



# Learning Environment Assessment (UMV) 2017

# Content

<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Analysis and assessment of the physical, psychological and aesthetic environment at CBS... 5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Follow-up to learning environment assessment 2014 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Status of action plan for 2015 – 2017 .....	6
<b>Social environment.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Regular degree programmes .....	9
Graduate Diploma in Business Administration .....	10
The physical environment affects the social (and psychological) environment.....	11
Social functions .....	11
Quality of administrative support on the programmes .....	12
Graduate Diploma in Business Administration .....	13
Information .....	13
Accessibility .....	13
Service level .....	14
<b>Psychological environment.....</b>	<b>15</b>
(Harder) competitive culture .....	15
Growing anxiety .....	16
Study progress: no margin for flexibility.....	16
<b>Action plans 2018-2020 .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix 1. Meeting with the student priests on 23 October 2017 .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 2. General statistics on the Student Counselling Service .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix 3. Work meeting about UMV on 20 October 2017 .....</b>	<b>24</b>

# Summary

On the whole, the results of the learning environment assessment (abbreviated in Danish to UMV) for the period 2015-2017 are satisfactory. Some areas, however, need further attention and we need to consider new approaches in the coming years.

In the light of the latest UMV, the assessment is that the action plan that was devised has been followed up by positive measures. There have been a number of striking improvements in the teaching facilities, notably the establishment of Graduate House, which has provided plenty of additional space and opportunities for setting up the rooms in new ways, offering much better conditions for independent study, social activities outside class time, etc. Nonetheless, after examining the physical environment at the university, it is clear that certain areas will require more attention in the coming years.

Generally, the students are very satisfied with their physical environment, and there has been extensive renovation work; however, their comments underline the need for a continued focus on renewal, refurbishment and improvement of student facilities, such as student workplaces, rooms for social activities, etc.

In general, the students are not very happy with their psychological environment. There are problems of pressure among the students – an issue with which we have little experience. It is a worrying development and will therefore be one of the main initiatives in the new action plan for the coming period.

This report will be sent to CBS' senior management and advertised on cbs.dk when the project has been concluded.



# Introduction

In accordance with the Danish Educational Environment Act, CBS must prepare a report on the university environment every third year. The report is referred to as an learning environment assessment, abbreviated in Danish to UMV. Preparing a UMV involves four phases:

1. Analysing the physical, psychological and aesthetic environment at CBS
2. Describing and evaluating the results of the analysis – positively and negatively
3. Devising an action plan for improvement of the learning environment
4. Guidelines for following up the action plan.

Experience has shown that the most suitable approach is to deal with the analysis together with the description and the evaluations (points 1 and

2), as this makes it easier to integrate the evaluations and to compare them with the analysis. Accordingly, 1 and 2 are referred to together as "Analysis and evaluation of the physical, psychological and aesthetic environment at CBS".

The legislative framework for the report is stipulated in consolidated act no. 316 of 05/04/2017 (Danish Educational Environment Act).

CBS last prepared a UMV in 2014, which can be retrieved, along with the previous assessments, on ► CBS' website.

The report was compiled by Business Intelligence and Development, Programme Administration Services, Dean's Office, Education (EDU) and Campus Services (CS), with the involvement of an ad hoc working group and campus committee.



# Analysis and assessment of the physical, psychological and aesthetic environment at CBS

The analysis and evaluation of the students' environment (referred to as the UMV) is prepared based on CBS' annual survey of student satisfaction in the three preceding academic years. All students – full-time, as well as part-time students doing a Graduate Diploma in Administration (HD) – have the opportunity to complete a questionnaire. This annual evaluation includes three specific questions about the study environment, namely how the students perceive their physical surroundings, both in the teaching rooms and at CBS in general, their social/psychological environment and the aesthetic surroundings.

The questions are phrased as follows:

- > I am satisfied with the teaching rooms
- > I am satisfied with the other physical amenities at CBS
- > The social environment on my degree programme is good.

For students doing the Graduate Diploma in Administration, the last question is phrased: I am satisfied with the social environment on my degree programme.



The responses are on a scale of one to five:

- 1= Completely disagree
- 2= Generally disagree
- 3= Neither agree nor disagree
- 4= Generally agree
- 5= Completely agree

Boxes are provided for supplementing answers with comments.

When assessing the study environment, we found it appropriate to include an evaluation of the quality of administrative support for the programmes, since the administrative services are important for the wellbeing of the students and thus also for the overall study environment. The comments students wrote in the comment boxes also support the decision to include an evaluation of administrative aspects. As the section below on the administration shows, many of the comments address the administration and some of the support functions which it provides and which are significant for the study environment. The question pertaining to the administrative side of things was phrased as follows:

- > Overall, I am satisfied with the administrative service.

In addition, the students' overall satisfaction with their degree programme is also appraised. We believe this question can also give us an indication of whether there are issues to be addressed. The question on overall satisfaction with the degree programme is phrased as follows:

- > I can strongly recommend this degree programme to others.

The questionnaire includes comment boxes for the individual topics covered by the questionnaire. The analysis below is based on the comments that were written under the points administration and study environment. In 2017 there were 2,000 comments. The comments have been evaluated and treated in the Nvivo programme, which categorises and quantifies qualitative data. The individual topics have been fleshed out with concrete examples of comments in the analysis and description below.

When doing the analysis, other sources of information on the status of the study environment were also included, as were interviews with the university chaplains. Furthermore, the experiences of the student guidance service have also been included as a source of information on the students' experience of CBS and the most frequent types of problems alluded to by the students.

# Follow-up to learning environment assessment 2014

## STATUS OF ACTION PLAN FOR 2015 – 2017

### PHYSICAL/AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT

During this period CBS worked generally and specifically on both physical and aesthetic conditions, by prioritising the continual maintenance and renovation of existing buildings and by continuing the major endeavour of planning the future enlargement of the Solbjerg Plads campus.

The master plan for the campus was finally completed in November 2014, after which work on the development plan was set in motion in 2015-2017. Final adoption by the municipal council was in December 2017.

With regard to aesthetic aspects, not only have walls, floors, the fountain, etc. been renovated during the period, but there has also been a particular focus on the conservation and relocation of works of art. In the second half of 2017 nearly DKK 1 million was spent on a special project to renovate and relocate CBS' extensive art collection. At the same time "CBS Digital Art Space" at Solbjerg Plads was inaugurated, an installation consisting of art videos curated by Danish and foreign art museums. In 2017 we screened films from the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art's collection.

Several initiatives and projects were carried out in relation to all four goals that were defined for the period 2015-2017.

#### Goal 1: Continued improvement of and focus on clean and tidy surroundings

Use of formal INSTA control has been established, i.e. ensuring that the cleaning service delivers the service that has been paid for – *all buildings*  
Monitoring of the washrooms has been tested with a view to cleaning based on need rather than frequency – *Solbjerg Plads*

Smoking areas have been set up, leading to fewer cigarette stubs on the ground - *all buildings*

Rubbish bins have been set up on the rambla - *Solbjerg Plads/Kilen*

#### Goal 2: Focus on creating "social space" for use by the students

Graduate House has been established with 1/3 of its space dedicated to rooms and facilities for social activities - *Graduate House*

Study niches have been established - *Dalgas Have*

2 armchair areas have been established in CBS Library - *Dalgas Have*

2 lounges have been established in CBS Library - *Solbjerg Plads*

LRC has been renovated in CBS Library - *Solbjerg Plads*

#### Goal 3: More rooms for collaborative learning; alternatively, greater scope for utilising existing rooms for group study, e.g. empty auditoriums

Several group study rooms have been set up in connection with relocation of MSC, from 8 to 11 - *Dalgas Have*

5 new group study rooms have been set up – *Porcelænshaven*

Waiting-/study areas have been set up at PH18 - *Porcelænshaven*

Reading room/study area has been renovated at PH16 - *Porcelænshaven*

Teaching rooms have been renovated and made multifunctional - *Dalgas Have*

Group study room in CBS Library has been refurbished - *Solbjerg Plads*

#### Goal 4: Focus on general and specific disabled facilities

All teaching rooms have been set up according to the 1% rule, i.e. 1% of spaces have been reserved for disabled users - *Graduate House*

All renovated teaching rooms have been established according to the 1% rule - *Dalgas Have*

1 or 2 spaces for disabled users have been installed in every auditorium - *Solbjerg Plads*

## FOLLOW-UP OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

#### Goal 5: Friendlier and more welcoming administrative services to make the students feel they are getting a good service

A large-scale student partnering project (SPP) has been carried out to improve information flow and service for the students. Together with the students, four action areas were delineated: teacher-student communication, exam dates and times, exam aids and Student Hub.

The project has led to concrete changes on a number of points; although there is, of course, potential for further improvements. The activities are now being continued under the direction of the Steering Committee for Programme Administrative Projects.

#### Goal 6: Investigating the possibility of earlier exam scheduling to allow better planning, avoid interference with living situations, etc.

As part of the aforementioned SPP project, exam scheduling has been changed so that the students in most cases are informed of exam dates at the start of the semester. In cases in which a specific date cannot be

given, e.g. because the exam hinges on a written paper delivered as a group, an exam period is given.

**Goal 7: Testing the possibility of setting up examinations emphasising feedback and learning rather than grades**

Originally initiated by the students on the committee, there has been an increased effort to encourage feedback on several areas on the degree programmes. Office hours for academic staff have been introduced, so the students can visit and get individual feedback; tools and guidance have been provided to help teachers or the study board promote feedback in the lessons. Recently, trials have been set up on some programmes to test whether some of the resources normally used for traditional teaching can be used on activities that give more direct feedback, such as assignments, tests, etc. We have to acknowledge, however, that not as much progress has been made as we had hoped. This is presumably partly because teaching traditions are difficult to change and partly because all activities are constrained by the present, limited financial framework.

**Goal 8: Testing whether it is possible to reduce the use of grades, e.g. in selection processes, so as to counteract increased grade rivalry and competition**

There has not been much progress in this area and no actual systematic approach has been implemented yet. At the same time, grades for admission requirements for CBS have not gone down.

An attempt to reduce the importance of grades in the selection process for periods of study abroad has been rejected for the time being for practical reasons and is now being considered in other forms.

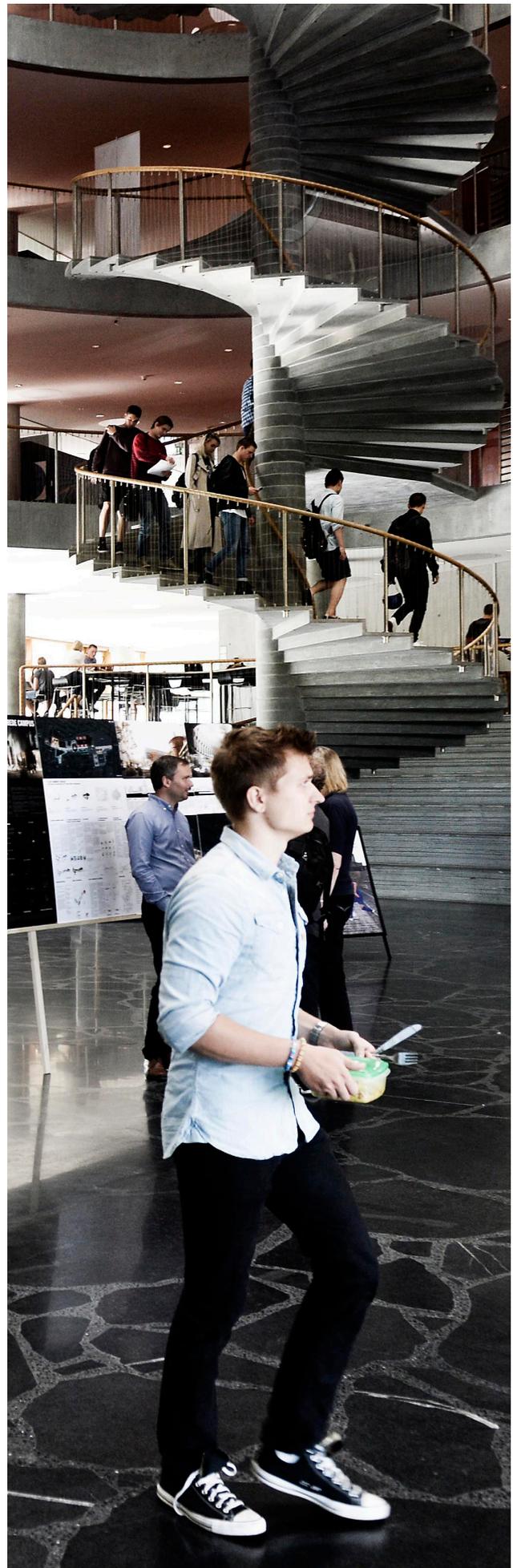
The practice of companies being allowed to offer special treatment, for example to the top 10% of a year, has been stopped, as we felt that there was a one-sided focus on grades.

In autumn 2017 the programme directors and CBS' board discussed making a more concerted effort and it was decided that at least one degree programme should try from 2018 to avoid awarding grades in the first year.

**Goal 9: Focus on students "getting off to a good start" on their degree programme. Greater awareness of student life, both at the start of studies and at other times when the students are in vulnerable situations**

Focus has been placed on students experiencing a positive start in their first year of study, initially through a trial where the teachers paid particular attention to a selection of first-year students. The focus was on creating a better team spirit, ensuring the students had a successful start, etc. Owing to the positive results, the first-year project has now been enlarged to include more people.

A project entitled "New Start", aimed at students when they are completely new to university life, was adopted due to unfortunate experiences on the induction courses in 2015. The aim of the project was to change the focus of the induction courses so that they would be a safer, more academic-based start to degree programmes. These efforts have led to slightly less emphasis on alcohol consumption and more emphasis on inclusive and academic activities. However, we are up against a general youth and secondary school culture, so we will not see any fundamental changes overnight.





# Social environment

## REGULAR DEGREE PROGRAMMES

As figure 1 below shows, over half of the students responded with "Generally agree" or "Completely agree" in response to the question of whether they think the social environment on their degree programme is positive. The annual evaluation further shows that there is no palpable difference between the various types of degree programmes or between bachelor and graduate programmes as far as satisfaction with the social environment is concerned.

Another indicator of student satisfaction with the social environment and with the degree courses in general is the issue of to what extent the students would strongly recommend their degree programme to others. Here, most of the students also responded with "Generally agree" or "Completely agree".

Figure 1. Social environment on the degree programme

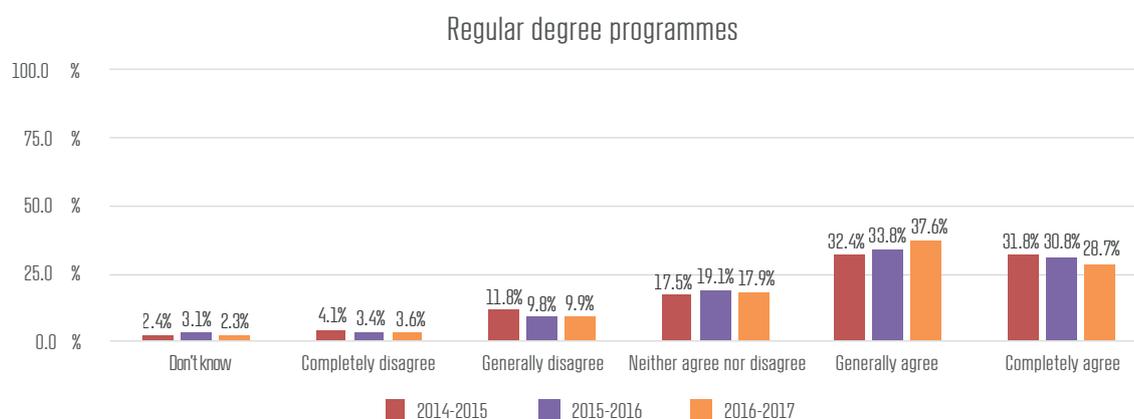
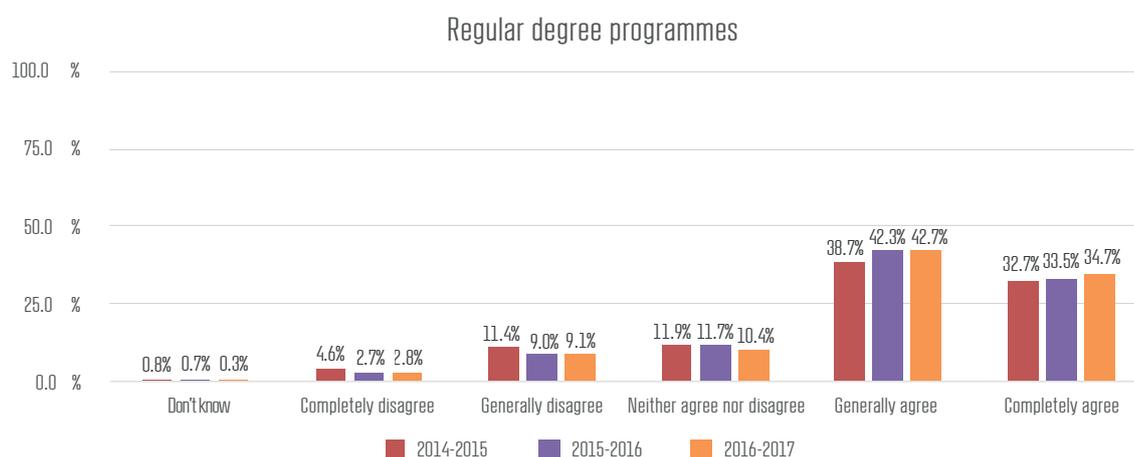


Figure 2. Recommendation of degree programme



# GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

As the figure below shows, over half of the students doing a Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (HD) responded with "Neither agree nor disagree", "Generally agree" or "Completely agree" in response to the question of whether they feel the social environment on their degree programme is good. Compared with the regular degree programmes, more students responded with "Neither agree nor disagree" to the statement "I am satisfied with the social environment on my degree programme".

In the case of the social environment, some Graduate Diploma students miss social activities, while others are not interested. The latter can be explained by the fact that they are part-time students and are busy with their jobs, family life, etc.

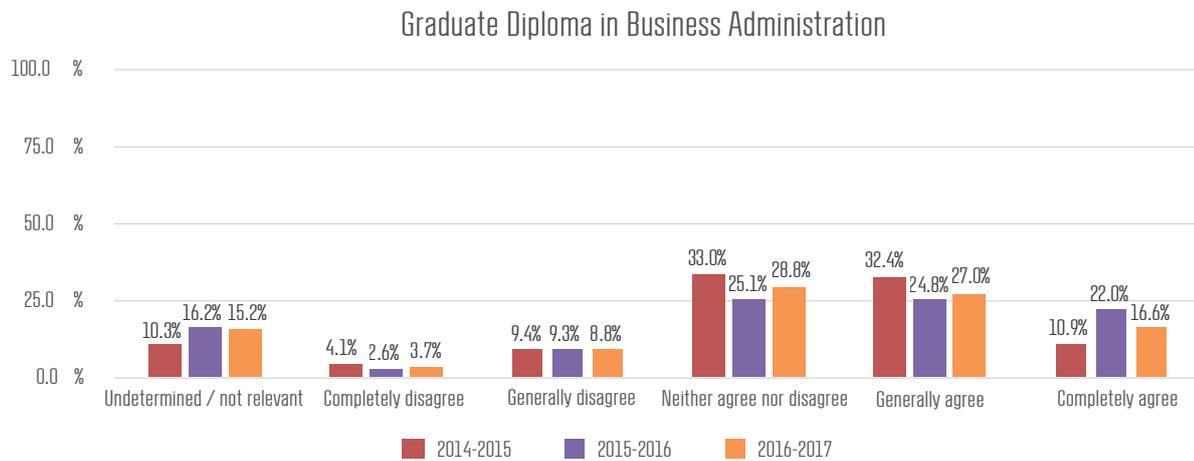
*"I think the social environment is directed at full-time students."*

*"CBS could arrange a social function halfway through the first semester. That would create more of a sense of belonging for the rest of the degree programme."*

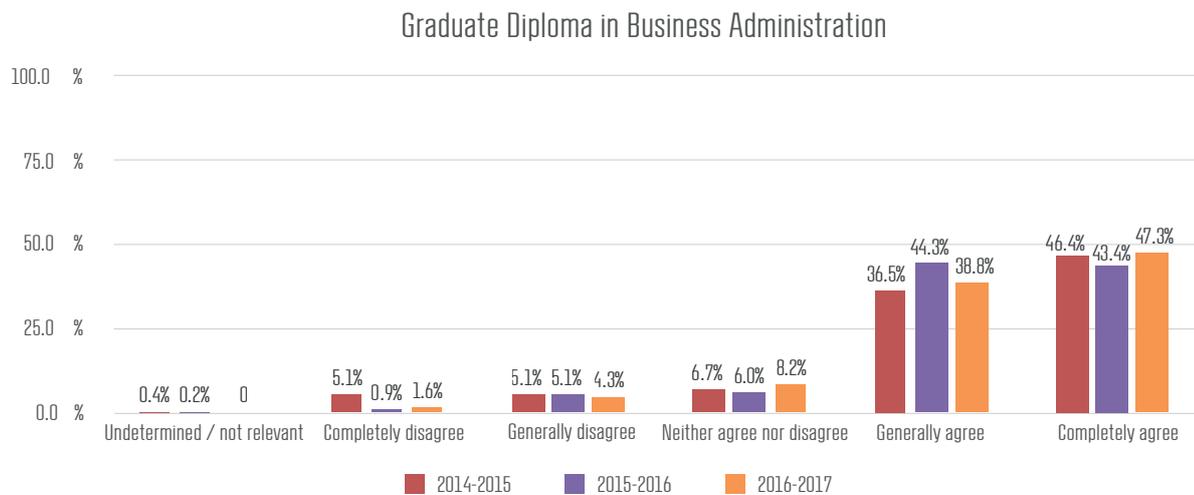
*"We have not been particularly social in our group. It's not always easy to find time with a full-time job and a family."*

Of the Graduate Diploma students who did not respond with "Neither agree nor disagree" to the question of social environment, the majority are generally satisfied and the vast majority (94.2% in 2017) would recommend their degree programme to others.

**Figure 3. Social environment on the degree programme**



**Figure 4. Recommendation of degree programme**



The student comments in the annual evaluations, taken together with interviews with Student Hub staff and the student guidance counsellors in Student Affairs, help to provide a more nuanced picture of the students' social environment on the programmes.

## THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS THE SOCIAL (AND PSYCHOLOGICAL) ENVIRONMENT

The comments from the annual evaluations and the experiences of the student guidance counsellors show that the physical environment also has implications for the social (and psychological) environment.

The student guidance counsellors point out that the fact that CBS is spread over several addresses means that the study environment is fragmented. This is a problem for the academic and social environment, as the students lead a nomadic life and lack fixed bases or informal places to "hang out", where they can meet and mingle with other classes and years. In the case of the degree programmes with a common base, such as the Bachelor in Business Administration and Information Systems, the students are able to find broad-based support<sup>1</sup>. This also helps to create an academic environment that permits "shoptalk" or more informal knowledge-sharing.

The comments from the students reflect this:

*"There is no study environment. We lack a room for socialising or for academic discussion. A student bar once a month would be good."*

*"Replace the anonymous Nexus disco with Friday-night bars for the individual degree programmes and also Friday-night bars for the whole university."*

These comments show that the students miss physical spaces that can facilitate social interaction across years and degree programmes. Physical locations can also be used as meeting places for arranged activities and social functions that also contribute to the students' satisfaction with their social environment.

## SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

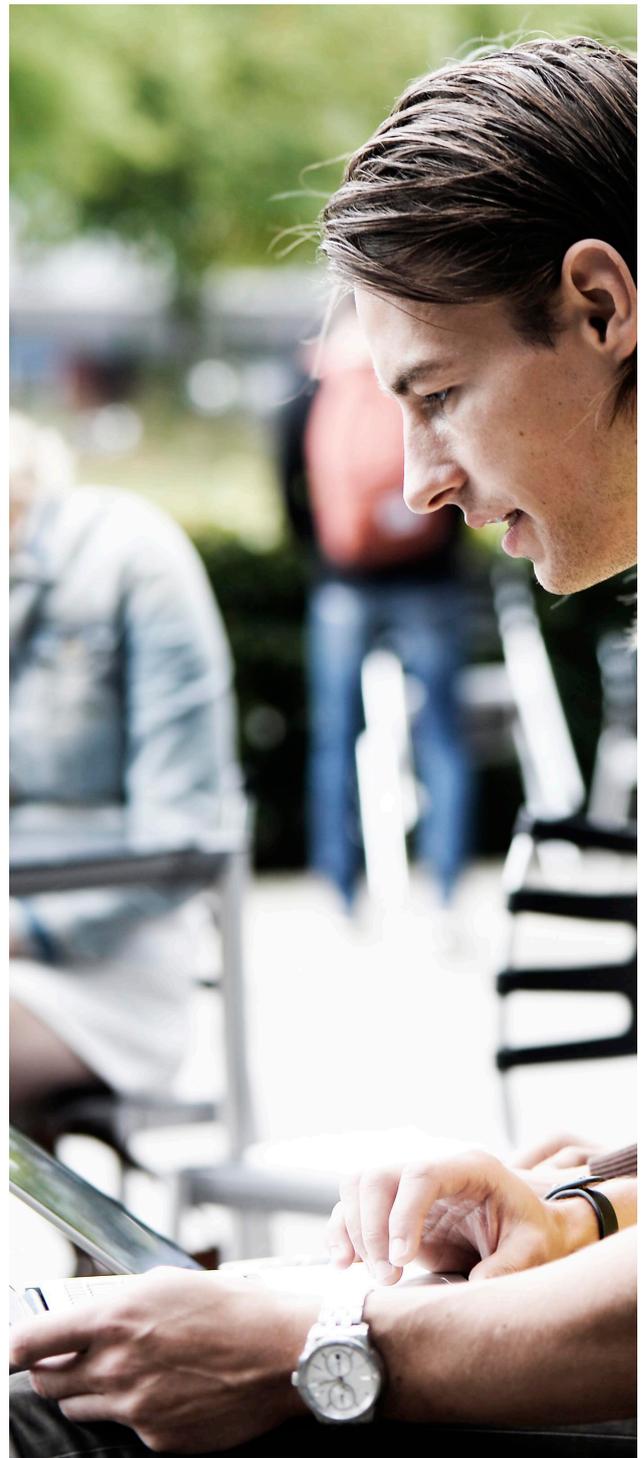
In the same way as students miss physical areas for socialising, their comments show that they miss social functions for their own degree programmes and also Friday-night bars and support from CBS for arranging them.

The comments reveal significant differences between the social environments on the various degree programmes and in the different classes. The students are very aware that they share responsibility for creating a good social climate. When there are people who take initiative, the students are very satisfied with their social environment, but when such people are lacking, individual students can feel lonely or isolated. Some students indicate that their own or their fellow students' professional occupations alongside their degree courses affect the level of social engagement. But

CBS' joint responsibility for the physical amenities, opportunities for arranging social functions and the number of contact hours are all cited as factors that contribute towards a good/bad university environment:

*"A lot is done at the start to make the students feel at home, but after that it's as though you get forgotten unless you make yourself noticed. Of course, we have to manage and take responsibility for our own learning ourselves and make sure we get the most out of our study environment, but it would be good to have a helping hand throughout and not just at the start of the first semester."*

Some individual comments point out that there are a good number of clubs and societies to join at CBS, which is seen as positive. This is also mentioned by the student guidance counsellors and hub staff.



<sup>1</sup> This is corroborated by the fact that they have the highest rate of satisfaction with the social environment on their programme compared with all the programmes (lowest rate 3.19 on the Bachelor in English and Organisational Communication and highest rate 4.28 on the Bachelor in Business Administration and Information Systems HA(it.))

## QUALITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ON THE PROGRAMMES

The learning environment assessment in 2014 showed that, despite general satisfaction with the administration, there were nonetheless comments indicating that the relationship between the students and the administration could be improved. As mentioned above, a number of initiatives have now been taken on this front.

As figure 5 below shows, most students responded with "Generally agree" to the question of how satisfied they were in general with the services provided by the administration.

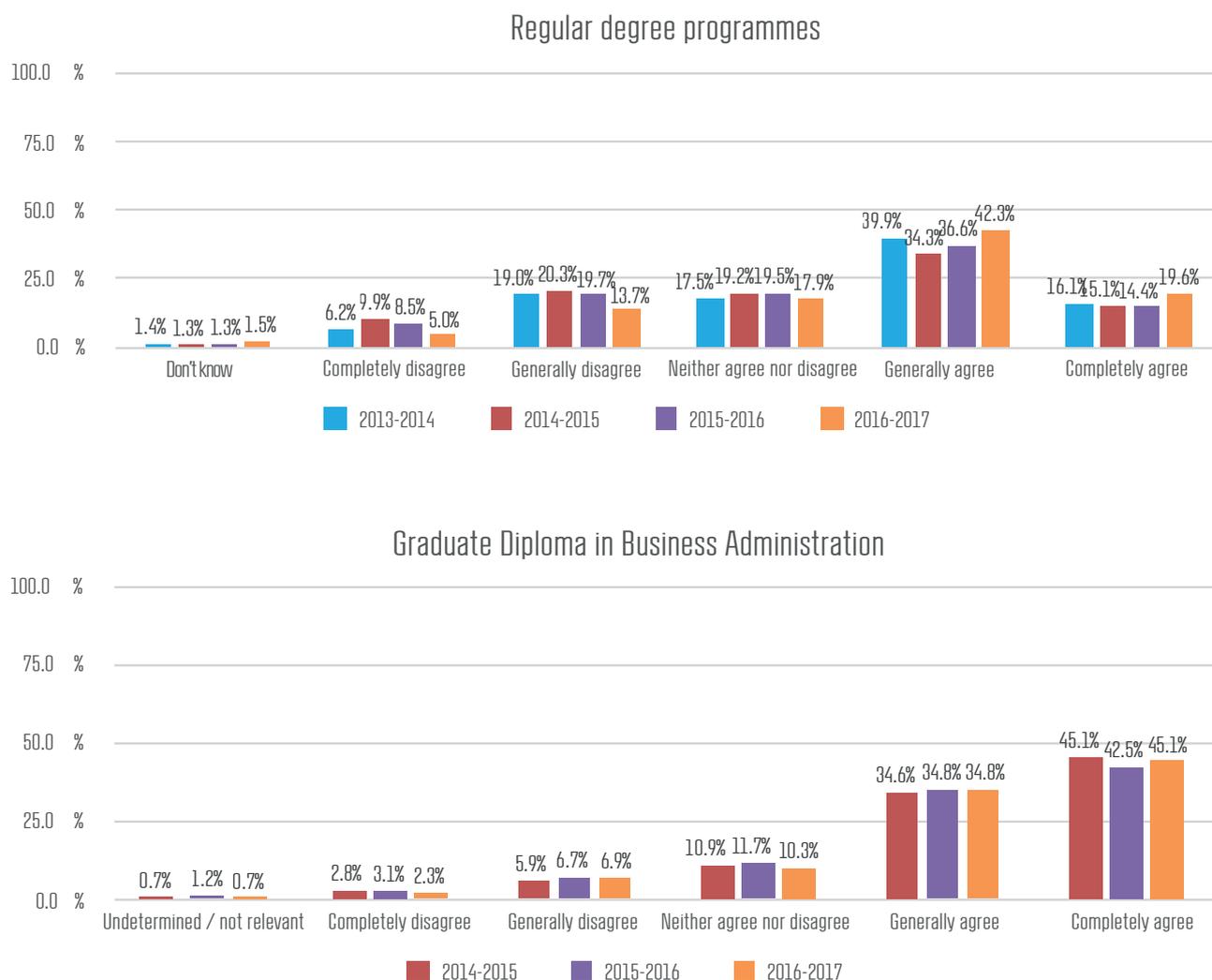
In the period up to 2017 there has been an improvement, with a larger proportion of students on regular degree programmes more satisfied with the services provided by the administration. In 2015-16, 51% of students responded either with "Generally agree" or "Completely agree" when asked about their general satisfaction with the administrative services. The annual feedback for 2016-2017 showed that this percentage had risen to 61.9% of the students surveyed. We have not seen such a marked improvement in satisfaction since 2013 and the satisfaction level is higher in 2017 than it was in 2014.

On the Graduate Diploma in Business Administration programmes satisfaction with the administrative services is generally slightly higher. In 2015-2016, 77.3% of Graduate Diploma students responded either with "Generally agree" or "Completely agree" to the question of their overall satisfaction with the services provided by the administration. This percentage rose in 2016-17 to 79.7%. Thus, the increase was less, but the level of satisfaction is nonetheless higher.

As with the previous learning environment assessment, the students in this annual evaluation have commented on the administration. Although the general satisfaction level on the regular degree programmes is going up, the comments show that there are still areas that could and need to be addressed.

Where the comments last time related in particular to the exam schedules (which were published late in the semester, causing frustration and stress among the students), this factor was only referred to by a handful of students in their comments in this annual evaluation. This is a positive development and can be put down to the programme administration service's new procedure for issuing exam schedules.

Figure 5. Satisfaction with the administrative services



The comments concerning the administration in this annual evaluation fall into roughly three categories: information, accessibility and service level. We take a look at them below.

## GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The comments made by the Graduate Diploma students on the administrative services are positive in a different way. Their comments refer to the high level of service and the helpfulness. However, the issue of information is raised again, as many of the comments revolve around the students' difficulty in being able to obtain correct information themselves:

*"I think it's difficult finding out how to get hold of the necessary information, as it's not always located logically. Often you get the information you need by talking to other students or going directly to the secretariat, which is always very helpful."*

*"The information from CBS' administration is not always easily available if it has to be obtained via CBS' website. There are far too many different sites, which makes it difficult to find the relevant information. Getting information via emails or by telephone works well."*

## INFORMATION

The comments concerning information refer in particular to CBS' digital platforms. The students' comments indicate above all that information is difficult to locate, for example:

*"Generally my.cbs.dk is a bit confusing when you need to locate information. You get redirected far too much and too much information is hidden away."*

*"Generally the structure of the various CBS websites (both internal and publically accessible pages) are completely confusing and it can be hard to find the information you want without having to click through lots of different pages – and even when you want to retrieve the information again, you have to go through the same rigmarole and you can't remember the maze of different paths you used before."*

The new intranet, my.cbs.dk, was introduced in summer 2016. Generally, the annual evaluation for 2017 indicates overall satisfaction with my.cbs.dk. For example, 51.42% of the students respond with "Generally agree" to the statement "Overall I'm happy with my.cbs.dk". However, the evaluation also suggests that it is possible that the students, as well as the staff, have had to adjust to the new system. The evaluation shows that those students completing their first year of a bachelor programme or graduate programme are more satisfied with my.cbs.dk than the students who have been studying at CBS for longer and have had to say goodbye to the old intranet.

The experience of the Student Hub staff and student guidance counsellors is that the students think my.cbs.dk functions well, even though it is information-heavy. Everything is in one place and in writing, which means that the students trust the information much more. It is seen as positive that my.cbs.dk has been streamlined/standardised, so that students and teachers do not have to search for information on many different platforms. Nonetheless my.cbs.dk is not always intuitive, which the comments also indicate.

The students feel that it is difficult to obtain information and that my.cbs.dk is tricky to navigate. For example, many students note that you have to click through many pages to get to the right one. Despite the fact that my.cbs.dk is more information heavy than the previous intranet, the students still feel that they have to use many platforms and this generally makes it difficult to find information and navigate the information channels at CBS. The students find processes that overlap particularly problematic, and they mention, for instance, electives, the International Summer University Programme (ISUP), exchanges and admission to graduate programmes as selection processes where the information is spread over several platforms and places on my.cbs.dk.

The students also point out that the information, when they find it, is not always up to date. Here, the criticism is directed at certain pages on my.cbs.dk, for example about student maintenance grants or writing theses, and subject-specific pages with (exercise) manuals, for example.

This is compounded by the fact that the students lack a proper overall understanding of the administrative structures at CBS. As a result, they often feel as if they are being tossed around the system. The feeling of not being able to get into contact with the administration coupled with vagueness about who is responsible for specific areas is frustrating for the students. Inadequate responses give the students the feeling that no-one is responsible, and the students feel they are simply shunted to the next unit, often through impersonal mailbox functions. The students suggest tools such as an annual cycle of work, which can help to clarify whom to turn to in certain cases. Quicklinks were also suggested for important contacts and deadlines.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The students find it difficult to come into contact with the administration, especially to pinpoint whom to contact or where to find the contact information. The issue of accessibility is primarily about the students not being able to meet in person with the administrative staff, but often being asked to have back-office contact via email.

*"It's hard to get into contact with the administration and it's hard to get hold of contact information."*

*"It's hard to talk to someone in person. Every issue needs to be discussed online, which is very confusing and takes a long time."*

Similarly, the opening times for the student guidance services are described as problematic, as they can only be contacted by telephone twice a week at the start, after which you can book an appointment for a meeting in person according to your needs:

*"I would have liked to talk to the student guidance services, but they are extremely difficult to get hold of."*

In other words, the students miss being able to pop in and talk to someone. The telephone hours are particularly tricky for students on exchanges.

Furthermore, the students feel that response times for their enquiries are too long. The students do not feel that their emails to the programme administration are answered, or they find they have to repeatedly chase up answers. In particular, response times for advance approval or credits are felt to be long. Apart from being a source of frustration for the students, the delayed response times have implications for their opportunities and choices.

There is often a link between the long response times and the students' feeling of being "sent round the system" and not being able to find the right contact information (cf. above). This leaves the students with the impression that the administration either does not know who is in charge of what or that the staff are simply incompetent because they are unable to answer the students' questions. This again can be seen as a consequence of the set-up of the programme administration services, where there is a sharp distinction between front and back office.

## SERVICE LEVEL

As explained in the introduction, the level of satisfaction with the programme administration services is generally rising; however, as with the last learning environment assessment, there are also comments on the general level of the administration's services.

The students do not always find the staff welcoming or helpful enough – this criticism applies both to personal meetings with, for example, staff from the Student Hub and also to emails. The students stress the staff's distrust that the students have done their bit and checked out my.cbs.dk, etc. before contacting them.

*"It seems to me it's often assumed that you haven't bothered to try and find the information yourself on the website or somewhere else before enquiring with the different service points, which is aggravating and shows a bad service mentality."*

*"I think it's usually quite easy to find most information on the different websites, etc., but when you contact the administration (Student Hub, grants' office etc.) you often get the answer: 'Have you checked on my.cbs.dk, su.dk, etc. etc.', which of course you have, otherwise why would you be contacting them! Several times my questions haven't been answered properly after contacting various departments."*

As described in the previous section, the students are frustrated about having to wait for responses and being sent round the system. They also remark on the fact that the answers can sometimes vary depending on which unit they talk to or whom they end up talking to.

The problem will persist if the students generally lose confidence in the administration and Student Hub because they do not think they are getting the correct guidance.

# Psychological environment

The psychological environment was investigated through interviews with the student guidance counselors and the Student Hub at CBS, who meet the students in various contexts. The staff in the Student Hub meet a broad section of the students in the three hubs. The student guidance counsellors partly meet the students at general information functions for whole years/subject groups, but they also come into contact with students who have been "affected" by the system in some way.

The psychological environment has also been analysed in interviews with the university chaplains in Frederiksberg, who offer consultation sessions with students about all facets of life – irrespective of faith. The university chaplains are experiencing an increase in the number of CBS students contacting them because they feel under pressure.

It should be emphasised that this part of the learning environment assessment is based on qualitative data and that it is not representative of the of the entire CBS student population.

Overall, the experience of the student guidance counsellors is that the students' psychological environment has neither improved in the period 2015-2017, nor, for that matter, significantly worsened. Three trends are especially noticeable in the students' psychological environment: 1) a more widespread competitive culture has been observed, which is pressurising students on the bachelor programmes in particular; 2) students at CBS are experiencing (irrational) anxiety, which has become more common over the last years and also more extreme; and 3) the students are feeling more alienated from the programme administration services, while at the same time, the study progress reform has led to more students having contact with the administration during their studies, e.g. because of dispensation requirements.

## (HARDER) COMPETITIVE CULTURE

According to the study guidance counsellors, CBS bachelor students, induction guidance counsellors and mentors are describing a university environment that is increasingly competition-bound – where social engagement is on the decline and fellow students are seen as rivals.

This manifests itself in various ways. Counsellors are observing that bachelor students have become warier of asking each other for help, and also of offering help. The students regard grading as a zero-sum game, where they have to jostle with their fellow students for a small number of



high grades. They are unwilling to help others, as that might undermine their own "competitive edge".

The focus on grades also means that the students are focusing less on learning, which is affecting their willingness to take risks and their academic inquisitiveness. The students are choosing the safe option: for example, rather than taking any risks in a written assignment, they are following well-trodden paths. The focus on grades also means that the students are prioritising the academic side of things at the expense of the social side. The students are not aware of how important the social side is in relation to developing good collaborative skills or building up a network that can be a support during difficult periods.

This is illustrated by a comment like the following one from the 2017 annual evaluation:

*"I think the atmosphere is dominated by unhealthy competition. People are really selfish. The student environment is not conducive to helping/supporting each other and it can feel pretty lonely."*

Both the student guidance counsellors and the university chaplains are finding that the students are using a good deal of time on their image, as it is important to come across as successful, both towards their fellow students and on social media. No-one shares information about their lower grades and "failing" is a taboo, which leads to some students feeling isolated and lonely. This also exacerbates the fear of failing even further.

On both the bachelor and graduate programmes the students are very concerned about grades and *ranking*. For many, their results are significant for job opportunities in certain specific companies. However apart from grades, the students are also competing over good student jobs, places on exchanges and being a high performer/being able to juggle many things at once (studies, job, voluntary work, etc.).

It should be pointed out, however, that the student guidance counsellors are not observing the same problematic competitive student environment on the graduate programmes. On these programmes, competition is being used to improve each other's skills and the notion of a zero-sum game does not exist in the same way as on the bachelor programmes.

## GROWING ANXIETY

Both the student guidance counsellors and the university chaplains are seeing anxiety becoming more prevalent and more extreme. Several CBS students have mentioned the prospect of vagrancy as being a consequence of not completing their studies. The students are often given to understand that they are individually responsible for "all of it". This responsibility, however, is creating a climate of fear among the students, who are increasingly scared of miscomprehending or failing. Fear, and taken to its extreme, anxiety, are hard for the students to cope with. They lack the understanding or the belief that there is a place for them even if they do not make it to the top.

The university chaplains are finding that students are feeling left alone with their feelings of failure and think that failure is a taboo. They often encounter students who have the impression they are the only ones struggling with their studies and who do not know where to turn with their feelings of defeat and their doubts.

The phenomena of rivalry and anxiety are not unique to CBS but can also be seen as a broader tendency in society and youth culture. This does not mean that we should not work towards improving the psychological environment. On the contrary, we should investigate further how we can tackle these challenges constructively

## STUDY PROGRESS: NO MARGIN FOR FLEXIBILITY

In the period since the last learning environment assessment, the study progress reform has come into force, with consequences for the first cohorts of students.

The university chaplains are noticing that the study progress reform has made it difficult to "sample" different things before coming to a decision. This means that there is little "room for doubt", which is problematic, as doubt is natural, especially, perhaps, for this age group and this period

of their university career and life. Doubt has become taboo and failure is linked to shame. The university chaplains report that the students feel there is zero tolerance for error. This is compounded by a study culture of comparison with others. In other words, there is not much room to "just be you".

The reform has brought with it more rules and rigid frameworks for the students, which means they often need to apply for some or other form of dispensation at some point during their studies. This means that "ordinary students" are having increasing contact with the programme administration services/study board.

As is also apparent from the section above on social environment, the students can have the feeling that it is not possible to get into contact with the administration. The students want to talk to a person and want concrete answers; they are less happy about trusting an impersonal mailbox function when the issue is a personal one. The students want to have confidence in the administration, which is difficult when people "know each other" to a lesser degree. This uncertainty can create a breeding ground for rumours to circulate among the students and for the students to share horror stories about the programme administration services. The hub staff have positive experiences with theme stands in connection with special fields, such as admission to the MSc in Economics and Business Administration (cand.merc), which can be a way for the students to put a face to the administration.

# Action plans 2018–2020

We list below the initiatives that will be incorporated into the coming action plan for 2018–2020 and are intended to address the action areas identified by the UMV.

The initiatives are recommended by the working group and they are to be implemented by the competent entities at CBS.

**The action plan tackles physical, psychological and aesthetic problem areas. The following focal points have been highlighted for these three areas in the coming period:**

1. Efforts toward improving the physical design and furnishing of teaching rooms, including better chairs and easier access to power supply points, will be continued in the coming period. In the past three years the places in most urgent need of attention have undergone renovation, notably Dalgas Have, which has resulted in the longed-for modernisation, translating into a higher level of satisfaction. However, there are still rooms that are outdated and in need of refurbishment. It is also important to ensure continual maintenance and to rethink the design of existing rooms.
2. Aesthetic setting – art. For years now, CBS has "rested on its laurels", partly because we do have a very attractive setting and partly because other tasks relating to room capacity have been given priority. We also need to retain a high level of ambition and ensure that art and decoration play a role in our present and in our newly refurbished buildings.
3. The UMV shows that the students are calling for "social spaces", where they can relax between class time. The preceding period saw the inauguration of Graduate House, which was designed along the lines of a new concept in this respect and it is seen as being beneficial, although its full potential has not yet been exhausted. One initiative would be to utilise this framework and to examine how we can offer other students similar opportunities. We could, for instance, locate the bulk of the teaching for one programme in the same building to establish more of a "base". We realise that effective use of rooms can pose limitations, but we suggest that this possibility be incorporated into the room planning. It will also be examined whether it is possible to set up several student cafés, Friday-night bars or similar.
4. We will also look at what role Student Innovation House could play in enhancing the social environment at CBS.
5. Efforts need to be made to counteract pressure and a stressful student environment. These efforts will be concentrated in the so-called first-year project: less pressure – more learning. The project aims through various measures to make the start of studies at CBS the start of a positive and enriching process of learning. We will also take a look at areas where we ourselves are fostering an unhealthy competitive culture. One measure in the project is to enable students to do a "grade-free, character-forming" first year on selected programmes.
6. Following CBS' development contract for the coming four years, the development of feedback structures, including the development and use of types of examinations that emphasise learning rather than grades, will be continued.
7. Efforts to help students for whom student life has its challenges, including students with physical or mental disabilities, will be stepped up and highlighted, for example through better information on the internet.
8. We have ascertained that satisfaction with the administrative services has improved. Efforts in this area will be continued and there is still work to be done. The students still sometimes have difficulty finding out where to go for help. In our opinion, my.cbs.dk is a definite improvement, and this is particularly clear from the evaluations by the new students. Therefore, we will assess during the action plan period whether the level of satisfaction is still high once several generations have become accustomed to using my.cbs.dk.



# Appendix 1. Meeting with the student priests on 23 October 2017

Participants in the meeting: Søren Kjær Bruun and Charlotte Cappi Grunnet (student priests), Silke (SA)

## ENQUIRIES

Two student priests are affiliated to CBS, and they also serve the remaining higher educational institutions in Frederiksberg (The Royal Danish Academy of Music, Faculty of Science at University of Copenhagen and the teacher education programme at Metropolitan University College).

- > The student priests each have 4-5 appointments with students per week. Some students come several times while others have fewer meetings.
- > The student priests experience that either e.g. a teacher in religion at an upper secondary school has referred students to them, or they are contacted by students who are in very stressful situations and see this as an opportunity to talk with somebody here and now.
- > It generally varies when students take contact during their education: The student priests talk both with bachelor and master students of all ages. However, a significant amount of new bachelor students take contact in November/December during their first year.
- > The student priests have specifically observed that CBS students from a wider range of programmes turn to them compared to before. Previously, it was mostly students studying auditing, Chinese and IBP (International Business and Politics) who made enquiries concerning “pressure” and fear of failing, but now it is not isolated to these programmes.
- > The student priests talk with students who are diagnosed with stress, anxiety and depression. Therefore, they are not “merely” in contact with students who have a busy life causing periodical sadness or nervousness.
- > Students often make enquiries about problems which might not be directly study-related, but which have implications for their studies.

## TENDENCIES

During the last eight years, the student priests have identified three (interconnected) tendencies described as:

- > “No space”
- > Perfectionism
- > Fear and anxiety (concerning failure)

The student priests point out that there is a connection to more general societal tendencies, but it is difficult to determine what exactly can be done. Nevertheless, they eventually arrive at two things to work on.

## “NO SPACE”

- > The study progress reform has made it difficult to try out different opportunities and test one’s ground. It means that “space for despair” is limited. This poses problems because doubt is natural, maybe in particular for this age group and this time in education and life.
- > Doubt is turned into a taboo, and mistakes are associated with shame. The student priests explain that the students feel a sense of zero tolerance for mistakes. This is combined with a study culture in which people to a great extent measure themselves according to others. As a consequence, the space for “just being” is very limited.
- > The students’ most important values are primary financial. You need to be successful, and you only gain success by earning money; that is how you “do well”. Other values in life become secondary if you even are aware of them. A disagreement between dream and reality emerges.

## PERFECTIONISM

- > The student priests have noticed a high degree of self-expression among the students. It is all about “appearing” to have success for example through social media.
- > You measure yourself on many different parameters:
  - > Résumé hysteria: CBS students are very fixated on getting the right student job and the right profile. You always think about the future and never live in the present.
  - > The students have many opportunities at CBS (mostly clubs and associations) and want to participate in everything. You are expected to be active, and it is difficult to opt out or not participate at all.
- > The competitive environment results in an increased feeling of failure and do not give us peace to be who we are.

## FEAR AND ANXIETY (CONCERNING FAILURE)

- > In recent years, anxiety has become more common and more extreme; several CBS students mention the bag lady/man as the consequence for not completing their education. Fear and in the extreme case anxiety are difficult for students to manage. They lack a feeling for or belief in the existence of a place to land even if they do not make it to the top - and that this does not involve becoming a bag lady.
- > Students feel they have to manage defeats alone, and failures are subject to taboo, so you do not dare showing or talking about them at the university. Student priests often experience that students believe they are the only ones who have difficulties with their studies, and that they are uncertain about where to go with their frustrations and doubts.
- > Students from programmes with some level of “job security” seem to be more at ease (this includes some programmes at LIFE (Faculty of Science at University of Copenhagen) and the teacher education programme). Competition and anxiety could therefore be a result of CBS’ high entry requirements. Students in some prestige programmes at LIFE and the Academy of Music feel the same level of competition and anxiety as CBS students, but it is noteworthy that only CBS students mention the fear of becoming a bag lady.
- > International students experience these feelings differently due to their lack of a social network in Denmark.

### PROPOSED MEASURES

Can something be done during the introduction weeks? Talk about reality and dreams and create a balance between the two. Could we make an initiative on “how to end your education properly”? The purpose should be to take care of those students who wish to end their programme and for example have a talk with them about what competences they actually take with them from CBS.

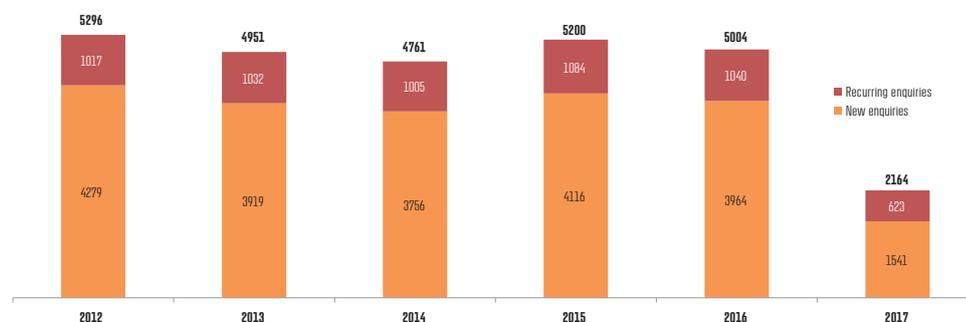
# Appendix 2. General statistics on the Student Counselling Service

Unless otherwise indicated, the statistics account for all units in the Student Counselling Service (SCS). All figures in this memo are developed based on data from SCS' journal and statistics system Kingo. For 2017, data are compiled for the period 1 January - 31 May 2017.

Prepared by Ulla Halskov, the Secretariat, Student Counselling Service.

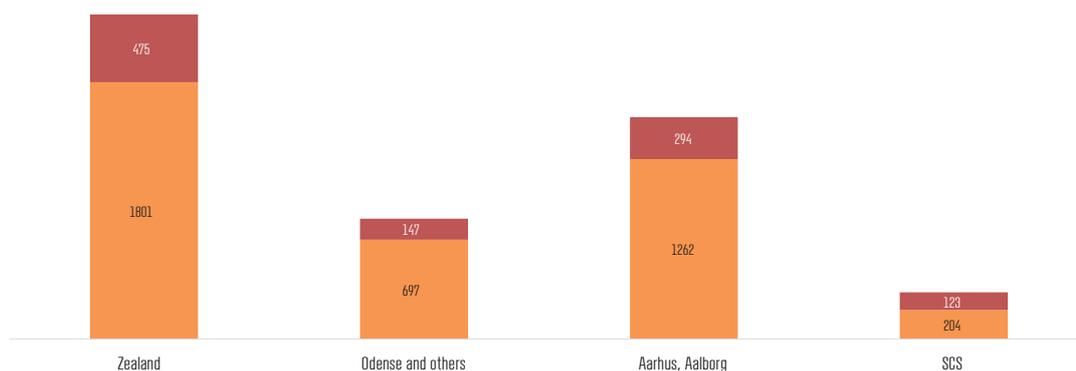
## Enquiries to SCS per year

The figure illustrates the development in number of enquiries, defined as the number of students who have contacted SCS per year. Students, who make a new enquiry three months after the last appointment and whose case is already closed, count as a new case.



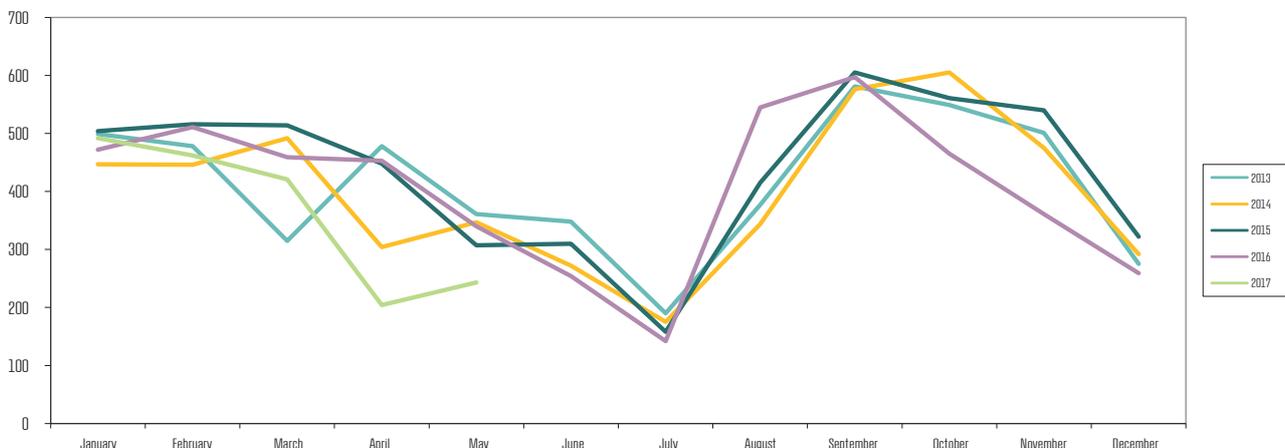
## Enquires distributed by units 2016

The figure shows the development in number of new enquiries by units in the SCS.



**Enquiries per month Nationwide**

The figure shows the monthly development in the number of enquiries to the SCS nationwide. The periods with most enquiries are in February/March and September/October. The period from August until the end of the year has been quite similar throughout the years.



**Number of individual options - 2017, accounts for 1 January until 31 May**

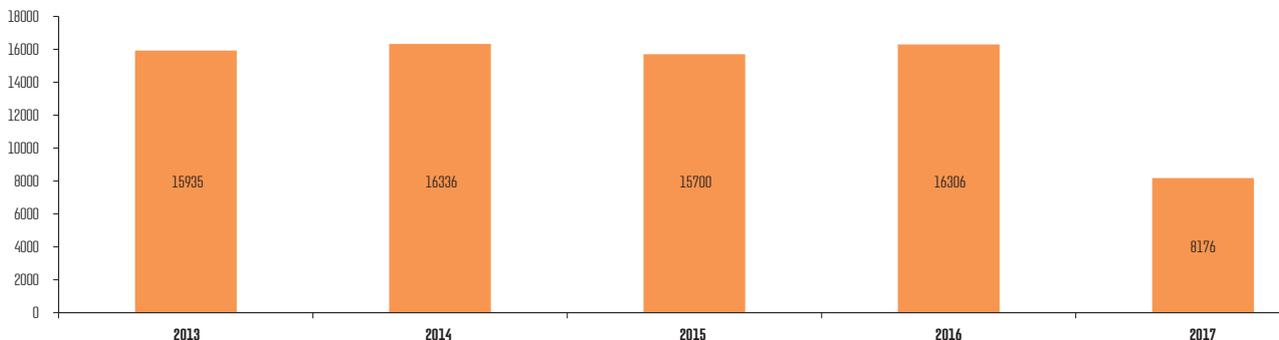
The figure indicates the number of individual options offered to the students. One enquiry to the SCS can therefore result in more offers: telephone helpline, assessing conversation, referral to another authority, individual sessions and/or group sessions.

**\*Individual options**

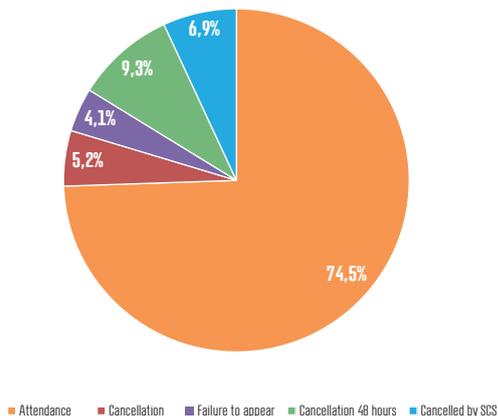
**Individual personal talk, including the assessing conversation (FS):** One session lasts approximately 1 hour.

**Telephone helpline:** One session lasts approximately 15-20 minutes. As of 2014, this service only concerns questions/guidance of a socio-legal character.

**Other:** Couple session, psychiatric talk, comment/application, SPS (special pedagogical support)

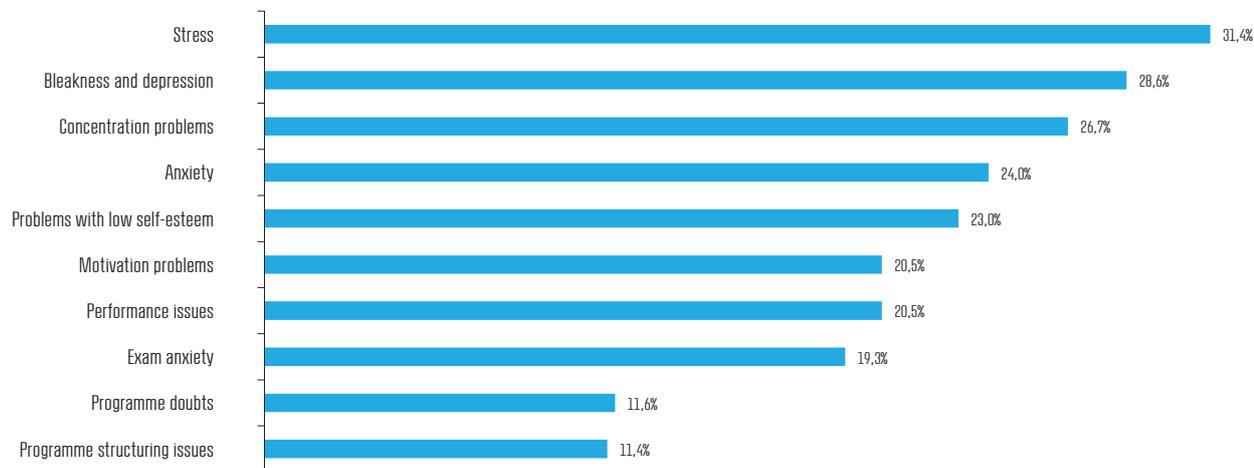


**Percentage distribution in relation to attendance, cancellation, failure to appear, late cancellation (48 hours) and cancellation by SCS. Based on individual offers**



**The most common reasons for making an enquiry**

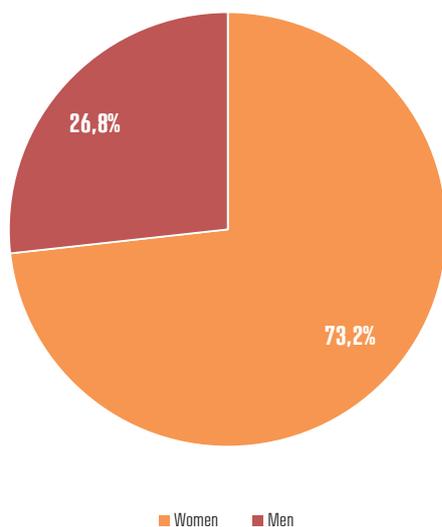
The figure illustrates what the students' enquiries to SCS typically concerned in 2016. Since 2014, stress has been the most frequent reason for making an enquiry. Sadness, depression and concentration problems were in top before. Several student life surveys show similar results where up to 50 per cent of the respondents feel stressed.



**National gender distribution 2016**

This distribution has been the same nationally for many years. It only varies a couple of percentage points.

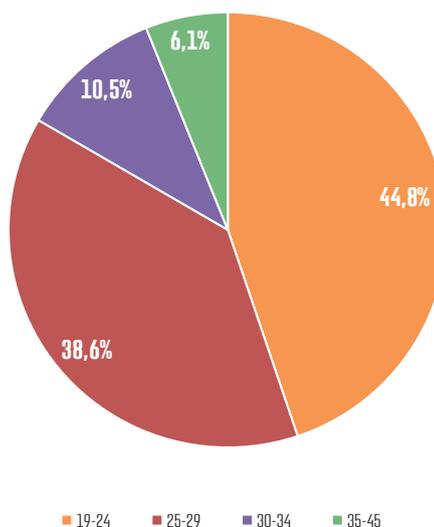
The figure shows the distribution of gender among the students who have contacted SCS in 2016. The distribution has remained constant during the years with 75% of the enquiries made by women and 25% by men. The percentage share can fluctuate with 1-3 percentage point but is generally stable.



**National age distribution**

The statistics are based on the age of the students the day they made their enquiry in 2016.

The figure illustrates that just under half of the students are between 19 and 24 years and approximately 8 out of 10 students are between 19 and 29 years. The national average is 26.4 years. For men, the average is 26.5 years and for women 26.3 years.



# Appendix 3. Work meeting about UMV on 20 October 2017

Participants in the meeting: Thomas and Lars (study guidance counsellors), Jeppe and Silke (Hub), excused from meeting: Susanne

The three items from the teaching environment evaluation (UMV) were discussed with outset in the Student Guidance Service's and the Hub's experiences. The Student Guidance Service finds the three themes to be interdependent, and it is not uncommon that the physical working environment is mentioned during guidance consultations.

In general, the Student Guidance Service has not seen progress on most items described in the action plan for 2015-17, but they have not developed in a particularly negative direction either during the period.

Enquiries to the Student Guidance Service and Hub: Silke contacts David to check whether statistics on student enquiries to the Student Guidance Service have been compiled. SCS is also contacted to obtain statistics specific for CBS.

## PHYSICAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- > Indoor climate is mentioned in guidance contexts as a strain on the students' working environment. This concerns problems related to temperature and odour nuisance.
- > **Seats and group rooms:** The students still experience a lack of seats and group rooms. In addition, master thesis students want better conditions for group work because most seats reserved for master thesis students are individual and not group/two-person seats.
- > The exam hall has undergone a positive development.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDENTS AND THE PROGRAMME ADMINISTRATION

- > The "Mickey Mouse"-structure causes a sense of alienation by the students. AcA is distanced from the students, and this distance impacts the service related to cases of exemption. Students often apply for exemptions at a time during their study period where they are vulnerable and have major problems. The students do not feel they can get in contact with the study board, and the administration is perceived as a "black box" in which mails are sent into a big hole. Students wish to talk with a person and get concrete answers and do not dare trust an impersonal, default inbox when it comes to personal matters. For the students, it is all about trusting the administration, but this is difficult when you to a lesser degree "know each other". This uncertainty sows

the seeds of internal rumours and horror stories about the Programme Administration among the students.

- > The Hub perceives the theme stands in MSc in Economics and Business Administration positively and considers them as a way for students to get familiar with the Programme Administration.
- > Both the Hub and the Student Guidance Service find that students perceive my.cbs.dk to be efficient despite a heavy information load. Everything is gathered in one place and in writing. Students trust it more than e-campus. In addition, Digital Exam and the submission receipt work well and provide the students with a feeling of security.
- > The alignment/standardisation of my.cbs.dk is regarded as positive because students and lecturers do not have to find information on LEARN and other platforms. The harmonisation has caused less confusion. This is also the case for the standardisation of forms to the study boards.

## SOCIAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT

- > The buildings contribute to a fragmented study environment: It is a problem for the academic and social environment that the students live a nomadic life and lack a permanent base or just informal places to socialise across programmes and classes. From a social perspective, it means that students on programmes with a common base, as e.g. BSc in Business Administration and Information Systems, can find support across classes which is of important to the students and also reduces drop-out rates. Furthermore, it contributes to an academic environment where it is okay to be enthusiastic about one's field and be involved in informal knowledge sharing. The service management programme is also known for its many social events where students can get to know each other across groups and classes.
- > CBS is the educational institution with most student organisations, and new ones are added all the time. However, few of these organisations revolve around the academic environment so, for instance, few student magazines are published.

## MENTAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Thomas' description of and memo on "*performance pressure among CBS students*" serves as point of departure - and the items below should be regarded as supplementary.

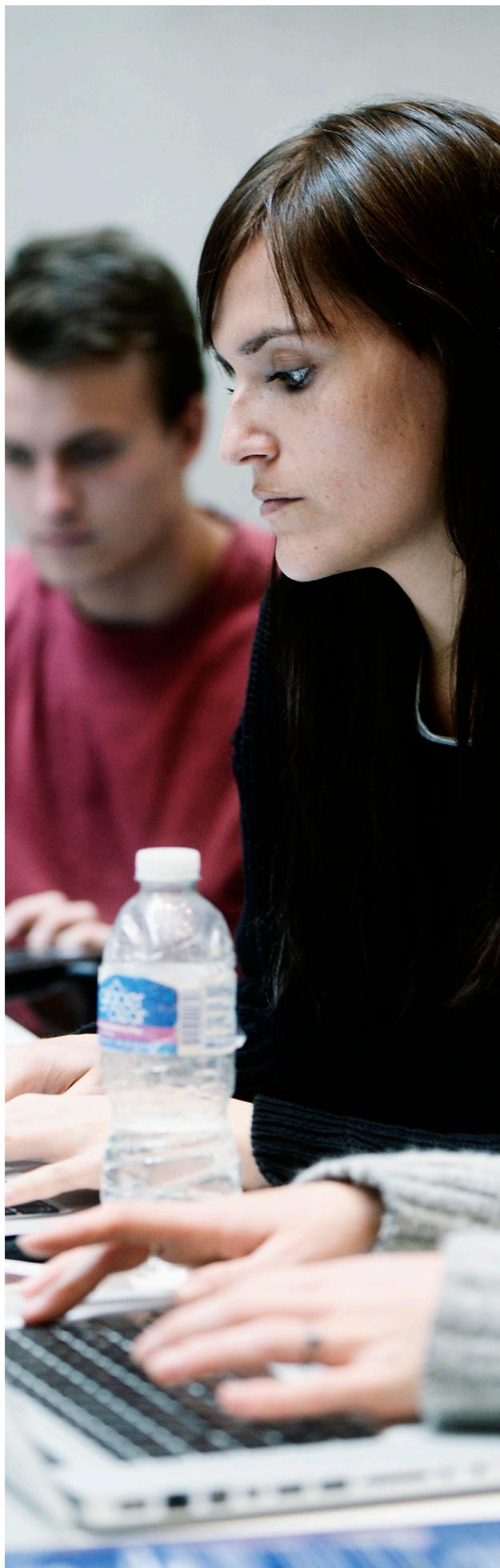
- > **Grade rankings:** Both bachelor and master students are very focused

on and interested in their rankings. For many, it has consequences for their job opportunities in some specific companies.

- The Student Guidance Service notices especially intro guides and mentors states that the study environment has changed from when they were first-year students (i.e. over a relatively short time period) and is now characterised by tougher competition.
- The study progress reform has resulted in more rules and fixed frameworks for the students, so they have to apply more frequently for some kind of exemption at some point during their studies. This means that an increasing number of “regular students” contact the programme administration/study board.
- The students are often told “everything” is their own responsibility, and they therefore pay much attention to when they can get access to information/answers/results. The responsibility evokes fear by the students who become more afraid of misunderstandings and mistakes.
- It appears from the last UMV summary (p. 3) that *“experience suggests among other things that an increased number of students have problems with the pressure of being a student, more feel bad, isolate themselves, consider ending their studies or actually drop out”*, so the Student Guidance Service does not evaluate the situation to have changed in spite of improved drop-out rates and less students withdrawing from their studies.
- Especially bachelor students are very competitive and compare themselves to other students. The students perceive grading as a zero-sum game and believe they have to fight against their fellow students for a small amount of high grades. This culture has a great impact on the social and mental study environment.
- The Hub observes a potential need for a communication task which can “decrease the pressure” on the students. For example, students who submit their master thesis in the first attempt are described as “good students” while the same terms are not used to describe other master thesis students.
- The Student Guidance Service points out that the introduction programme can have a negative effect and, thereby, enhance competition and pressure in relation to study-related jobs.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BACHELOR AND MASTER PROGRAMMES

- The Student Guidance Service experiences that the study environment is transferred from the bachelor programmes to the master programmes, but they also differ on some points. First of all, the student population is different from bachelor to master programmes. Many new students from outside CBS are enrolled in the master programmes (especially in MSc in Economics and Business Administration and the Master of Social Sciences programmes). In addition, master students are generally more fragmented because they only have the first year together in the mandatory courses and do not have many lessons of direct teaching at the university and/or choose not to show up for classes.
- The evaluation is that those students who succumb to the competitive pressure will do so during their bachelor programme. If you as a student make it to the master programme, you either thrive on the competition or have learned to deal with it.
- Therefore, the Master Guidance Service does not have the same amount of cases concerning a competitive study environment. In the master programmes, competition is used to make each other better where you on the bachelor use competition to make somebody inferior/promote yourself based on the idea of grading being a zero-sum game. In the master programmes, people compete for different things than grades: Student jobs, high performer/being able to juggle many things, etc.



**THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT 2017 IS COMPOSED BY:**

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Photo: Jacob Boserup