

ISSUE #1

Feb. 8, 2021

DEAN'S DIGEST

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

Welcome to the very first biweekly version of the Dean's newsletter. At ITU, there is an increasing need for clearly communicating to faculty the decisions and actions that relates to teaching and learning. This newsletter will convey news as well as education perspectives to build a more qualified setoff for a shared sensemaking between the Dean of Education's office, Heads of Department and Heads of Study programme. We hope that this transparency initiative will spark fruitful debates on education for the future so we can learn faster and make better decisions and actions for our students, peers, and society.

A few words on transparency and inclusiveness

The open and transparent ITU building encourages us to be open and transparent with each other. But to be excellent collaborators and strategic thinkers will also require us to open to new ideas and to rely on learning. This means that in far most cases, the best idea or suggestion for action is determined by the quantity and quality of data, not by position. When we accept that others may have a better solution, we start looking for the best answers rather than our best answers. To be an inclusive organization, we should appreciate constructive evidence-driven debates and inquiry exploration since everyone has the right to understand what makes sense.

We will need the best thinking and doing by all members of ITU in order to produce the best possible decision-making and operation regarding teaching and education under the fast-shifting circumstances. Allow me to refer to my research on Fast & Flow real-time management: in order to ensure an ITU where wellbeing and welldoing complement each other, a collaborative and inclusive culture where we all feel empowered is a must.

Elaborating on online teaching principles 2 and 3 - stay safe and social

As you hopefully discovered, we announced a set of [online learning principles](#) on January 14, 2021. Think of it as “decision-making algorithm” to help us better navigate during the lock-down period and to teach and run exams in ways that would be as appropriate for the students as possible. After the first announcement, the rules were tightened due to the official Covid-19 announcements, which means that the second principle changed slightly into

“Safe Campus. Faculty, who absolutely needs to be on campus in order to teach (see ITU Covid-19 guidelines), must adhere to the latest public health restrictions and take the necessary hygiene precautions and follow “traffic rules” on campus.”

No rules without exceptions, so who may teach on Campus?

On January 21, the Executive Management specified that VIP, DVIP, and TAs can teach on campus if they are not able to teach from home due to an unstable, slow or otherwise problematic internet connection or because of young school children or small children being home-schooled or care taken. However, to increase safety, the ITU studios and labs are closed for teaching and research activities; only offices, meeting rooms, and teaching rooms will be available for teaching.

We will reopen the studio and labs as soon as the COVID-restrictions are suspended (hopefully after Feb 28). We are pushing for prioritizing teaching as much as possible but going against the stream in these times can have severe political consequences for ITU and we must therefore take that into consideration.

Teachers can borrow a hardware kit for online teaching at home or at ITU. FM is in process of buying the equipment and establishing a procedure for picking up the kit from the Information desk. You will be informed about when you can order from fm@itu.dk and pick up the equipment at the Information desk at Rued Langgaards Vej.

We thank you for having endured many work-related difficulties this year. We know that this is not the optimal solution for conducting excellent teaching and we know that we are compromising the quality by teaching in our living-room or office space, but we also know that you represent a great pool of creativity and experience. Let us continue to focus on what we can do under the challenging circumstances.

Let’s combat the challenge of online learner isolation and share ideas and resources with peers and explore the amounts of materials online on online teaching. For instance, this “roundabout design” may be a useful planning approach: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-course-design-and-preparation/planning-a-great-online-class-through-roundabout-design/>. Learning Support also offers online teaching courses: <https://intranet.itu.dk/training-for-teachers#calendar-1s-2020> and [advice for learning in an online environment](#).

This leads to principle 3:

“Social ITU. Faculty and staff should encourage students to socialize (online or privately when the health authorities allow it) on a regular basis to maintain closeness to increase their wellbeing and learning process.”

Stay social to increase wellbeing and study performance

Working and studying at ITU fulfills a social need of being part of meaningful relationships and communities. The lock down situation puts our wellbeing and our social and professional relationships under pressure. Fresh numbers in an ITU survey reveal that our students are suffering from social isolation. 77 % found that the study motivation has dropped during covid-19 and some students feel lonely. We have a huge responsibility to take action. Therefore, we must pay great attention to the social environment, which forms the foundation for students, faculty, and staff.

Together with the Dean of Education Support, I am working on initiatives to strengthen wellbeing through social initiatives. ITU online workspace actions are communicated to our students in a welcome letter on ITU Student and our teachers are also informed about this on Teaching Guide. Moreover, we will engage students and other key persons in this work of exploring how ITU can better facilitate a social online environment. Though we need more knowledge on how to include the most vulnerable students, we encourage you to do what you can to grasp the social moments available and use the technology at our side to help us do that well, be it online gym sessions, group work, online fireside talks, or informal meetings where we can engage in value-creating activities.

Stay safe, social, and updated! See you soon at our next meeting where we also will discuss these aspects.

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