

HANDBOOK

Guide-Lines for cooperation between Jönköping University and the learning centres in the Jönköping region concerning university courses on distance

A model for working with quality development

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The network cooperation between Jönköping University and the municipalities in the region started 1989 regarding university education on distance. Every municipality in the region appointed a coordinator, part time, and the two areas east and south of Jönköping created two hubs.

Each hub represents different municipalities. The aim with the regional coordination organizations, which have one regional coordinator, is mainly to see to that the need of higher education will be satisfied. Later a network for the municipalities around the city of Jönköping was created.

In 1996 the first course on distance was constructed and broadcasted by the video conference technique. That course was broadcasted to four different learning centres at the same time. Since then the amount of courses with that technique increased rapidly. During the last, at least 5 years, the net based courses have been more and more frequent. The learning centres are utmostly important for the students who study on distance.

1.2 Aim of the handbook

The aim is to secure the quality of the cooperation between learning centres and Jönköping University regarding courses on distance by constructing and agreeing upon a well working cooperation model.

In the hand book shall roles and functions be defined and routines be written down to secure good quality in the courses given on distance. The thought is also that the hand book shall make it easier for new teachers, education providers and other persons who are engaged in the cooperation around courses on distance to get to know “how it works”.

1.3 How has the hand book been written?

In 1999 was the first working conference arranged with around 40 participants from the municipalities and Jönköping University. During the conference the participants were divided into different groups and the roles and functions of the learning centres and the University were discussed out of different questions. The result formed the background to the hand book.

Working conferences have been arranged yearly and turned more and more into developing conferences for continuous improvement.

1.4 Some definitions

A few examples of definitions we agreed upon to make the cooperation easier

Distance education

Kinds of education where the teacher and the student are physically separated but where some kind of two way communication between them are used by the help of one or more medias.

Net broadcasted education

Net based education characteristics is the physical separation between the teacher and the student and the communication is run by ICT medias.

Video conference technique

This technique has been used a lot. A course can be broadcasted to many learning centres at the same time. The group of students meet at the learning centre close to where they live, often one evening every week. The idea is to use the group as an important resource in for example discussions, social support and exchange of experiences.

Through video conference technique it is possible to communicate with picture and sound during the broadcasted lecture. Now and then the teacher and the students might meet at the learning centre or at the University.

Net based education

Net based distance courses can be offered by support of internet based learning platforms. One called Ping-Pong is frequently used. By the platform the students can get information relevant to the course, such as literature, presentations, lectures, examination forms, contacts etc. The net based system makes it possible for the student to participate from all over the world.

The role of the learning centre might be important also with this system. It is often a great advantage for the students to meet even in net based courses and the learning centres are adequate meeting places with relevant equipment and space.

The role of the University is also important as the teachers can support the students to meet at the learning centres and create tasks which preferably might be done in the learning centres.

Learning centre

A learning centre is physically placed in the municipality, sometimes as an organization and building of its own sometimes within another organization/school and building. A learning centre offers a good environment for studying close to the student's homes and is like a link between the student and the university. The recommended equipment at a learning centre is described in chapter 2.

Contact person at the learning centre

For each course from the university given at a learning centre there shall be a contact person at the learning centre. The task is to see to that all the practical and administrative details work well.

Subject tutor at the learning centre

The subject tutor might work both as a contact person and as a well oriented tutor in the subject of the specific course. A subject tutor is often valuable in laboratory elements.

Coordinator, municipality

In every municipality in the region there is a person working as coordinator. That person is the cooperation partner with the university regarding university courses on distance in the municipality and is responsible for strategical planning, inventorization of the need for education in the municipality, marketing of courses, information to presumptive students. This person might also work as the contact person for the courses.

Coordinator, region

The region is divided into three areas and there is one head coordinator in each area. This coordinator is the link between the learning centres in the area in the council for cooperation between the learning centres and the university.

Coordinator/responsibility in the university

There are 4 persons at the university who are responsible, one faculty each, for the courses given on distance.

1.5 Characteristics concerning the cooperation around courses on distance

Our experience tells that the communication between teachers, contact persons at the learning centres, coordinators etc is essential to get the courses work well. It is important to create an open and creative atmosphere and cooperation climate built on:

- We help each other and do our best and understand that things might go wrong sometimes
- We are flexible and show great willingness to solve the problems that arise
- We meet and share experiences at the conferences and get to know each other
- Our contacts can be done informal and in a simple way
- We feel that what we do is both fun and important
- The single learning centre and faculty work as one organization in the contact with the students. The problems that will arise are to be solved internally between the learning centre and faculty

2. Learning centres – roll and function

2.1 Aim of activities at learning centre

The aim, overall, is to offer the inhabitants accessibility to higher education. The Norwegian researchers Grepperud/Thomssen use three M to describe the activities in learning centres: meeting place, motor, mäklare = broker.

Meeting place – learning centres are meeting places which offer service to the students (pedagogically, technically, administratively, study socially)

Motor – learning centres as a motor which work strategically for development in the municipality and in the region

Mäklare- broker – learning centres have the ambition and task to satisfy different needs of education for different people by acting as a bridge –cooperator to different educational providers

2.2 Technical equipment

It is natural that learning centres have different levels regarding equipment due to economical resources and the volume of activities. To make distance education possible to run the technical equipment demands certain standard. The following list describes these demands which shall be installed in every learning centre that host distance courses:

- IP-technique, at least 2 mbit/sec
- Video-conference equipment
- Projector, big screen, TV with big screen
- Phone for loud speaking
- Phone and fax connected to the video-conference room. Preferably split numbers
- Copy machine
- Computers
- Printer
- TV and video recorder
- Documentation camera

2.3 Service at the learning centres

Just like the technical equipment there are different levels on the service that a learning centre can offer. The following service should every learning centre offer:

- Generous opening schedule
- Contact person for every course
- Accessibility to group rooms and working places for computers
- Possibility to log in to the net of the University
- Possibilities to copy

- Accessibilities to phones
- Technical support
- Coffee room
- Personnel that support the students with basic information about the courses, different forms etc

2.4 The role of the contact person

Every course claim a contact person (often the same person for many courses). This person is the link between the students and teachers. The contact person see to that all the practical details work well in the course. The contact person

- Often participate at the first occasion-course meeting
- Present for the students what the learning centre can offer
- Inform the students about the service from the local libraries
- Inform the students about the service from the library at the university
- Check the student's presence in the course and report ev. drop outs to the responsible person at the university
- See to that someone from the learning centre always is available every time the course runs – especially check the technical equipment
- See to that material from the teacher will be copied and distributed to the students
- Organize the exams at the learning centre
- Keep frequent contact with the teachers in the course

2.5 Subject tutors at the learning centres

If a course need/claim tutorship from a well oriented person, for example labs, the learning centre and the university discuss and come to an agreement. Some funding from the university is possible.

2.6 The role of the coordinator from the municipality

This person act is the contact person with the university in all the courses run by the university. This person has the overall responsibility for the courses at the learning centre, such as:

- Make an inventory of the needs of higher education in the municipality
- Be responsible for planning of courses regarding study rooms, contact persons etc
- Be responsible for the marketing of courses, course information etc
- Be present to answer questions from interested persons and inform about applications, course plans etc

- Be responsible for the service and be sure that the contact person knows the routines and tasks and support this person. The coordinator is often the same person as the coordinator.
- Inform the personnel at the learning centre about news from the university

2.7 The role of the regional coordinators

In the region there are three regional networks to coordinate the distance courses from Jönköping university. In each region there is a coordinator. The overall responsibility and task is to coordinate the distance courses, such as:

- Coordinate the planning of new distance courses in cooperation with Jönköping university, the companies in the region and other interesting organizations
- Represent the region in the Council for educational cooperation at the university
- Spread information from meetings and conferences
- Be responsible for strategical marketing
- Follow the activities at the learning centres and make regular evaluations
- Actively act to develop distance education technically, pedagogically and organizationally

3. The role and function of the University

3.1 Inventory of needs and planning of courses

In October are the regional coordinators invited to the university to discuss next year's distance courses. The regional coordinators have before this meeting investigated the needs and discussed the needs with representatives in the special region. This list of desires is brought to the meeting at the university and the representatives from the university bring these to the subject groups and discuss if it would be possible to run each course depending on time, money, teacher capacity etc. In December the university decide which courses that will run during the autumn and spring the year after. These courses are then presented on the web, and in catalogues.

3.2 The flow of information

To get the distance courses run well it is essential that correct information is reaching the learning centres. There are several persons at the university who have that responsibility.

At the learning centres there are also several persons who have responsibility – the regional coordinators, those of the municipalities and the contact persons. This is described in the next chapter.

3.3 Coordinator for distance courses - role and responsibility

Before the course starts

Information to the coordinators at the learning centres

Information to the regional coordinators

At the start of the course

- See to that updated list of participating students are presented
- See to that the students register to the course
- See to that the students who are on the reserve list and not yet appointed come to the course start
- Inform the students about relevant and valuable things regarding the course and the studies

During the course

As soon as the course has started the responsibility for the course is handed over to the responsible teacher. The coordinator is just acting as speaking partner.

After the course is finished

- Follow up study results and the number of students who have fulfilled the course. Pass this information over to the coordinator of the municipality
- Follow up the evaluations and in cooperation with responsible teacher inform actual persons of the result

3.4 The role and responsibility of the responsible teacher

Before the course starts

- Make a timetable and a study guidance
- Contact the different contact persons at the learning centres to agree upon the cooperation around the course
- Inform the contact persons about the need of equipment and software
- See to that he/she has learnt the technical tools and is well aware of distance pedagogic and organization
- Read the handbook
- Inform ev. guest teachers about routines to follow during the course

At the start of the course

- Hand over the decided course plan, literature list and timetable to the students and the coordinator
- Inform the students about the learning and pedagogic in the course
- Meet the contact person and check that everything is OK concerning the course

During the course

The teacher is responsible, during the course, that the communication with the learning centres and the contact person work well. This is very important – our experience of this is very unanimous.

All the information that is for the students should also be for the contact person – most efficient by e-mail. The teacher gives information about:

- Changes in the timetable to the students, coordinators, contact persons at the learning centres and the learning platform of the course
- Information about exams
- Information about the evaluation of the course
- Information how to apply for the certificate after the course

If the teacher send special information material to the students it should be sent to the learning centre not later than two days before the date of the lecture. The information can be sent by normal post, e-post, fax etc. Important to crystal clear in this information from the teacher. Most of the information is, of course, transferred by the web platform.

After the course is finished

Responsible for the evaluations, that they will be filled in, the result summarized and communicated to the persons in mind.

3.5 Routines for exams in distance courses

The first occasion for exam will be fulfilled at every participating learning centre. The costs for the officials are reimbursed by the university.

Two additional occasions are offered at the university. If the student and the contact person at the learning can agree the second and third occasion might be fulfilled at the learning centre.

The teacher will send the questionnaire – exam to the learning centre in due time before the date of exam. As soon as the questionnaire is penetrated the teacher sends the results to each learning centre.

3.6 Routines for evaluation

At the end of the course at the learning centres the teacher is responsible for the evaluation procedure. The students fill in a form or answer digitally. The coordinators at the university and learning centres and the responsible teacher agree upon the *exact* day and time for the evaluation. It is placed within the timetable of the course.

The responsible teacher sees to that the result of the evaluations are put together in a clear presentation and the result is sent to the persons in mind and to the student's union.

A programme for improvement of the course according to the result of the evaluation will be organized by the responsible teacher and discussed with persons in mind.

The result of the evaluations are saved and discussed in conferences and planning groups as well as in the Council for educational cooperation.