with a greater workload (Sjöblom et al., 2024). So even though students have experience from the bachelor programme and have acquired relevant study techniques, master's students may find it difficult to redefine their study techniques and learn to relate differently to the academic material.

---

When organising the study start, it should be considered that students have very different needs, motivations and prerequisites for participating in the social community. A central starting point is therefore to create more and different pathways to the community, so that participation can develop in different ways and at different speeds.



### Specific questions for reflection when organising the start of studies

- ? What different groups of students are represented in the programme (e.g. in terms of age, gender, background and experience), and how are these differences taken into account at study start?
- ? Does the start of studies provide varied opportunities for participation, for example in both small and large communities, with different degrees of social intensity, as well as opportunities to take breaks and withdraw?
- ? How do we balance academic and social activities so that there are pathways into the community both for students who are motivated by academic aspects and for students who prefer social spaces without performance requirements?
- ? What unwritten expectations may be associated with study start (e.g. about participation, social behaviour or alcohol), and how can the settings be made clearer and more inclusive?
- ? How are the placement and timing of the start of studies and related social activities planned, and can they create practical or social barriers for some students?
- ? Is important information distributed over time so that students do not risk being excluded if they are unable to participate in all activities in the beginning?
- ? How do we support relationships both in our own class and across classes and years, including contact with senior students and volunteers?
- ? How can we engage in dialogue with volunteer senior students about their role as promoters of culture and community, including how traditions can be preserved and further developed while ensuring that the start of studies is organised in an inclusive way for students with diverse needs and backgrounds?



## Attention points for heads of study and teachers

This third perspective focuses on study start and other transitions, which are important situations and arenas in student life.

- 1 The start of studies is a critical time for the development of a sense of belonging.** Study start is when students form crucial impressions of the programme, their fellow students and their own opportunities to belong. Therefore, study start – and the first year of the programme – is a key time to work purposefully with belonging and retention. Strive to create early, clear and inclusive environments for both academic and social communities, so that all students have more pathways to participate.
- 2 Students have different needs and paces of study.** A good study start requires more and varied opportunities for participation, including small and large communities, different degrees of social intensity and the possibility to withdraw. It is therefore important to signal that there are many legitimate ways to be a student. Therefore, consider how you can clarify to the students that expectations for participation and engagement can be met in different ways, and that it is legitimate both to be active in the community and to take breaks – so everyone can find a safe way into the programme at their own pace.
- 3 A sense of belonging is developed in the interaction between academic and social communities.** Students are motivated differently by social and academic activities. A balanced programme where social activities are based on academic settings without performance pressure can bridge the gap between different needs and support both relationships and academic identity. Therefore, strive to plan activities that connect subjects and community in a safe way, such as small collaborative assignments, academic introductory exercises and low-paced study practice.
- 4 Settings, timing and information at study start are of great importance.** The location, extent and organisation of the study start – including when activities and information are scheduled and what expectations there are for participation – sends strong signals about the community and can either support or inhibit students' ability to feel included. Therefore, consider how you can organise your study start with clear information, realistic expectations and flexible participation options that make it easy to orient yourself and ensure that you are not excluded if you cannot or do not want to participate in everything.

---

Many master's students face a break with the social relationships they built during the bachelor programme because they either complete it at different times or choose another candidate programme than the natural superstructure.

---

### Transitions create different situations for each student

During their programme, whether it is the bachelor or master's programme, students may also face different transitions, for example from basic courses to elective subjects, transitions to exchange programmes and internships, or when a student is admitted via late admission and therefore starts later. It can also be when students return from leave due to illness, parental leave and the like. In these transitions within the same programme level, students may experience a shift in both workflows, expectations and requirements and being involved in new social and academic contexts. Therefore, it is a good idea for the programmes to consider how expectations and requirements of students in these transitions can be made explicit and how students can be supported in their (continued) relationship-building.

Some students are in a situation where they are particularly pressured to follow the standard programme time. This applies, for example, to students with prolonged illness or functional impairments (Kristiansen, 2022; Larsen et al., 2023; Poulsen, Rieland, Schultz, & Pedersen, 2019; Wulf-Andersen, 2023). For students who are delayed in their programme, this can have specific and serious consequences such as running out of monthly SU grant portions and having to drop out. In addition, it has social consequences for the student because they are disconnected from the class of students they started the year with and often feel wrong and inadequate because they cannot live up to the notion of the "ideal" student (cf. Larsen et al., 2023).

---

### Transitions require repeated attention to belonging and relationship-building

Students meet new social and academic communities several times during their studies, for example in the event of a change of programme, transition from bachelor to master's programme, internship, exchange programmes, elective subjects, leave or delay. In these transitions, it is important to make expectations clear and ensure new community "onboardings", especially for students in vulnerable positions.



#### Questions for reflection on student life transitions

- ? Which student transitions are particularly central to our programme (e.g. change of programme, transition from bachelor to master's programme, internship, exchange programmes, elective subjects, leave or delay)?
- ? How do we make expectations, requirements and frameworks clear to students in connection with these transitions?
- ? Are there clearly defined "onboardings" to the community in these transitions, so that students feel that there is room to be new – even later in the programme?

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR:

## *A strongly inclusive study environment emerges in teaching*

The sense of belonging, a strong study environment and good relations with other students are fundamentally based on inclusive teaching, says Trine Wulf-Andersen, Associate Professor at the Department of People and Technology at Roskilde University (RUC).

### How can we create stronger social study environments at universities?

” Many programmes prioritise the study environment, for example, by hiring a study environment coordinator and initiating cafés and board game evenings. At the same time, it is important that well-being, a sense of belonging and social relationships are not per-



#### WE ASKED:

Trine Wulf-Andersen is associate professor and Head of Studies at the Department of People and Technology at Roskilde University. She holds a PhD in learning, education and social inclusion and conducts research on student life and young people's communities, identity and learning processes.

ceived as something that develops outside the classroom. The sense of belonging is first and foremost created in the classroom, where all students participate. Therefore, we as teachers must strive to strengthen students' relationships with the subject and with each other and us teachers as peers.

### As teachers, how can you work with social relationships in teaching?

” A sense of belonging is largely created when students connect to the subject field in communities with the other students and teachers. Students generally attend due to the learning activities and therefore, belonging to a programme is about developing a strong academic identity in relation to others, where collaboration and respect play a central role. Some students find that teaching, assignments and academic contexts do not invite them to participate.



---

”” In my experience, the exercise provides a setting where more students find the courage to say something out loud without fear of failure.

TRINE WULF-ANDERSEN

Therefore, as a teacher or head of studies, you can focus on ensuring that the syllabus and work methods invite students in different ways – thereby including students who are extroverted, introverted, practically or theoretically inclined and, not least, those who may be anxious about failing or about not living up to the programme's often invisible expectations.

It is about thinking in different formats and roles so that everyone can find themselves in the academic community and being seen and heard. And it is about demonstrating that talented contributions can take multiple forms.

### How do you invite different students to attend classes?

”” On the master's programme where I teach the most, we have students with different bachelor backgrounds and interests. I therefore say out loud that I value different perspectives and understandings as academic benefits. It is not about diluting the academic discussion or lowering the academic level, but about challenging the students in turn. It is also about challenging yourself as a teacher by varying the work methods, so that you not only focus on presentations, discussions in plenary or written assignments, but consider whether you can use, for example, silent reflections, discussions with the person next to you, podcasts or visual expressions – and with different formats give different students the opportunity to show their competences.

### Do you have an example of how to use teaching to create a sense of belonging?

”” A fellow teacher and I have frequently used an exercise that we believe gives students several important insights about studying. Students are given the task of reading and arguing for and against a classic theoretical text in small groups, where we as teachers decide who should speak for and against the text. They must come up with the arguments themselves – even if they do not agree with them. The exercise shows that you can distinguish between who you are and *who you are* and *what you invite*, into an academic discussion because, for example, you can easily find gaps in a text that you fundamentally agree with. And then it shows the value of listening to arguments from others and using them in your own learning going forward. My fellow teacher and I begin the lesson by discussing a selected text and then ask the students for arguments when we run out. In this way, we show that we are in the exercise together, we open up several angles and demonstrate that everyone – including teachers and more experienced text readers – needs input from others.

### What makes this exercise special?

”” In my experience, the exercise provides a setting where more students find the courage to say something out loud without fear of failure. Hence, the exercise becomes both an incentive for academic in-depth reading and in-depth understanding of specific syllabus content, for establishing academic forms of work and collaboration and for creating an inclusive and trusting learning space.

---

# FOURTH PERSPECTIVE

## Participation is essential for the sense of belonging



A sense of belonging develops when students participate and engage in student communities in or outside the classroom. Students' engagement in joint activities, whether organising a Friday bar or working on a group project, provides an important basis for building relationships and developing shared meaning and value (cf. Wenger, 1998).

Students who get the opportunity to contribute to communities and make a difference for others in their programme feel that they are important for the study environment. That experience strengthens their sense of belonging (Flett, Khan, & Su, 2019). Therefore, it is central that students meet social environments during their studies, where they have the opportunity to participate in ways that are meaningful to them and where they feel that they can contribute.

The literature points to the importance of building a sense of belonging when students have the opportunity and time to meet regularly and build relationships, and when this takes place within an inclusive social environment that both fosters commitment and allows for autonomy (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Healey & Stroman, 2020; Larsen et al., 2023; Nielsen, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Wulf-Andersen, 2023).



### Questions for reflection on teaching and learning spaces

- ? How do we strive to create safe teaching spaces where students dare to ask questions, show doubts and contribute in different ways?
- ? How do forms of teaching and group work support meaningful participation and lasting collaborative relationships among students?
- ? To what extent does the teaching make room for different academic positions and experiences, e.g. through variation in tasks, forms of collaboration and ways of participating?
- ? How can teachers – through language, accessibility and the way teaching is framed – invite students into an academic community and address them as future peers?
- ? How do scheduling and physical environment (e.g. shared breaks or co-location) support informal meetings and relationship-building among students?

---

## Programmes can create an opportunity for varied participation

Students come with different expectations for the programme and have different preferences for participating in its social communities (EVA, 2021b). It therefore varies from student to student, which forms of participation and pathways into the social and academic environment are meaningful to them and strengthen their sense of belonging. For some students, the common practice around the academic aspects is particularly important, as they value building relationships through teaching and other academic activities more than activities of a more social nature (EVA, 2021b). Other students have a greater need to be able to participate in and build relationships through communities and activities, where they can meet fellow students in a voluntary context outside of the classroom (Ulriksen & Gregersen, 2022, p. 207; Wilcox et al., 2005, p. 720). Therefore, it is crucial that the programme allows for

different forms of participation from the beginning with student communities of different academic or social, formal or informal character and intensity.

Variation in how students can engage in the programme can also help bridge the gap between the academic and the social community. For example, a student who has difficulty speaking up during formal teaching due to low academic self-esteem may realise through informal conversations with other students in the Friday bar that they share the same challenges and frustrations, which can encourage the student to participate and be more open about their doubts in the classroom. Thus, well-functioning social environments can help prevent or reduce problems related to misperceptions about majority norms, which may otherwise threaten students' sense of belonging, particularly among new students who may be uncertain about what is required of them and about their own abilities in relation to these requirements (Steele, 1997; Walton & Yeager, 2020).

Students who get the opportunity to contribute to communities and make a difference for others in their programme feel that they are important for the study environment.



### Questions for reflection on student engagement and communities outside of class

- ? What different opportunities for participation exist within the programme, and to what extent do they provide space for students with different needs, life situations and levels of engagement?
- ? How do we respond to student initiatives – do students experience support, recognition and easy access to resources?
- ? How are both informal and formal forms of engagement recognised, for example through visibility, encouragement, influence or financial support?
- ? How do we support informal meetings among students and between students and staff, for example through shared physical spaces or social activities?
- ? What signals do we send on special occasions such as welcome events and celebrations, and who is singled out as part of the community?

---

## Inviting students into the community: the role of teachers and staff

Teachers and other staff can play a central role in supporting students' sense of belonging both in and outside the classroom. One way of doing so is to consider how classes and groups are organised, so that they allow for lasting collaborations without locking students into fixed constellations. At the same time, teachers can strengthen the sense of belonging by speaking to students as future peers and actively inviting them into an academic “we”. Attention to the width of texts, presenters, examples and cases can also give more students the opportunity to reflect their academic interests in the subject. In addition, teachers' physical accessibility – for example by arriving well in advance and staying after class – can contribute to informal meetings and dialogue. Finally, both formal and informal meetings between students at different levels, teachers and other staff, such as counselling, mentoring, dialogue forums, lunch situations or meetings in the hallway and library, can help strengthen relationships and support students' sense of belonging. Visible and accessible counsellors and administrative staff can strengthen students' sense of belonging by making it easier for them to initiate contact, ask questions and participate actively in student life.

---

## The programme can support student-driven communities and activities

Student communities may be organised by the institution, the students themselves or a combination of both. Student communities that are wholly or partly student-driven give students the opportunity to influence the social environment and thereby turn it in a direction that is meaningful to the students. Students who actively contribute to the student community thus develop a greater sense of co-ownership of the programme, which helps strengthen their sense of belonging (Healey & Stroman, 2020, p. 15).

It is beneficial for students to experience general support and responsiveness from the institution when organising student-driven initiatives. It can help strengthen students' sense of belonging if the institution recognises their efforts in the social environment of the programme (Healey & Stroman, 2020). Students' ability to set up student-driven communities and activities also depends on the educational institution's framework, including the

financial space available for student initiatives and the physical environment. For example, students' ability to participate in the creation of the social environment depends on whether or not they have access to premises without restrictions in relation to time, and whether they have access to premises where they are free to leave their mark on the physical environment (see also EVA's knowledge brief on Organisation and physical environment at university). It may also matter whether it is easy to initiate a new activity, or whether they have to obtain permits etc.

---

## The programme can support inclusive study environments

It is often time-consuming for students to be co-responsible for student-driven communities. The volunteer students who run and sustain student-driven communities, such as tutors, thus represent a special group of students in the programme who prioritise and have the energy to put a special effort into the social environments. This may entail a risk that the social environments will inadvertently exclude students who do not recognise themselves in the group of volunteers (cf. Nielsen 2024).

For example, an intense study start with a packed social programme with festive activities can seem overwhelming for students who need breaks from being social to gather renewed energy or who prefer that the academic programme is the starting point for building their social relationships during their studies (EVA, 2021b).

Therefore, while recognising students' active contributions to the social environment, it is a good idea to consider how the needs of other groups of students who are less visible in the social environment may be addressed. It is therefore relevant to have an ongoing dialogue with the existing initiators about how they can create more variety and inclusion in the student communities.

---

## The opportunity to participate requires recognition of different ways of being a student

Students' ability to participate in the academic and social communities of the programme is closely related to the forms of participation that are recognised as legitimate. At universities, there is often an expectation that students quickly learn to navigate academic codes, work inde-

pendently, prioritise and structure their work and master certain forms of academic argumentation and academic language. These expectations can act as frameworks for participation, but can also constitute barriers for students who are not already familiar with the academic culture.

Research indicates that students with different backgrounds, life situations and experiences have unequal conditions for meeting dominant norms of participation. Students from non-academic homes, older students or students with family obligations may, for example, find that both academic and social activities are designed according to ideals that are difficult to reconcile with their everyday lives or prior educational experiences. It may limit their ability to participate in ways that are perceived as meaningful, thereby impairing their sense of belonging (EVA, 2021b, 2021a; Gregersen & Nielsen, 2023, p. 85; O'Boyle, 2015, p. 101; Ulriksen, 2002).

In order to support students' motivation, security and desire to participate, it is therefore important that programmes work actively to create inclusive communities where different ways of being students are recognised. This involves attention to the norms and forms of participation that are promoted and rewarded as well as dialogue across programme participants about how

academic and social environments can be arranged so that more students have the opportunity to participate in ways that strengthen both learning and their sense of belonging.

Students must be able to find communities that they can identify with in order to feel welcome and included. At the same time, student communities may challenge and broaden students' horizons in terms of how they think and act (Healey & Stroman, 2020, p. 7). The balance lies in creating student communities that can support a positive identity development and strengthen the sense of belonging, but which do not challenge students' values and orientations to such an extent that they feel excluded (cf. Nielsen, 2024).

Belonging, however, is not only about whether students participate, but whether they are recognised as legitimate members of the community. Students may participate in activities without feeling included, for example, if participation requires adaptation to norms and practices that are perceived as excluding or contrary to their own values. Examples from research show how community-forming activities can also be excluding if there is no room to challenge dominant norms and expectations.



## Questions for reflection on dialogue, norms and recognition

- ? What norms of participation characterise the programme, and who can easily live up to them – and who can risk feeling excluded?
- ? How do we ensure dialogue with students and volunteers about the development of the social and academic environment – even when there is disagreement or conflict?
- ? How do we strive to balance traditions and renewal so that the study environment preserves its culture and also develops in a more inclusive direction?
- ? How do teachers, management and administration show curiosity about student perspectives, even when practice is maintained?
- ? How are administrative staff visible and accessible to students, so that students feel comfortable initiating contact and participating actively in student life?



## Attention points for heads of study and teachers

This fourth perspective focuses on how students' opportunities for participation help shape their sense of belonging within the programme.

- 1 A sense of belonging is created through active and meaningful participation.** Students develop a sense of belonging when they are given the opportunity to participate and contribute in the academic and social communities in the programme in ways that are perceived as meaningful to them. Participation can be both academic and social, formal and informal. What is important is that students over time see themselves as legitimate and significant members of the community.
- 2 Inclusive teaching is central to everyone's participation.** Teaching is the community that all students meet and thus the most important arena for belonging. When teaching methods, collaboration and participation requirements vary, more students get the courage and opportunity to participate. Consider, for example, how the syllabus is composed, who is honoured and singled out in situations such as welcome speeches or on websites. Make room for several types of students to identify with the teaching and the requirements for participation. Safe learning spaces with room for doubt and various contributions strengthen both learning and the sense of belonging.
- 3 Variation in forms of participation as a precondition for belonging.** Students come with diverse backgrounds, expectations and life circumstances that shape their capacity to engage. Some experience a sense of belonging through teaching and academic collaboration, while others find it in voluntary initiatives or social communities. Programmes may therefore benefit from offering multiple “points of entry” into the student community – ideally already from study start and in the period immediately after.
- 4 The institution's framework and recognition determine the participants.** Institutional frameworks, norms and forms of recognition influence which ways of participating that are considered legitimate. Student-driven communities can strengthen the sense of belonging and co-ownership, but can also inadvertently favour specific groups of students. An inclusive study environment therefore requires attention to the norms and forms of participation that are promoted and rewarded as well as dialogue with students about how communities can be organised so that more people feel recognised and included. Show curiosity about students' perspectives so that they have a voice in shaping activities and opportunities to build relationships and form communities.

# *The 4 perspectives for social environments – in brief*



Social environments are of great importance for student well-being, academic engagement and completion. Social relationships and communities are developed in interaction with teaching, the organisation of the programme and the norms and expectations that characterise everyday student life. Key points from the chapter are summarised below, along with associated reflection questions.

## 1.

### **Academic and social study environments are closely linked**

Students' social relationships are largely developed through academic activities such as teaching, group work and collaboration on academic assignments. The organisation of teaching therefore influences the ways and frequency with which students meet, as well as the opportunities available for building relationships. At the same time, social communities can strengthen student motivation, engagement and retention.

#### **? Questions for reflection:**

How does the organisation of teaching and working methods support relationships between students – and between students and staff? Where can academic activities to a greater extent function as social meeting points?

## 2.

### **Belonging and participation are shaped by norms and notions of who fits in**

Students' sense of belonging to the programme is shaped by both explicit and implicit norms of what it means to be a student. Standards related to academia, participation, engagement and social behaviour can both support communities and create barriers to participation and belonging.

#### **? Questions for reflection:**

What notions of the "ideal" student characterise our programme? Who may find it difficult to identify with these notions, and how can expectations be made clearer and more inclusive?

Students come with different backgrounds, preferences and life circumstances, and social study environments are strengthened when there is room for variation in forms of participation and ongoing dialogue between students, teachers and other university staff.

## 3.

### **Study start and other transitions are crucial for students' social and academic integration**

Study start plays a central role in the development of relationships, academic identity and a sense of belonging. Later study transitions – such as students changing programmes, transitions from bachelor to master's programme, internships, exchange programmes or delays – can also challenge students' social and academic integration and therefore require careful attention.



#### **Questions for reflection:**

Which transitions are particularly central to our programme, and how do we support students' ability to build relationships and find their place in the community – even later in their studies?

## 4.

### **Participation is essential for the sense of belonging**

A sense of belonging develops when students have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the student community in ways that they find meaningful. Students come with different backgrounds, preferences and life circumstances, and social study environments are strengthened when there is room for variation in forms of participation and ongoing dialogue between students, teachers and other university staff.



#### **Questions for reflection:**

What opportunities for participation and engagement do the programme offer – both in and outside class? How do we support ownership and shared responsibility for the study environment, and are there groups of students who find it more difficult to find a pathway into the community?

# List of references

- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995).** The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Beachboard, M. R., Beachboard, J. C., Li, W., & Adkison, S. R. (2011).** Cohorts and relatedness: Self-determination theory as an explanation of how learning communities affect educational outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 52(8), 853-874. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-011-9221-8>
- Christie, H., Tett, L., Cree, V. E., Hounsell, J., & McCune, V. (2008).** 'A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions': Learning to be a university student. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(5), 567-581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802373040>
- Dingel, M., & Puntì, G. (2023).** Building faculty-student relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 31(1), 61-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2023.2164976>
- EVA. (2017).** *Studiestartens betydning for frafaldet på videregående uddannelser*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2020a).** *Et nyt perspektiv på faglige og sociale aspekter af studielivet*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2020b).** *Fagligt engagement og social tilknytning – fra teoretiske begreber til empirisk måling. Teoretisk baggrund og dokumentation*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2021).** *Nye studerendes deltagelse i sociale fællesskaber på studiet*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2022).** *Kommende studerendes forventninger og ønsker til studiestarten*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2024).** *Kønsminderets oplevelse af det første år på videregående uddannelser*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA. (2026a).** *Hvad fremmer fagligt udbytte, trivsel og gennemførelse på universiteter? Betydningen af forhold i studiemiljø og undervisning samt sociale og faglige aspekter af studielivet*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- EVA (2026b).** *Etniske minoriteter på videregående uddannelser. En undersøgelse af hvordan studerende med anden etnisk baggrund end dansk oplever det første år på videregående uddannelser*. Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut.
- Flett, G., Khan, A., & Su, C. (2019).** Mattering and psychological well-being in college and university students: Review and recommendations for campus-based initiatives. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 17(3), 667-680. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-019-00073-6>
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004).** School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>
- Gregersen, A. F. M., & Holmegaard, H. T. (2022).** The ideal philosophy student: A qualitative study of the transition into first year higher education. *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift*, 17(33), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.7146/dut.v17i33.132715>
- Gregersen, A. F. M., & Nielsen, K. B. (2023).** Not quite the ideal student: Mature students' experiences of higher education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(1), 76-95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2022.2120525>
- Hansen, R., & Elving, P. R. (2020).** 3 opmærksomhedspunkter i overgangen til universitetet: Hvad kan vi lære af Arts-studerendes oplevelse af at starte på universitetet? *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift*, 15(29), 70-86. <https://doi.org/10.7146/dut.v15i29.120632>
- Hasse, C. (2002).** *Kultur i bevægelse: Fra deltagerobservation til kulturanalyse – i det fysiske rum*. Samfundslitteratur.
- Hasse, C. (2008).** Learning and transition in a culture of playful physicists. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 23(2), 149-164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03172742>
- Healey, K., & Stroman, C. (2020).** *Structures for belonging: A synthesis of research on belonging-supportive learning environments*. Student Experience Research Network (SERN).
- Holmegaard, H. T., Madsen, L. M., & Ulriksen, L. (2014).** A journey of negotiation and belonging: Understanding students' transitions to science and engineering in higher education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 9(3), 755-786. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-013-9542-3>
- Hope, J. (2017).** 'Cutting rough diamonds': The transition experiences of first-generation students in higher education. I: E. Kyndt, V. Donche, K. Trigwell, & S. Lindblom-Ylänne (red.), *Higher education transitions: Theory and research* (s. 85-100). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315617367>
- Illeris, K. (2002).** Unges læring, identitet og selvorientering. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 22(2), 65-87. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-5949-2002-02-01>
- Kristiansen, M. H. (2022).** *Hører jeg så ikke til her?: En institutionel etnografi for studerende i psykosociale vanskeligheder i videregående uddannelse*. Ph.d.-afhandling. Roskilde Universitet.
- Kristoffersson, E., Rönqvist, H., Andersson, J., Bengs, C., & Hamberg, K. (2021).** "It was as if I wasn't there" – experiences of everyday racism in a Swedish medical school. *Social Science & Medicine*, 270, 113678. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113678>
- Larsen, L., Stigemo, A., Wulf-Andersen, T., Krogh, L., & Jensen, A. A. (2023).** Tilhør og anerkendelse – studenterperspektiver på psykosociale problemer i videregående uddannelse. *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift*, 18(34), 41-58. <https://doi.org/10.7146/dut.v18i34.133901>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (2012).** *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Madsen, L. M., Holmegaard, H. T., & Ulriksen, L. (2015).** *Being a woman in a man's place or being a man in a woman's place: Insights into students' experiences of science and engineering at university*. I: E. K. Henriksen, J. Dillon, & J. Ryder (red.), *Understanding student participation and choice in science and technology education* (s. 315-330). Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7793-4\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7793-4_19)

- Madsen, M. (2018).** *Fællesskabets ingeniører: En antropologisk analyse af sociale studiestartsaktiviteter for ingeniørstuderende*. Ph.d.-afhandling. Det Samfundsvidenskabelige Fakultet, Københavns Universitet.
- Nielsen, G. B. (2024).** Ytringer der krænker? Om humor, fællesskab og epistemisk uretfærdighed på universitetet. *Tidsskriftet Antropologi*, 89, 85-106. <https://doi.org/10.7146/ta.vi89.148002>
- O'Boyle, N. (2015).** The risks of 'university speak': Relationship management and identity negotiation by mature students off campus. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 25(2), 93-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2015.1018921>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2003).** A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(4), 667-686. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.4.667>
- Poulsen, S. A., Rieland, S., Schultz, V., & Pedersen, K. M. (2019).** *Nødvendigt for nogle, godt for alle. En undersøgelse af vilkår for studerende med funktionsnedsættelser på lange og mellemlange videregående uddannelser*. Tænk tanken Perspektiv.
- Ralund, S. (2022).** Individualiserede netværk og frafald. I: D. Reimer, & I. G. Andersen (red.), *Frafald på de videregående uddannelser: Forklaringer, mekanismer og løsninger* (s. 191-205). Aalborg Universitetsforlag.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017).** *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Sjöblom, A., Inkinen, M., Salmela-Aro, K., & Parpala, A. (2024).** Transitioning from bachelor's to master's studies – examining study burnout, approaches to learning and experiences of the learning environment. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 17(7), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-07-2023-0275>
- Souto, A.-M., & Lappalainen, S. (2024).** Normative whiteness in Finnish university education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 66(1), 91-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2024.2347276>
- Steele, C. M. (1997).** A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613-629. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613>
- Thomsen, J. P. (2008).** *Social differentiering og kulturel praksis på danske universitetsuddannelser*. Roskilde Universitet.
- Tinto, V. (2015).** Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 254-269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115621917>
- Trautwein, C., & Bosse, E. (2017).** The first year in higher education: Critical requirements from the student perspective. *Higher Education*, 73(3), 371-387. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0098-5>
- Ulriksen, L. (2002).** De videregående uddannelser – selvstændighed som ønske, krav og byrde. I: K. Illeris, N. Katznelson, B. Simonsen, & L. Ulriksen (red.), *Ungdom, identitet og uddannelse*. Center for Ungdomsforskning.
- Ulriksen, L., & Gregersen, A. (2022).** Expectations and challenges of first-year biotechnology students: The importance of social relations. *Nordic Studies in Science Education*, 18, 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.5617/nordina.8679>
- Ulriksen, L. M. (2004).** Den implicite studerende. *Dansk pædagogisk Tidsskrift*, 3, 48-59.
- Walton, G. M., & Yeager, D. S. (2020).** Seed and soil: Psychological affordances in contexts help to explain where wise interventions succeed or fail. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29(3), 219-226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721420904453>
- Wenger, E. (1998).** *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. (2021).** *Praksisfællesskaber: Læring, mening og identitet*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005).** 'It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people': The role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6), 707-722. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500340036>
- Wong, B., & Chiu, Y.-L. T. (2021).** Exploring the concept of 'ideal' university student. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(3), 497-508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1643302>
- Wulf-Andersen, T., Larsen, L., Jensen, A. A., Krogh, L., Stigemo, A. B., & Kristiansen, M. H. (red.). (2023).** *Students' experiences of psychosocial problems in higher education: Battling and belonging*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003221029>

EVA (The Danish Evaluation Institute)  
– analyses, tools and development that  
strengthen education and daycare.



The Danish  
Evaluation  
Institute

EVA  
+45 35 55 01 01  
eva@eva.dk  
eva.dk