

2022/2023 Network report for Danish Network for Educational Development in Higher Education, DUN

Annual conference

The 2023 conference of DUN was held over two days in May. The topic was on learning environments, addressing the onsite and online learning environments, as well as the relation between learning environments and students' well-being. This latter theme is a major topic at the Danish universities as well as in the public debate. The conference was the first since 2021, because DUN hosted the ICED 2022 conference. This year's conference was fully booked and with a waiting list – for the first time in the history of DUN conferences. The conference was offered in a combination of Danish and English.

The general assembly of DUN was held online in June.

SIGs

The special-interest groups (SIGs) form the spine of DUN's activities during the year. There are 14 active SIGs. The members come from the various member organizations. There are SIGs focusing on, inter alia, doctoral supervision, use of digital learning technologies, exams and assessment.

The SIGs have managed to continue their activities during the long lockdown period by having meetings and seminars online. The SIGs arrange meetings that are open for participation as well as meetings for SIG members only. The board has increased the contact with SIG coordinators to facilitate exchange of experiences between SIGs. This initiative is continuing this year.

Meetings for the heads of the units and departments of educational development

DUN facilitates meetings between the heads of the units and departments engaged with educational development at the different universities. The centre leaders meet twice a year, one of them being in relation with the annual conference. A topic this year was how to attract experienced teachers to take part in competence development activities. Since 2020, it has been mandatory for all academic teaching staff to take part in development of their teaching competences throughout their entire career. It is the implementation of this rule that is considered.

The journal and the newsletter

DUN publishes the Journal of Danish University Education (DUT). This journal publishes two issues each year containing peer-reviewed research papers as well as non-peer reviewed papers, mainly but not exclusively in Danish. A special kind of paper, the DUT Guides, offer brief introduction to key topics, such as oral exams, supervision or peer feedback. The quality of the papers is high and there is a reasonable number of submissions, although the Covid years also witnessed a decrease in the number of papers.

The journal has a new editor in chief after some changes. Rikke Toft Nørgaard is the new editor. A newsletter is sent via email to all members, approximately every three weeks. In addition to information concerning conferences, seminars, vacant positions, etc., each letter includes a short comment from a member of the board, addressing a topic that the board member finds relevant to reflect on.

Particular activities and challenges from June 2022 to September 2023

The hosting of the ICED 2022 conference was a particular achievement as well as a challenge. The conference itself was a positive experience. Covid had an effect on the number of

participants, and there has been a substantial amount of administrative challenges in the wake of the conference. DUN suffered a deficit of app. 120,000 (app. 17,000 \$). Although we had set off money in the budget to cover a possible deficit and the network still has a reserve, it is now necessary for the board to look closely at the expenses and how we support the activities financially. We are also looking for ways to increase the income by attracting two institutions who currently are not members, and reaching out to an institution that is leaving the network this year. However, due to the financial situation of many universities that are laying off academic staff these months, the situation is difficult.

The webinars that we launched in 2021 has been continued and is currently offered in relation to papers published in DUT, the network academic journal. Some of the webinars will be offered in English and are open for others.

Subjects of discussion in the DUN board

This year, we have had a particular eye on inclusion in relation to the network. Beginning with the many non-Danish speaking colleagues at the universities, we are currently broadening the scope to look at diversity and accessibility of DUN and DUN activities. This work will continue in 2023 and 2024.

Further, we are discussing how to strengthening DUN as a network and a community covering different types of activities. A part of this is also to consider the target group of DUN's activities: Should we seek to include all teachers, or should we consider academic developers, researchers in teaching and learning and others who work professionally with AD/ED as the main target group. Teachers, heads of studies and other teachers and administrative staff with interests in teaching and learning in HE would then be a secondary group.

Hot topics

Main topics of discussion in the Danish university landscape:

- Student well-being.
- A reform of Danish Master's programmes that means that in addition to the current 3+2 structure with the Master's level being a two-years programme, a substantial part of the Master's students should instead be studying a one-year Master's programme. This was decided by a majority in the Parliament in the spring (but still not passed as a new university act) and the universities and the Ministry are now negotiating how this should be put into practice.
- Due to different issues, including that the ministry has limited the number of students to be admitted at university, many institutions have a strained financial situation. This presents challenges for the development work.

Lars Ulriksen

Chairman of DUN, September 26, 2023