

The coronavirus and student well-being

The coronavirus has affected – and in some periods completely transformed – the daily life of students at the country's educational institutions. This is also true for students at Aarhus University. In the wake of the shutdown in the spring, in early summer 2020, the university conducted a survey evaluating the transition to online teaching and exams. The aim of the survey was to learn from these experiences in order to enhance AU's approach to digital teaching and exams in future. The report and main conclusions are available here: <https://newsroom.au.dk/nyheder/vis/artikel/hvad-laerte-vi-af-foraarets-corona-undervisning>.

Due to the coronavirus situation's impact on well-being, the ministry's 2020 student survey contains¹ four questions concerning the coronavirus and the shutdown of the educational sector. The central issue is student well-being during the coronavirus pandemic, and both the shutdown last spring as well as daily life during the autumn, when the survey was conducted, are addressed.

¹ ¹ The student survey is conducted by UFM. The study consists of a number of sub-elements, including the Learning Barometer (which measures the students' experiences of the learning environment), Degree Programme Zoom (digital admissions tool), Teaching Environment (under the auspices of Dansk Center for Undervisningsmiljø (the Danish centre for the teaching environment).

² In relation to the statistics on for higher education in Denmark cited above, please refer to the analysis: <https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeddelelser/2021/filer/analyse-corona-situationen-pavirker-studerendes-trivsel.pdf>

Note that the survey was conducted from 20 October to 15 December 2020. During this period, the university was subject to a number of coronavirus restrictions that impacted teaching, but was not physically shut down.

Main findings: Well-being during the coronavirus pandemic

I had a hard time during the corona-shutdown in the spring:

- The majority of respondents (63%) responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that they had a hard time during the coronavirus shutdown in the spring. The figure is 59% for Denmark as a whole².
- 68% of the respondents on academic Bachelor's degree programmes responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' with the statement, while this applies to 59% of respondents on professional Bachelor's programmes and 57% of respondents on Master's degree programmes. This corresponds with results at the national level.

The shutdown have not delayed me in my studies

- 76% responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that the shutdown did not delay their progress in their studies. Nationwide, 64% of respondents indicated that the shutdown did not delay their progress.

Today, my everyday life in my study program works well despite the corona situation:

- 67% of the respondents responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' with the statement – nationwide, the percentage is 66%.
- 77% of the professional Bachelor's degree students who took the survey responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that their everyday lives as students are functioning well despite the coronavirus situation. This applies to just 63% of the academic Bachelor's degree student respondents. The percentage is 69% for the Master's degree student respondents. Nationwide, more professional Bachelor's degree students (68%) responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that their everyday lives are functioning well despite the coronavirus situation; the lowest positive response rate was among academic Bachelor's degree students (62%).

The Corona situation removes some of the joy of studying:

- 78% respond that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that the coronavirus situation has diminished their enjoyment of their studies to some degree. Nationwide, this applies to 70% of respondents on post-secondary degree programmes.
- 82% of the respondents among academic Bachelor degree students, 76% among Master's degree student respondents and 68% of the respondents from the professional Bachelor's degree programmes 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that the coronavirus situation diminished their enjoyment of their studies to some degree. Nationwide, this applies to 77% of academic Bachelor's degree student respondents, 74% of Master's degree student respondents and 66% of professional Bachelor's degree respondents.

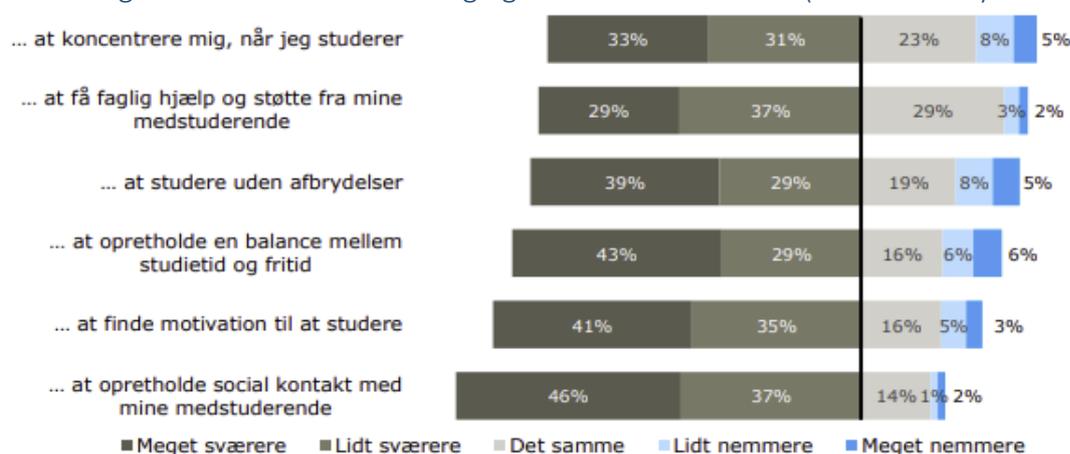
The shutdown and Student well-being during the spring shutdown

In AU's own survey from early summer 2020 on online teaching and exams during the coronavirus pandemic, about seven out of ten students responded that they had learned a little less or a lot less from online lessons than from in-person instruction. This is attributed to the suddenness of the transition, lower motivation and the limitations of the digital formats².

The academic environment and student well-being are affected by both academic and social conditions. Figure 1 below illustrates a number of conditions that affected student motivation and their academic experience in the spring of 2020. Generally speaking, the vast majority of respondents indicated that all of the conditions described had become more difficult to deal with – and all of 83% responded that it had become 'A little more difficult' or 'More difficult' to maintain social contact with fellow students.

Figure 1: Student motivation and academic experience in the spring of 2020, cf.

"Undersøgelse af online undervisning og eksamen forår 2020" (Conducted by Rambøll for AU)



Note: N=1.816. 'Ved ikke'-svar er taget ud af analysen. Spørgsmålsformulering: "Sammenlignet med et semester med fysisk tilstedeværelse, har jeg under nedlukningen af AU haft sværere/nemmere ved...." Kilde: Spørgeskemaundersøgelse blandt studerende på AU.

The majority of respondents from AU (63%) who participated in the Ministry's 2020 student survey from 2020 responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that they had a hard time during the coronavirus shutdown in the spring. This is slightly higher than the national average for post-secondary degree programmes in Denmark (59%). Response rates across the five faculties were relatively uniform: the majority of respondents indicated that they had had a hard time in the spring. However, the percentage who responded 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' with the statement was highest at AR (68%) and lowest (59%) at HE.

Table 1. I had a hard time during the corona-shutdown in the spring*

I had a hard time during the corona-shutdown in the spring	Completely agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
AR	35%	33%	13%	14%	5%
BSS	28%	34%	15%	15%	8%
HE	26%	33%	16%	17%	8%
Nat	30%	34%	14%	15%	8%
Tech	26%	34%	15%	17%	9%

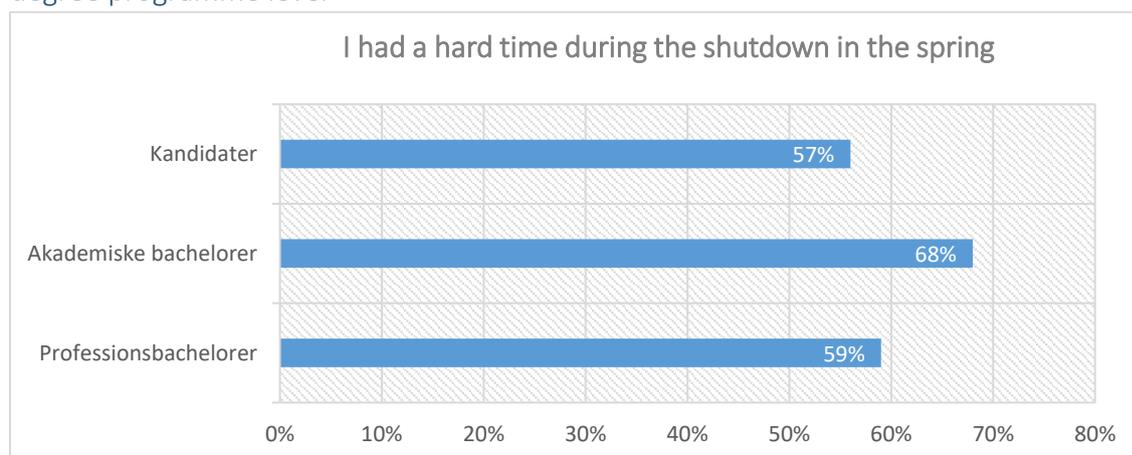
² <https://newsroom.au.dk/nyheder/vis/artikel/hvad-laerte-vi-af-foraarets-corona-undervisning/>

AU	29%	33%	14%	15%	7%
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*This question was not put to students who started their degree programme in the summer of 2020. The response category 'Don't know' is not included in the calculations. N=7097

Nationwide, the results show that the proportion of the respondents who indicated that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that they had a hard time during the shutdown in the spring is greatest among academic Bachelor's degree students. The same is true at AU, cf. Figure 2: 68% of the respondents on academic Bachelor's degree programmes responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' with the statement, while this applies to 59% of respondents on professional Bachelor's programmes and 57% of respondents on Master's degree programmes.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who indicated that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' by degree programme level*



*This question was not put to students who started their degree programme in the summer of 2020. The response category 'Don't know' is not included in the calculations. N=7097

The shutdown and progress toward degree in spring 2020

the coronavirus shutdown in the spring clearly affected the students' general well-being, and students were also asked to indicate whether the situation also affected their progress toward degree.

Tabel 2: The shutdown have not delayed me in my studies

The shutdown have not delayed me in my studies	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
AR	42%	28%	7%	12%	10%
BSS	53%	25%	6%	9%	6%
HE	54%	29%	5%	6%	5%
Nat	51%	25%	7%	10%	8%
Tech	51%	25%	9%	11%	5%
AU	50%	26%	7%	10%	7%

*This question was not put to students who started their degree programme in the summer of 2020. The response category 'Don't know' is not included in the calculations. N=7097

The majority of respondents indicated that their progress toward degree was not delayed in the spring of 2020 on account of the coronavirus. All of 76% indicated that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' with the statement that the shutdown had not delayed their progress to degree. This is higher than the national average for post-secondary degree programmes in Denmark (64%).

There is no indication that students generally fell behind the spring of 2020, based on data from AU's studies administration and developments in degree completion times.

Everyday life in the autumn with the coronavirus

The students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that their everyday lives as students were functioning well despite the coronavirus situation. 67% of the respondents replied 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' to the statement. The percentage was 66% for all post-secondary degree programmes in Denmark. There are differences in response rates across the faculties. About two-thirds of respondents at HE (63%), BSS (63%) and AR (66%) indicated that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that their everyday lives as students were functioning well despite the coronavirus situation. This was the case for 77% at Tech and 74% at Nat.

Table 3: Today, my everyday life in my study program works well despite the corona situation*

Today, my everyday life in my study program works well despite the corona situation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
AR	19%	47%	17%	13%	4%
BSS	18%	45%	18%	14%	5%
HE	17%	45%	19%	14%	4%
Nat	25%	49%	14%	10%	3%
Tech	28%	49%	13%	7%	2%
AU	20%	47%	17%	12%	4%

*The response category 'Unsure/not applicable' is not included in the calculations. N=10959

There are significant differences in how respondents from the different degree programme levels evaluate their quality of life during the pandemic. The greatest difference is between the professional Bachelor's degree students and the academic Bachelor's degree students. 77% of the professional Bachelor's degree students who took the survey responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that their everyday lives as students are functioning well despite the coronavirus situation. This applies to just 63% of the academic Bachelor's degree student respondents. The percentage is 69% for Master's degree student respondents. Nationwide, more professional Bachelor's degree students (68%) responded that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that their everyday lives are functioning well despite the coronavirus situation; the lowest positive response rate was among academic Bachelor's degree students (62%).

The impact of the coronavirus situation on students' enjoyment of their studies

78% respond that they 'Completely agree' or 'Agree' that the coronavirus situation has diminished their enjoyment of their studies to some degree. Nationwide, this applies to 70% of respondents on post-secondary degree programmes in Denmark. Taken by faculty, responses at AU varied from 81% at BSS to 71% at Tech.

Table 4 The Corona situation removes some of the joy of studying

The Corona situation removes some of the joy of studying	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
AR	43%	35%	10%	7%	4%
BSS	49%	32%	9%	6%	4%

HE	43%	34%	10%	8%	5%
Nat	38%	37%	10%	9%	5%
Tech	36%	35%	14%	10%	5%
Grand total	44%	34%	10%	8%	4%

*The response category 'Don't know' is not included in the calculations. N=10991

Once again, the percentage is highest among the academic Bachelor's degree students. 82% of these respondents indicated that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that the coronavirus situation has diminished their enjoyment of their studies to some degree, while this applies to 75% of the Master's degree student respondents and 68% of respondents among the professional bachelors. Nationwide, this applies to 77% of academic Bachelor's degree student respondents, 74% of Master's degree student respondents and 66% of professional Bachelor's degree respondents.

FACTS about the 2020 survey:

AU's study environment survey is based on data collected by Epinion for the Danish Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Aarhus University. The results of the survey form the basis for the university's teaching environment evaluation, which is conducted every three years.

The survey is carried out every other year and was most recently conducted in the autumn of 2020.

The questionnaire was sent to 33,381 full-time students at Aarhus University and 11,133 responded to the survey, which results in an overall response rate of 33.4%.