Framework provisions

University pedagogy for assistant professors
Aalborg University

Version 071117

Section 1. Objectives of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors

The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors is a research based pedagogical competence development course which provides assistant professors and other course participants with a pedagogical and didactic foundation for a permanent career at Aalborg University or another institution of higher education.

The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors at Aalborg University is a key element in the system for quality assurance of the study programmes offered by the University. PBL is the pivot of university pedagogy for assistant professors, and in taking PBL as its point of departure, the overall objective of the course is to develop and ensure that assistant professors have the pedagogical competences required to undertake class teaching, supervision, course planning and examinations in university courses.

Completing a course in university pedagogy for assistant professors or a similar course is a prerequisite for tenure as an associate professor at Aalborg University, cf. Aalborg University’s policy for the pedagogical competence development of teaching staff at http://www.kvalitetssikring.aau.dk/pedagogisk-kompetenceudvikling/politik-pedagogisk-kompetenceudvikling/ (in Danish).

University pedagogy for assistant professors is offered with reference to Circular on proceedings concerning certain employment conditions for academic staff at universities, stipulating that tenure as associate professor presupposes completion of a course in university pedagogy https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=174476 (in Danish).

University pedagogy for assistant professors at Aalborg University is based on the problem and project-based learning model (PBL); the objective of the course is to qualify attendees for undertaking teaching activities based on pedagogical principles at a high level, with a particular emphasis on PBL.

University pedagogy for assistant professors focuses on teaching and supervision within the University’s general course portfolio aimed at bachelor and master students as well as target groups with business
experience under the auspices of the University’s part-time master courses and other courses of further and continuing education.

(2)
University pedagogy for assistant professors is organised as a combination of course modules and feedback on attendees’ own teaching and supervision provided by their study group as well as by academic and pedagogical supervisors. While participating in these activities, the assistant professors will work to achieve the competence goals of the course.

University pedagogy for assistant professors includes obligatory English language certification, emphasising communicative as well as pedagogical and didactic challenges when using English as the medium of instruction.

English language screening and certification take place as integral activities under university pedagogy for assistant professors and include certification at C1 level in CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). English certification at C1 level is a prerequisite for passing university pedagogy for assistant professors.

(3)
The overall aim of university pedagogy for assistant professors is for assistant professors to acquire competences in:

- applying Aalborg University’s principles of problem-based learning in all of their activities at Aalborg University
- applying relevant pedagogical and didactic methods and theories in their development, planning and implementation of individual courses as well as extended teaching activities and supervision, taking into consideration the target group of the individual activity
- applying relevant IT tools in communicating and organising teaching activities
- conducting teaching activities for target audiences of varying types and sizes, including classroom teaching conducted in English
- supervising and leading learning processes based on the principles of problem-based learning and problem-based project work, including supervision in English
- conducting examinations according to the learning objectives stipulated in the curricula and regulations and the rules regarding examinations and assessments
- actively engaging in the continuous development, evaluation and quality assurance of the programmes offered by the University

Furthermore, another essential aim of university pedagogy for assistant professors is for assistant professors to acquire competences in:

- reflecting on their own teaching and supervision in their continuous evaluation and development of these activities
- identifying and communicating their own needs for further pedagogical training, and, by extension, being able to focus on developing their own teaching skills
Each of the course modules of university pedagogy for assistant professors is aimed at supporting the development of one or several of the above competences.

(4) University pedagogy for assistant professors takes into account Aalborg University’s status as an international workplace which has Danish and English as its official work languages. Thus, university pedagogy for assistant professors offers activities and resources in both Danish and English. The composition of study groups and language requirements will be considered in the practical planning and implementation of the course.

Section 2. Duration, structure, content, etc.

The scope of university pedagogy for assistant professors is 1/6 academic staff full time equivalent.

The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors is scheduled for completion within one year. The course must be completed within two years.

In the event that assistant professors do not complete the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors within two years, they must send an application for admission to a new course to the secretariat of university pedagogy for assistant professors. The application must contain the written approval of their head of department. Please refer to section 6 on special regulations and exceptions.

(2) The course comprises:

- Five compulsory course modules
- Compulsory English language certification
- A minimum of three elective course modules
- Pedagogical/didactical supervision and teaching observation provided by the pedagogical supervisor and an expert supervisor
- Collegial sparring in small study groups, including participation in teaching observation
- Individual learning report based on a problem based approach

(3) The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors includes the following five compulsory course modules:

1. Teaching at a PBL University
2. Planning and Implementation of Group Instruction
3. The Use of IT and Media for Learning and Teaching
4. The PBL Group – Collaboration, Process and Supervision
5. Planning, Development and Quality Assurance of Study Programmes
Each of the compulsory course modules is concluded with a compulsory **reflective assignment**, which is included in the overall assessment of the completion of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors.

The content and structure of the compulsory course modules are described in more detail in section 3.

(4)
The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors includes a minimum of three **elective course modules**: The assistant professors may select a minimum of three elective course modules presented in the catalogue of elective course modules.

The approval of an elective course module requires active participation in the selected module, cf. the description of active participation.

One of the required elective course modules may be replaced by the participation in other equivalent activities. For further information go to section 4.

(5)
When commencing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, each assistant professor will have two supervisors assigned to them. A pedagogical supervisor and an expert supervisor appointed from the assistant professor’s department/academic environment.

Each of the supervisors will observe a number of teaching and supervision activities in each of the two semesters of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors and offer pedagogical and didactic supervision in relation to these activities.

The reflective assignments completed as part of the compulsory course modules will be included in the supervision.

In their individual learning report, each assistant professor must document their participation in the pedagogical and didactic supervision. Thus, the assistant professors are required to include in their learning report their personal reflections on the supervisor’s contributions.

(6)
The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors includes a compulsory English language certification. When commencing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, all assistant professors must participate in a screening process identifying their individual language skills and needs; subsequently, assistant professors are either 1) referred to participate in the final language certification without further instruction or 2) offered participation in recommended English courses. These courses are conducted by AAU Language and Communication Services (LACS) and are thus not part of the course catalogue of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors.

The content and structure of the compulsory English language certification are described in more detail in section 3.
When commencing the course, all participants are divided into study groups. Within their assigned study groups, the assistant professors are required to observe and provide feedback on the teaching and supervision activities of their peers.

In their individual learning report, each assistant professor must document their participation in peer work in the small study groups, including participation in teaching observation. Thus, the assistant professors are required to include in their learning report their personal reflections on the observation of the teaching and supervision activities conducted by a colleague and the feedback they have received from colleagues on their own teaching and supervision activities.

As part of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, the assistant professors are required to complete a learning report. The objective of the learning report is:

- to contribute to the retention of assistant professors, to aid them in organising and reflecting on their own pedagogical practice and development throughout the course in university pedagogy
- to define and qualify the objectives and strategies for the future pedagogical development of the assistant professors

Before completing their course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, the assistant professors must submit their individually completed learning reports. When preparing written assessments on the assistant professors, their two supervisors will take the learning reports into account.

The learning report must be at least 5 standard pages and no more than 10 standard pages (a standard page is defined as 2,400 characters, including spaces).

The reflective assignments completed as part of the compulsory course modules must be attached to the submitted learning report.

Furthermore, an activity log must be attached to the learning report; the activity log must include information on collegial sparring, teaching observation and pedagogical and expert supervision.

Section 3. Compulsory course modules and English language certification – content and structure

The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors includes the following five compulsory course modules:

Course module 1: Teaching at a PBL University

This module provides a research based, theoretical frame of reflection for problem-based learning pedagogy and focuses on the connection between teaching, supervision and student learning processes within a PBL environment. The module is based on the participants’ own understanding of PBL and seeks to expand and deepen this understanding through theoretical input. Thus, PBL is not only characterised as a foundation based on experience but also on research and theory, and taking this as their point of
departure, the participants should be able to position their own understanding, practice and development in relation to PBL.

- This module includes the completion of a reflective assignment (1 page) to be included in supervision activities and attached to the learning report. In completing the assignment, the participants must reflect on their own practice by applying the knowledge and theories of the module

**Course module 2: Planning and Implementation of Group Instruction**

This module focuses on the planning and implementation of teaching activities involving groups of various types and sizes. This may include lectures for hundreds of participants, seminars and workshops for small groups of students; class room teaching involving students of identical year groups and study programmes and teaching groups comprised of various different types of students; teaching students face to face and teaching in various types of mediated settings. Teaching is founded in research-based knowledge and literature on teaching and planning.

The role of the lecturer and the opportunities to support student learning will form the key focal points of this module.

- This module includes the completion of a reflective assignment (1 page) to be included in supervision activities and attached to the learning report. In completing the assignment, the participants must reflect on their own practice by applying the knowledge and theories of the module

**Course module 3: The Use of IT and Media for Learning and Teaching**

The module focuses on the application of IT and media technology in the pedagogical planning and implementation of teaching activities; this includes ways in which IT, media technology and labs may help activate students.

The module covers several types of technology applications, such as the application of video conferencing systems and the IT platforms currently in use at Aalborg University (such as Moodle and Mahara) and how these may be put to best possible use in a PBL context. The module also introduces participants to the application of commonly used file sharing systems, such as Dropbox, Google+ etc. and communicational tools such as PPT.

The module is taught through the integration of specific technologies and media technologies, and thus takes the form of blended learning involving, for instance, video sessions, online courses etc.

- This module includes the completion of a reflective assignment (1 page) to be included in supervision activities and attached to the learning report. In completing the assignment, the participants must reflect on their own practice by applying the knowledge and theories of the module

**Course module 4: The PBL Group – Collaboration, Process and Supervision**

The module focuses on the working community of the group and on how the supervisor may support the various stages of a project or case. The key elements of the module are the communicative aspects of supervision and how the supervisor may support students in project management, cooperation and in
reflecting on their own learning. Theoretical perspectives on various types of groups and supervisors are discussed in relation to the participants’ own experiences as supervisors. The objective is to challenge the participants to prepare their own personal guidelines for practising “effective supervision” in a problem-based learning environment. Collaborative difficulties within the group and coaching as a means to solve such issues are included as a separate theme.

- This module includes the completion of a reflective assignment (1 page) to be included in supervision activities and attached to the learning report. In completing the assignment, the participants must reflect on their own practice by applying the knowledge and theories of the module

Course module 5: Planning, Development and Quality Assurance of Study Programmes

The first part of the module focuses on the educational perspectives of the planning and development of study programmes. The curriculum as the framework for teaching and learning is of particular importance. The module focuses on how “good learning objectives” are defined and how the organisation of teaching and supervision activities may optimise the educational and didactic foundation for students in achieving these learning objectives.

The second part of the module includes a number of themes which address the various formalities connected with study programmes. One of the themes covered in this module is grading and assessment; this includes a presentation of various regulations, laws and procedures and the various roles assigned to examiners and co-examiners during examinations and the assessment of examinations. Furthermore, AAU’s system of quality assurance and quality assurance procedures, such as teaching assessment, are included as a theme.

- This module includes the completion of a reflective assignment (1 page) to be included in supervision activities and attached to the learning report. In completing the assignment, the participants must reflect on their own practice by applying the knowledge and theories of the module

Certification in English as a Medium of Instruction

English language screening and certification take place as integral activities under university pedagogy for assistant professors and include certification at C1 level in CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

When commencing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, all assistant professors must participate in a screening process identifying their individual English language skills. In the screening process, participants present an excerpt of a lecture in their own field and read and discuss a short unknown article. The instructor then assesses whether they live up to the internationally recognised C1 English certification level criteria or if they need to participate in upgrading courses. The assistant professors who are close to the C1 level and need no further instruction, are referred to participate in the final language certification, which is scheduled to take place at the end of the spring semester. The assistant professors who are recommended to participate in English courses are offered to attend one or several courses prior to the final certification. The process of the final language certification is almost identical to the screening process; however, the instructor as well as a co-examiner will be present at the
certification. The overall assessment emphasises both language skills and the communicational, educational and didactic challenges of teaching in English.

Thus, as part of the English language certification process, all participants are required to attend a final certification (test). Certification at C1 level English is a prerequisite for passing university pedagogy for assistant professors. Assistant professors who do not manage to reach the C1 level at the first attempt will be offered further and more intensive instruction and a second attempt to achieve the final certification. Assistant professors who, after the second attempt, need additional instruction and a third attempt to reach the C1 level must ask their department to fund any further certification activities. A more detailed description of the English language certification (screening, courses and certification) is provided by AAU Language and Communication Services (LACS) and is available in Moodle.

Section 4. Elective course modules
In addition to the five compulsory course modules and the English language certification, assistant professors are required to select (at least) three elective course modules within pedagogy and/or didactics presented in the catalogue of elective course modules.

The elective course modules offered each year will vary; new elective modules may be developed, while others may be discontinued according to developmental trends and challenges of a structural or political nature. Concrete requests or indications from councils for education, student councils, heads of departments, schools or study boards at AAU may also cause for elective modules to be offered. However, elective course modules in PBL and IT are always included in the catalogue of elective course modules.

(2)
One of the required elective course modules may be replaced by participation in conferences of relevance to the educational field. Replacement of an elective course module is only possible if the alternative activity is carried out after commencement and before completion of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors.

Section 5. Completing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors
Completing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors requires:

1) active participation in compulsory course modules, active participation in pedagogical and expert supervision and active participation in at least three elective course modules. Active participation means attending supervision and the courses and workshops offered as part of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors; moreover, participants are required to work on the subject material as described in the framework provisions of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors
2) English language certification at C1 level in the CEFR scale
3) participation in teaching observation and teaching supervision (this must be documented in an activity log, which must be attached to the learning report; the activity log must include the dates of such observation and supervision)
4) participation in peer work in small study groups. This must be documented in the individual assistant professor’s learning report, which must include written reflections on the response
received from their peers of their teaching/supervision activities as well as their own reflections on teaching/supervision activities conducted by their peers

5) submission of a written learning report, which serves as documentation of the participants’ thorough study and reflections on the completed course in university pedagogy for assistant professors; the learning report must a) document how participants have succeeded in achieving the educational objectives and b) provide perspectives for their future educational development

The learning report and its attached documents (reflective assignments and activity log) may be written in Danish, English or a Scandinavian language (Swedish or Norwegian).

(2)
On the basis of the above criteria, the two supervisors (the pedagogical supervisor and the local expert supervisor) assess whether participants have succeeded in achieving the educational objectives of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors. The supervisors must complete a written pedagogical supervisor assessment comprising a maximum of two pages. The supervisor assessment must be written in English.

In addition to the supervisor assessment, the assistant professors receive a certificate as proof of their completion of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors. The certificate text is written in Danish and English.

Section 6. Special regulations and exceptions
In the event that an assistant professor starts but does not complete the AAU course in university pedagogy for assistant professors, the assistant professor can be entitled to a partial transfer of one or more mandatory modules. A transfer of one or more mandatory course modules requires that active participation in the module has been formally registered by the secretariat beforehand.

(2)
The course in university pedagogy for assistant professors must be completed within two years, cf. section 2. Exceptions from the two-year rule must be justified by long-term illness, maternity/paternity leave or other exceptional circumstances and must be formally granted by the participant’s department and faculty before the two-year deadline expires.

Section 7. Commencement
These framework provisions and learning objectives will apply to assistant professors commencing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors in the autumn of 2017.

Section 8 Additional information
In addition to the framework provisions annex guidelines for the learning report are provided.