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THINKING DIFFERENTIALLY - FROM A COURSE TO AN ENTRANCE EXAM, CASE MASTER'S DEGREE IN BEAUTY AND COSMETICS

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic during the last few years changed dramatically the chances of conducting teaching and entrance exams at Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS). Educational institutions and universities were closed, and entrance exams traditionally held on campus were no longer possible. Decisions on the implementation of the entrance exams had to be made quickly.

Laurea's Master's degrees have already considered the implementation of entrance exams courses (EECs) based on a core competence course. The reasons were e.g., improvement of the quality of entrance exams, raising the motivation of students, and raising awareness of Laurea's education portfolio and the contents of education. The financial implications of the solution were also discussed. One goal was to increase the ratio of credits performed in the Open University of Applied Sciences (Open UAS). The COVID-19 pandemic justified the implementation of this solution further. Conducting the student selection with the EEC has numerous advantages. The online course enables the teaching of large groups of students. The Open UAS credits are accrued for all participants who pass the course. Students with the best grades will be selected as degree students. They will have the credits included in their studies.

During the EEC, students become acquainted with the main contents of the Master's degree they apply for. Students who complete the course and are selected as degree students are motivated. They can immediately take part in Laurea's Learning by Developing (LbD) projects based on authenticity, partnership, experiential learning, creativity, and research.

Designing the curriculum for Master's Degree in Beauty and Cosmetics was presented in ICERI 2018 [1]. The Degree has been one of the degrees utilizing this new way to conduct student selection. Core competence courses have been chosen as the entrance exam, and different courses each year. This article presents the development, structure, and experiences of the entrance exam courses based on three years of experience. The discussion is based on a SWOT analysis.

Keywords: Entrance exam, Pedagogy, Online teaching, Curriculum, Master of Beauty and Cosmetics, Cosmetic Science.

1 INTRODUCTION

Laurea University of Applied Sciences started a Master's Degree in Beauty and Cosmetics with a group of 28 students in January 2018 in Vantaa. The degree is the first one both in Finland and in the Nordic countries. The aim for starting the degree existed for several years. The beginning of the degree was preceded by development work, which lasted several years; the most active development work took place two years before the beginning of the degree. [1]

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the chances of conducting teaching and entrance exams in all universities. Decisions on the implementation of the entrance exams were made and Master of Beauty and Cosmetics was one of the first degrees to select the students via EEC.

In the spring of 2020, the first entrance exam courses were built. Four Master's degree programs worked together. And from that on, degree programs implemented the entrance exams in the same way, utilizing different study units. Student feedback on the entrance exam courses (EECs) was excellent. It was decided to be a permanent model for conducting entrance exams, together with traditional on-site and online entrance exams.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Development of entrance exam courses

Entrance exam courses (EEC) have now been carried out in Laurea since the spring of 2020. Each implementation has given new ideas to the teachers to develop the courses further. Implementation and construction are now fluent and part of the general development work of the online courses.

The main purpose of EEC is to act as an entrance exam for Laurea's Master's programs. Another aim is to create a learning experience focusing on a specific subject [2]. The pedagogical model for online courses in Laurea was introduced in 2020 [3]. This model has been the basis of creating online courses and EECs in Laurea [2].

The course can be part of the core studies or part of the complementary competence studies. This varies from one degree to another, and degrees can decide where in the curriculum the course is located. The development and construction of the EEC begin with the revision of the learning objectives. Regardless of the nature of the course, the student must be offered the opportunity to achieve the learning objectives in the time of the study unit. Often the study unit has been carried out in the past as a standard multi-form or online study so that development work does not need to start from the beginning. Learning objectives are divided into modules in the Canvas learning platform so that they form a structurally clear and easy-to-use whole.

The course schedule will be built in such a way that it can be completed within 5-6 weeks. Important is, that the workload in the study is evenly distributed and the student can influence his or her pace of progress. The study is carried out on a quite tight schedule, within 5-6 weeks, which must be considered when planning tasks.

Assignments and quizzes in the EEC must be independent tasks, group work is not possible, even though group work is the most used study method in Laurea UAS Master's Studies. Assignments are planned to measure the student's ability to fulfill EEC's learning objectives. If assignments and quizzes already exist from the previous implementations, they will be changed if they are not as such suitable for individual tasks.

The materials used in the EEC must be easily available to all the participants. That must be checked before the course starts.

The EEC starts and ends with a video made by a participant. In the beginning, the student presents herself and talks about her own goals for the study unit. At the end of the EEC, in the so-called motivation assignment, the student is asked to explain her motivation and goals for completing her degree studies. The videos also work as a method for the student's identification.

There is a Canvas learning platform in Laurea UAS and it is used also on our entrance exam courses. The course platform in Canvas is opened no earlier than at the beginning of the course and closed at the end of the course. Assignments that are returned late are not accepted or evaluated.

Before opening and start of the EEC entire content must be carefully tested. The instructions must be clear and must not conflict with each other. The schedule and instructions throughout the course must be similar. Guidance is not given during the course, unlike other normal courses.

2.2 SWOT- analysis

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning and management technique, used by a researcher or organization to identify those aspects of a business or other developmental work. It is intended to identify the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving the objectives of the venture or project. In this article, SWOT analysis is used to present the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of designing and conducting an online entrance exam as an EEC.

3 RESULTS

In this chapter, the structure of an EEC from spring 2021 is presented. SWOT analysis is used to present the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of online entrance exam design and implementation.

3.1 Canvas-platform

The entrance exam course in the Canvas platform is divided into modules that the student completes in order (Fig. 1). Modules are designed to follow one another logically and are based on the learning objectives of the course. All modules of the course are opened at the beginning of the course. Students can proceed with their studies at their own pace, except that we have had the first module, orientation, which must be carried out within a week.

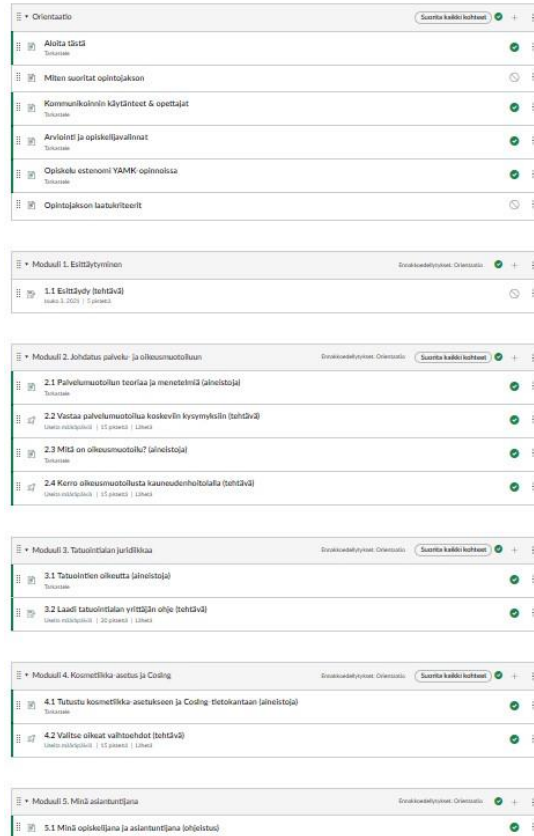


Figure 1. Modules in the EEC Jurisprudence in Beauty Services

When students start the study and open the Course Canvas, they first open the Starting page, where they are welcomed to the course (Fig. 2). On that page participants are informed about the general timetable and how to proceed in the course.

Aloitussivu



Tervetuloa kauneudenhoitopalvelujen juridiikan opintojaksolle!

Tällä opintojaksolla vaalitaan opiskelijat Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulun syksyllä 2021 alkavaan [Kosmetiikka-asiiantuntijuuden kehittämisen ja johtamisen YAMK-koulutukseen](#).

Opintojakso toteutetaan verkossa 23.4.-31.5.2021. Lähdä liikkeelle tutustumalla opintojaksoon vasemalla olevasta kohdasta Moduulit. Käy sitten tarkaan läpi Orientaatioissa olevat ohjeet.

Tämän jälkeen pääset tekemään varsinaisia tehtäviä. Opintojakso etenee kolmessa portaassa: ensin moduuli 1, sitten moduulit 2 ja 3, lopuksi moduulit 4 ja 5. Sivun oikeassa alalaidassa on teksti "seuraava" ja pieni nuoli. Sillä pääset etenemään - tai suoraan valitsemalla uuden sivun tai tehtävän kohdasta Moduulit.

Tarkat tiedot ja aikataulut ovat Orientaation kohdassa Opintojakson suoritusstapa.

Käytännössä sinulla on aikaa opintojakson orientaatioon ja ensimmäiseen tehtävään viikko. Saat halutessasi lisää aikaa muille tehtäville, kun teet ensimmäisen tehtävän ennen sen viimeistä palautuspäivää, vaikka jo ennen vappua.

Hienoa, että olet mukana!

Fig. 2 Starting page from an EEC from spring 2021 named Jurisprudence in Beauty Services

After the Starting page participant enters the Introductory module. It contains the instructions for use of the Canvas platform and other useful links to different instructions. The deadlines for the assignments are visible at the beginning of the Canvas workspace and always at the beginning of the assignment or quiz so that the student can plan his or her progress during the study. (Fig. 3)

Miten suoritat opintojakson

Palautukset ja suoritusjärjestys

Opintojaksolla tulee palauttaa tehtäviä Canvas-alustalla määräaikaan mennessä. Opintojakson tehtävät tehdään itsenäisesti yksilötehtävinä.

Opintojakso etenee kolmessa portaassa: ensin moduuli 1, sitten moduulit 2 ja 3, lopuksi moduulit 4 ja 5.

Opintojakson moduuleista ja tehtävistä yleisesti

Opintojaksolla on orientaation lisäksi viisi varsinaista moduulia (taulukko 1).

Moduuli	Ennakoedellytys	Sisältö ja tehtävätyypit yleisesti	Pisteitä enintään	Palautus viimeistään
Orientaatio	-	Perehdyt opintojakson suoritusstapaan, ohjajiin ja kommunikoinnin käytänteisiin. Saat tietoa arvioinnista ja opiskelijavalinnoista. Lisäksi tutustut opiskeluun koulutusohjelmassa.	-	-
Moduuli 1	Orientaatio	Teet oman videoterveyshyösesi. Siinä kerrot, kuka olet ja miksi olet lähtenyt mukaan opiskelemaan. Kerrot myös, mitä ajatuksia sinussa herätti tehtävänannossa viitattu artikkeli.	5	3.5.2021 klo 23.59
Moduuli 2	Moduuli 1	Tutustut palvelu- ja oikeusmuotoilun teoriaan ja käytäntöihin. Teet monivalintatehtävän ja kirjoitat tekstikenttään oikeusmuotoilusta kauneudenhoitoalalla.	30	17.5.2021 klo 23.59
Moduuli 3	Moduuli 1	Perehdyt laajasti kauneudenhoitoalan juridiikkaan. Laadit aloittelevan tatuointialan yrittäjän ohjeen. Palautus erillisenä dokumenttina.	30	17.5.2021 klo 23.59
Moduuli 4	Moduulit 1-3	Tutustut kosmetiikka-asetukseen ja Cosingiin. Vastaat koskeviin kysymyksiin vastaamalla aikarajoitetussa monivalintatehtävässä.	15	31.5.2021 klo 16.00
Moduuli 5	Moduulit 1-3	Pohdit omaa motivaatiotasi tuleviin opintoihin. Kerrot myös ajatuksesi opintojesi käytännön järjestelyistä. Valmistele vastauksesi ja esität sen maksimissaan kolme minuuttia kestäväällä videolla. Lopuksi varmista, että olet tehnyt opintojakson tehtävät itsenäisesti.	20	31.5.2021 klo 16.00

Taulukko 1. Opintojakson moduulien sisältö

Fig. 3 Overall picture of the study unit, modules, and deadlines is seen in the Introductory module

3.2 Assignments and quizzes

The structure and form of the assignments and quizzes differ, but each assignment must be carried out individually by the participant. There are multiple-choice quizzes where the student sees their scores immediately. Some tasks have a time limit, e.g. 60 or 90 minutes. In text assignments, which are limited by the length of the texts, the student writes his or her answers in a text box or returns the answer

document. The text assignments are evaluated at the end of the course. In all assignments, the student's ability to scientific thinking is evaluated.

The EEC starts and ends with a video made by a participant. In the beginning, the student presents herself and talks about her own goals for the study unit. At the EEC's end, the student is asked to explain her motivation and goals for completing her degree studies in the so-called motivation assignment. The videos also work as a method for the student's identification and only teachers/evaluators can see the videos. The EEC is usually conducted by more than one teacher and each teacher is responsible for certain assignments. The results from all the assignments and quizzes are brought together at the end.

3.3 Communication with students and teachers during the EEC

During the course, teachers mainly do not communicate with students. However, if the student has any questions, he can send the question to the teachers through the Canvas platform. If the question concerns a matter common to all, such as a mistake or confusion in the assignment, the teacher will inform all participants about this and correct the error.

3.4 Evaluation of the EEC

The evaluation of the course follows the Laurea Master's degree assessment criteria. The maximum score in our EEC has been 100 points. All those who have received more than 40 points and have completed their assignments will receive a record of the course. The best performers will be selected as students and receive a place to study.

3.5 SWOT-analysis

3.5.1 Strengths

- Through the EEC, we can reach larger audiences for the study unit.
- The course produces more Open UAS credits.
- The student's total time of conducting the degree is faster when the study units have already been completed before the beginning of the actual studies.
- Students get a feeling in studying at Laurea UAS and about the degree, they are applying for.
- Students get credits, when they pass the EEC, even though they would not get the actual place to study. If they apply again the following year, they already have 5 credits completed.

3.5.2 Weaknesses

- Participants must be independent and take responsibility for their studies.
- The EEC has no communication or cooperation with other students.
- Teachers' work and workload are uneven, it is directed before the EEC and after the EEC.

3.5.3 Opportunities

- With EEC there is a chance to scale the study unit on a bigger scale
- and an opportunity to develop the digitality of the educational institution.
- As the courses change each year, several courses of core competence will be conducted and can be carried out online in the future.
- EEC is a way to motivate students to learn more about the topic also in the future.

3.5.4 Threats

4 CONCLUSIONS

The entrance exam course is a modern way of student admission and fits well in the current trend of digitalization in higher education. It allows students to familiarise themselves in advance with the field of education they apply for. Students with the best grades from the EEC will be selected as degree students and they will have the credits included in their studies. If the participant does not get elected as a student this time, he will receive credits for his performance. These credits can be used later in his studies at Laurea UAS or another university. The EEC enables a larger number of participants and thus

supports open learning opportunities. At the same time, it will inevitably lead to the digitalization of higher education study units.

From the teacher's point of view, an online course as an admission process is a pedagogically interesting and challenging way to implement teaching. Communication with the participants and teachers' support during the course could be the thing to be developed in the future.

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