

2021 Study Environment Survey – Summary of the university report

In March 2021, SDU conducted the Study Environment Survey (SES) among all full-time students for the eighth time. The study was thus conducted while the University was on lockdown as a result of the corona pandemic. The questionnaire was sent out to 19,826 full-time students and achieved a response rate of 45.6.

The SES report focuses on SDU level including campus distributions and faculty distributions. The questionnaire was divided into a number of overarching topics, which serve as chapters in the report. This summary outlines selected points from each topic.

The students' everyday lives over the past year have been characterised by restrictions and the lockdown of SDU's campuses due to corona. The results of the study are heavily influenced by this. Corona is mentioned over 1,800 times in the free text fields, and the fluctuations seen in many places are historically large.

General trends

The students have rated SDU's general study environment on a scale from 0 to 10 (from very negative to very positive). This year's survey achieves an average rating of 6.0 – down from 7.2 in the previous survey in 2019. This year's survey has the lowest rating since the students were initially asked the question in 2004. At the faculty level, the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences rates the lowest at 5.7 and the Faculty of Science the highest at 6.5. At campus level, Slagelse rates the lowest at 5.1 and Sønderborg the highest at 7.1.

When considering the assessment of the general study environment against selected background variables, it is evident that aside from the group which is most delayed, all groupings rate the study environment lower in 2021 compared to 2019. For commuters versus those who live on campus, there has been an equalisation, as their evaluation is largely the same. Past surveys saw lower ratings from commuters in particular, but the ratings decrease among commuters is generally smaller in 2021 compared to those who live on campus.

The students have been asked to prioritise between 8 statements which they believe SDU should work with to create a better study environment. The top priority was '*Teaching and subject knowledge*', followed by '*Social and academic communities*' and '*Well-being*'.

Academic and social communities

The topic's questions were rated from 37% and up to 80% on the positive scale (SDU level). The positive scale is calculated on the basis of the proportion of answers that is above the mean assessment.

The topic's highest-rated statement is *'If I want to discuss a study assignment with a fellow student outside of class hours, I know someone I can turn to'* with 80% positive answers. The lowest-rated statement is *'There is a satisfactory selection of social events at SDU'* with 37% positive answers.

The topic of communities is the one that has seen the biggest decline since 2019. Particularly sharp declines occur in the assessments of the professional and social communities. With rating drops ranging from about 20% since the previous survey, the 2021 assessment ratings constitute a historically large decrease in these assessments at SDU.

When looking at background variables in relation to study years, it's clear that those who rate the highest are third-year undergraduates. In second place are second-year postgraduates and second-year undergraduates. First-year postgraduates and first-year undergraduates have given a somewhat lower score.

Since 2015, there has been an increase in the proportion of students who are part of a study group, up from 64% in 2015 to 78% in 2021. 57% have created a study group themselves, and 20% are in a group created by their programme. 12% are not in any group, but do not miss it either, while 9% are not in a study group, but would like to be in one.

Well-being

The topic of well-being has also seen a significant decline since the previous survey. Previously, the topic has consistently been rated very highly, but has taken a dive in 2021. The statement *'I thrive on studying at SDU'* achieved a positive response rate of 69%. In 2019, the number was 85%.

Loneliness has doubled since 2019. 24% state that they feel lonely at their programme. In 2019, the number was 12%. The three most common explanations given by the students for this are *'Lack of physical attendance at SDU'*, *'Lack of opportunity for participation in social and academic communities'* and *'Lack of sense of belonging socially'*.

27% of the respondents experience severe stress symptoms in their everyday lives – up from 23% in 2019. The students have stated which factors they view as important for their experience of stress symptoms. Here, *'putting a great pressure on myself to perform'*, *'great pressure in connection with exam situations'* and *'uncertainty about academic expectations'* are the three most stated causes.

5% of the respondents at SDU indicate that they have personally been exposed to abusive behaviour or discrimination in connection with their studies. In 2019, 5% also indicated this. Gender discrimination is the most frequently reported form of discrimination – followed by ethnic discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

19% at SDU level have indicated that they are considering leaving their programme due to conditions in their study environment (in 2019, it was 13%). The Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Health Sciences have the lowest proportions at 16%, while the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences have reached a score of 21-22%.

Disability

The topic's questions are rated from 33% and up to 64% on the positive scale (SDU level). For the first time, people have been asked about disabilities in the SES. 15% at SDU self-assess that they have a disability.

63% assess that they experience a good understanding of their special needs when contacting SDU for help or support in connection with their disability, while 33% have stated that their well-being at SDU is negatively affected by their disability.

Information and communication

The topic's questions are rated between 38% and 68% on the positive scale (SDU level). The topic's highest-rated statement is '*The library's information and access to materials at www.mitsdu.dk/bibliotek work satisfactorily*'. The lowest-rated statement is '*Information on relevant social activities is satisfactory*'.

The topic of information and communication is the lowest rated in the survey. All statements have received a lower rating this time around compared to 2019, but there are large differences in how much. Positive indications about social activities have decreased by as much as 23% at SDU level. The runner-up is information about academic activities, which has seen a decrease of 15%. The other statements have decreased from 2 to 6 percentage points.

IT matters

The topic's questions are rated from 55% and up to 88% on the positive scale (SDU level). The topic's highest-rated statement is '*The network coverage at SDU is good*'. The lowest-rated statement is '*Itslearning works satisfactorily*'.

Overall, the topic is rated very favourably. With the exception of the assessment of Itslearning, all other questions are given a rating of between 79-88% positive responses at SDU level. With its very low rating, Itslearning stands out markedly among the other questions. On 1 February 2021, Blackboard was replaced by Itslearning as SDU's learning platform. It is thus a completely new system.

Online teaching

The topic's questions were rated from 38% and up to 65% on the positive scale (SDU level). The topic's highest-rated statement is *'I have been adequately guided in how to participate in online teaching'*. The lowest-rated statement is *'I ask questions and interact with the lecturers whenever possible in the online teaching'*.

For the first time, the study environment survey contained questions on online teaching. In general, the topic ranks among the lowest in this year's SES. Among other things, it appears that of all the faculties, the Faculty of Humanities receives the highest ratings in the topic; commuters give a higher rating than those who live on campus; and the highest ratings are especially seen among first-year undergraduates and postgraduates.

Physical conditions

The topic's questions were rated from 62% and up to 93% on the positive scale (SDU level). The highest-rated statement is *'Overall, I find that the rooms I am taught in are suitable for the teaching methods used in the teaching'*, rated at 93%, followed by the *'The Library'* at 90%. The lowest-rated items are *'Break areas'*, *'Computer rooms'* and *'Auditoriums'* at 62%, 63% and 66%, respectively.

In 2021, the topic of physical conditions has received a better average rating than previously seen. While all campuses have seen progress, Esbjerg has experienced a markedly greater progress since the previous survey.

There are large internal variations at both faculty and campus level. However, the overall consensus is that the premises fit their purpose, and apart from Slagelse, the library is ideally located everywhere.

As something new this year, the students were asked to answer whether they feel safe when using the facilities at SDU in relation to the risk of corona infection. 85% answer in the affirmative at SDU level.

The lavatories have been rated with 77% positive responses, which places them in the better half of the rankings. Since 2015, the lavatories have ranked the lowest or second lowest at SDU level. Lavatories have moved 8 places up in the ranking since 2019.

Aesthetic conditions

The topic's questions were rated from 50% and up to 63% on the positive scale (SDU level). The topic's highest-rated statement is *'It's nice to spend time in the outdoor areas'*. The lowest-rated statement is *'The facilities for breaks and socialising with other students are inviting'*.

There are large internal variations at both faculty and campus level. Overall, Sønderborg achieves the highest rating, while Slagelse achieves the lowest overall. The new SDU Esbjerg has once again – just like during the physical conditions – seen a huge improvement compared to previous survey.

As with the physical conditions, there is progress to be traced in terms of aesthetic conditions. The average for the topic is the best during the period we can compare it against (since 2015).

Laboratories and workshops

The topic's questions were rated from 70% and up to 90% on the positive scale (SDU level). The topic's highest-rated statement is '*Safety in connection with the teaching is good*'. The lowest-rated statement is '*I feel able to act if an accident or other dangerous situation arises in connection with lab and/or workshop work*'.

The questions are chiefly aimed at the students at the Faculties of Science, Health Sciences and Engineering, but everyone has had the opportunity to answer the questions. The rating of topic is largely the same as in 2019. If considering only Science, Health Sciences and Engineering, the development is mostly characterised by stagnation.