## Semester Steering – Overview

### Semester starts

#### Semester planning
- Planning process
- Semester description
- Project proposals
- Allocate supervisors

#### Semester implementation
- Semester introduction meeting for students
- 2-3 steering group meetings
- Possibly meet with project supervisors (status, exam, etc.)
- Encourage students to solve minor issues themselves
- Handle conflicts; e.g., group splitting
- Report serious matters to the Study Board

### Semester ends

#### Semester evaluation
- Manage evaluation process
- Make draft evaluation report
- Call for comments from teachers and students
- Send final report to the Study Board

### Fall cycle

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<th>Semester starts</th>
<th>Semester implementation</th>
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| Semester steering coordinator
  - Semester schedule
  - Moodle
  - Group lists
  - Exam planning
  - Take minutes of steering group meetings
  - Maintain info at Moodle (e.g., info on deadlines, exam plans, etc.
  - ... |
  - Participate in semester intro meeting
  - Meet with project group(s) once a week to guide and provide feedback to the students
  - Participate in meetings called by the semester coordinator
  - Act as examiner in the project exam (be acquainted with AAU’s evaluation criteria)
| Schedule semester evaluation meeting
  - Attach exam statistics to semester evaluation report
  - Fill out questionnaire for study secretaries |

### Spring cycle

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<th>Semester starts</th>
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| Project supervisor
  - Participate in planning meeting, if called
  - Get acquainted with semester description and learning goals
  - Propose semester projects
  - Possibly participate in semester intro meeting
  - Act as examiner in the project exam (be acquainted with AAU’s evaluation criteria)
| Provide feedback on draft evaluation report |

| Course lecturer
  - Participate in planning meeting, if called
  - Update course description at Moodle
  - Get acquainted with semester description and learning goals
  - Possibly participate in steering group meetings
| Provide feedback on draft evaluation report |

- Possibly participate in semester intro meeting
- Act as examiner in the course exam (be acquainted with AAU’s evaluation criteria)
# Semester steering – yearly cycle

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<th>Task</th>
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<td>Send out teaching requisitions to departments</td>
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<td>Inform semester coordinators about time schedule for semester evaluations</td>
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<td>Allocate project supervisors according to requisitions</td>
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<td>Inform semester coordinator and semester secretaries on new, rules, initiatives, etc.</td>
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<td>Call for and conduct semester (steering group) meetings</td>
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<td>Conduct midway and before-exam meetings (if relevant)</td>
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<td>Inform new teachers on rules, regulations, info, etc.</td>
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<td>Announce deadline for submitting project reports</td>
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<td>Schedule semester evaluation meeting, in cooperation with semester coordinator</td>
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### Semester steering – yearly cycle

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Responsibilities for semester coordinators

In a nutshell: The semester coordinator is to be considered the right-hand man of the Study Board in planning, steering, monitoring and evaluating the activities of the semester. This includes making sure the activities are coherent and coordinated with the secretary, lecturers and project supervisors of the semester. NB: In addition to the points below, beware of the specific responsibilities at First Year of Studies

• Semester planning
  • Notify Study Board of proposals for possible changes to the semester description to be approved by the Study Board in August / January
  • Approve proposal for semester schedule worked out by the semester secretary
  • Possibly meet with the secretary, the lecturers and the project supervisors of the semester to plan the activities of the semester
  • Call for project proposals among the project supervisors
  • Consider using the Study Activity Tool for the semester’s study load and present the resulting “load profile” at the semester intro meeting

• Semester introduction
  • First day of the semester, introduce the semester to students
  • Run the process of formation of project groups
  • Allocate supervisors to project groups based on the students’ project choices

• Semester steering
  • Arrange 2-3 semester meetings with representatives for project groups, ensuring minutes get uploaded to Moodle and sent to the Study Board
  • Conduct meetings with project supervisors
  • Handle conflicts; if necessary, by involving the chairman of the Study Board of Head of Studies;
  • Report serious issues, dropouts, etc. to the Study Board

• Semester evaluation
  • Run the semester evaluation process in cooperation with the department and the Study Soard

• Key resources
  • Study regulation
  • Eksamensordning for prøver ved Aalborg Universitet (Da), Examination Policies and Procedures for Aalborg University (En)
  • CS Rules and Forms
  • Quality Assurance policies @ CS
Extra responsibilities for semester coordinators at the First Year of Studies

At the first year of bachelor’s programmes, the semester coordinator has some extra responsibilities:

- **Semester planning**
  - Make sure the learning goals are communicated to the project supervisors and pay special attention to supervisors with limited experience with PBL
- **Semester introduction, inform about**
  - the intro period, possibly by the assistance of an elder student (tutor)
  - the Study Commencement Exam
  - the Study Café, where they can meet elder students and get assistance with various study-related challenges
  - the midterm seminar
- **Semester steering**
  - Support good collaboration with the PBL lecturer (course and consultations)
  - Keep an eye on dropouts and generally have focus on retention (e.g., suggest / support student activities that can stimulate the students’ motivation)
  - Make a guide for the midterm seminar in collaboration with the PBL lecturer(s) and invite them to participate in the seminar
  - If needed (for supervisors with limited experience), call the project supervisors to one or more meetings to inform on learning goals, exam form, evaluation criteria, roles, etc.
Responsibilities for project supervisors

**In a nutshell:** The project supervisor is supposed to guide the students in a direction that ensures that they achieve the learning goals set out for the project module, to guide them in exploiting material from the courses of the semester, to guide them in achieving a fruitful collaboration in the group, and to examine them in the project exam. NB: In addition to the points below, beware of the specific responsibilities at [First Year of Studies](#).

- **Semester planning**
  - Participate in the semester planning meeting called by the semester coordinator
  - Get acquainted with the semester description, the courses of the semester, and the learning goals of the project module
  - Propose one or more semester projects

- **Semester introduction**
  - Participate in the semester introduction meeting arranged by the semester coordinator and present proposed project(s)

- **Project supervision**
  - Meet with the students approximately once a week (typically one hour) to discuss status, progress, plans etc. for the students’ project
  - Guide the students
    - to make sure their project evolves in a way suitable for meeting the learning goals of the project module
    - to exploit material from the courses of the semester
    - in achieving a fruitful collaboration in the group
    - in working with their project in a structured manner
  - Participate in midway and before-exam meetings, if arranged by the semester coordinator

- **Project examination**
  - Act as the examiner in the project exam, being the primary conductor of the exam and asking the students questions to assess the degree to which the learning goals have been achieved
  - Be acquainted with AAU’s evaluation criteria

- **Key documents**
  - Study regulation
  - Eksamensordning for prøver ved Aalborg Universitet (Da), Examination Policies and Procedures for Aalborg University (En)
Extra responsibilities for project supervisors at the First Year of Studies

At the first year of bachelor’s programmes, the project supervisor has some extra responsibilities:

• For the students to get good start, meet with them at least 3 times during the P0 project period (P0 exam not included)

• Talk to the students about their new life as university students and the challenges they experience in that connection
  • Point them to the Student Councillors for help in case of major challenges

• Pay special attention to
  • the students’ application of project management tools (time plans, academic and social contract, etc.)
  • the students’ use of academic writing (in particular referencing), possibly referring them to a Guideline for students’ correct use of citations
  • the students’ approach to project work with focus on the structure and the method applied in their problem and process analysis
  • dropouts and absence from supervisor meetings and contact the semester coordinator in case of dropouts or severe patterns of absence
Responsibilities for course lecturers

In a nutshell: The course lecturer is free to plan the course module as he or she finds optimal for the students’ to achieve the learning goals set out for the course, to guide them during exercise / lab sessions of the course and to examine them in the course exam (whether oral or written).

- **Semester planning**
  - Participate in the [semester planning](#) meeting called by the semester coordinator
  - Get acquainted with the [semester description](#), the courses of the semester, and the learning goals of the project module

- **Semester introduction**
  - Possibly participate in the [semester introduction meeting](#) arranged by the semester coordinator and present the course

- **Assistance in exercise / lab sessions**
  - The course lecturer is supposed to take active part in assisting the students in exercise / lab sessions irrespective of whether or not TAs have been assigned to the course

- **Semester steering**
  - Feel free to participate in [steering group meetings](#) arranged by the semester coordinator

- **Course examination**
  - In 1st or 2nd lecture, inform students on how the exam is going to be conducted
  - Act as the examiner in the course exam, being the responsible and primary conductor of the exam and, in case of an oral exam, asking the students questions to assess the degree to which the learning goals have been achieved
  - Be acquainted with AAU’s [evaluation criteria](#)

- **Key documents / resources**
  - [Study regulations](#)
  - [Eksamensordning for prøver ved Aalborg Universitet](#) (Da), [Examination Policies and Procedures for Aalborg University](#) (En)
  - [LearnSome](#) (platform for booking free guest lecturers)
Semester description

Tasks for the semester coordinator:

• Notify the Study Board of proposals for possible changes to the semester description (approved by teachers of the semester) for approval by the Study Board

• Take into account recommendations from semester evaluation report of last year’s implementation of the semester

• Make sure the semester description is made in accordance with the template provided by the Study Board; see the semester room in Moodle

• Inform the students about the semester description at the semester intro meeting
Semester schedule

• The semester secretary is responsible for making a draft schedule that must be approved by the semester coordinator
  • Course lecturers are asked to provide input needed for detailed planning (e.g., miniprojects, workshops, guest lecturing, etc.)
  • If possible, no activities should be scheduled for Wednesday afternoons
• The semester coordinator makes sure the schedule
  • allows reasonable time for students to prepare for the different activities of the semester
  • gives the students a reasonable load balance during the semester; cf. Excel-tool for Study Activity Model that the semester coordinator is supposed to use and to present its output in the semester description and at the semester introduction meeting
Planning the semester

• The point of departure for planning the semester is the [study regulation](#), the current [semester description](#) and the [semester evaluation report](#) from last year’s implementation of the semester

• The semester secretary is responsible for taking care of the practicalities of the planning; for example, schedule, bookings, Moodle, etc.

• There’s supposed to be a close collaboration between the semester coordinator and the semester secretary

• The semester coordinator is responsible for the planning process and for involving other teachers of the semester; for example, by calling for a planning meeting to discuss
  • semester schedule
  • main points of last year’s semester evaluation report
  • semester description
  • project proposals
  • relations between courses and projects
  • fair distribution of workload for students
  • etc.
Project proposals

• The semester coordinator calls project supervisors for project proposals
  • possibly based on criteria to ensure coverage of learning goals and semester theme

• At most semesters it’s customary to present the students with project proposals to choose from; although students must always be free to make their own project proposal (to be approved)

• A project proposal
  • must be open-ended and be problem-oriented
  • must meet the theme of the semester
  • must support the students’ acquisition of the project module’s learning goals
  • preferably involves external collaboration with a company or organisation
  • can support cross-disciplinary perspectives; e.g., part of a megaproject
  • can be address one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

• The proposals should be collected in some sort of catalogue presented to the students at the semester intro meeting
Semester introduction

• First day of the semester, the semester coordinator conducts a semester intro meeting with the students

• At the semester intro meeting the coordinator presents the semester description, which introduces the objective of the semester and describes the activities planned for the semester:
  • If 1st semester (BSc or MSc): Introduce the Study Activity Model
  • Project proposals (possibly presented by project supervisors)
  • Schedule and expected study load during the semester (presenting the output of the Excel-tool of the Study Activity Model)
  • Steering group meetings – students appoint a member from each group
  • Formation of project groups
  • Submission of project reports
  • Exams
  • …

• The project supervisors participate in the semester intro meeting and they present their project proposals
Formation of project groups

• Formation of project groups is notoriously difficult and sometimes painful for the students, so please take care!

• The semester coordinator is encouraged to provide means for easing the group formation process; for inspiration, see [Principles for group formation](#).

• Consider using the [system for supporting the management of group formation](#) developed by Kurt Nørmark (disclaimer: bugs may exist, as it’s a brand new system)
  • The system supports virtual group formation; eliminating the need to gather all students in a single lecture room
  • Kurt has made an [introduction to the system](#) (in Danish)
Steering group meetings

- The steering group consists of the semester coordinator, teachers and student representatives (one per project group) of the semester.
- The semester coordinator calls the semester group for a meeting 2-3 times during the semester; see templates for the meetings.
- Normally, the semester secretary participates and takes minutes of the meeting.
- The meetings are a forum for discussing teaching (form, content, etc.), workload, progress in projects, etc.
- The students should be encouraged to solve minor issues themselves (e.g., discuss course issues with lecturer, report physical study environment issues via app (iPhone and Android) or via a web-form).
- Course lecturers and project supervisors normally only attend if so requested by the semester coordinator.
- No later than a week after the meeting, the minutes of the meeting (approved by the semester coordinator) are published in the Moodle semester room and sent to the Study Board.
  - Potentially sensible information are conveyed in other means by the coordinator.
Project supervisors’ meetings

• The semester coordinator of 1st and 2nd semesters of bachelor’s programmes must meet with project supervisors
• The semester coordinator of other semesters are encouraged to meet with the project supervisors, especially with unexperienced supervisors
• The kinds of meetings are:
  • Semester planning: Expectations, roles, etc. for project supervisors
  • Midway status: Status for projects, collaboration, etc.
  • Before exam: Quality of reports, exam form, learning goals and evaluation criteria, roles, etc.
• The semester coordinator has a special responsibility to make sure that new project supervisors and supervisors unfamiliar with the theme of the semester receive appropriate guidance to handle the role as project supervisor at the semester
• NB: In any case, semester coordinator and project supervisors must keep each other informed about challenges, dropout, etc. in the project groups
Conflict handling

- The semester coordinator takes care of issues and conflicts raised by students and teachers (course lecturers and project supervisors)
  - The semester coordinator and the semester group is supposed to handle the issues and conflicts themselves and only involve the chairman and/or the head of studies if needed
- Conflicts in a project group is first sought to be solved by the students themselves, possibly involving the project supervisor
  - The semester coordinator gets involved only if the students are unable to solve the conflict; if the group needs to split up, see the rules for group splitting
Guide and provide feedback to the students

The task for a project supervisor is to guide the students in two ways:

- **Subject matter:**
  - Provide feedback on the students' ideas, suggestions, drafts, prototypes, etc. and guide them in correcting (if necessary) and continuing their work
  - Suggest literature, theories, methods, etc. that can be used in their project
  - Don’t tell the students what they *should* do, but what they *can* do

- **Project management:** Guide the students in running their project in an appropriate manner in terms of good teamwork and project management

If relevant, consider joint supervision in clusters of groups, as this can be beneficial for both students and supervisors

For inspiration, see

- Kolmos et al. (2008), *Facilitation in a PBL environment*, Aalborg University
- Davidsen et al. (2019), *Study competencies: Communication, motivation, resilience, study technique & learning*, Aalborg University
Evaluation criteria

• Aalborg University operates two sets of evaluation criteria:
  • Evaluation with assessment according to the Danish 7-point grading scale
  • Evaluation with the assessment Pass/Fail

• Assessments are made according to evaluation criteria
  • In Danish: Bilag 2 i Eksamensordning for prøver ved Aalborg Universitet
  • In English: Appendix 2 of the Examination Policies and Procedures for Aalborg University
Semester evaluation

The semester coordinator is responsible for the semester evaluation process in cooperation with the department and the Study Board, which consists of the following steps:

1. The department informs the semester coordinators about the semester evaluation process and their roles in the process (e.g., the semester coordinator is supposed to see to that the students fill out the questionnaires)
2. Each student performs a quantitative evaluation (late November / late April, respectively); initiated by the department
3. Each project group performs a qualitative evaluation (late November / late April, respectively); initiated by the department
4. The semester coordinator conducts an evaluation meeting with the students based on their qualitative evaluations to make a joint qualitative semester evaluation (the semester secretary will call for the meeting and send the students’ evaluations to the semester coordinator)
5. The semester coordinator drafts a semester evaluation report (using the Study Board’s template) based on
   • the results of the quantitative evaluations
   • the joint qualitative semester evaluation
   • minutes of the steering group meetings
6. The draft must be sent to students and teachers of the semester for comments, revised on basis thereof and then sent to the Study Board
   • with comments received enclosed
   • with minority statements (if any) included
   • without sensitive personal information; such information must be conveyed to the Study Board by other means
   • concluded with recommendations on changes (if any) before the next iteration of the semester
7. Send final report to the Study Board no later than early February / mid August, respectively