

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

### **PERSÖNLICHKEITSENTWICKLUNG IM STUDIUM (UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

Leuphana University Lüneburg's academic model is characterized by an approach emphasizing interdisciplinary inquiry alongside the acquisition of core subject-specific competences. This approach is most explicitly expressed in the comprehensive area of the University's undergraduate and graduate curricula called "Complementary Studies" (Komplementärstudium). Enrolling in courses offered under the auspices of Complementary Studies is mandatory for all students at Leuphana. At the graduate (Master's) level, Complementary Studies modules are strongly oriented towards scientific reflection and interdisciplinary questions stemming from the philosophy of science, ethics, and methodological aspects of research processes. In this model, students learn to analyze their own disciplinary formation from transdisciplinary perspectives and strengthen critical thinking and judgment skills. Closely linked to this, students also learn to collaborate in analyzing complex issues, applying ethical frameworks and putting diverse, conflicting perspective into dialogue.

### **Seminar Content**

"Persönlichkeitsentwicklung im Studium" was offered as a seminar within the context of "Connecting Science, Responsibility and Society", an advanced graduate model in Complementary Studies that deals with broad topics concerning the importance of ethical responsibility in knowledge production and addressing current social challenges.

The aim of this seminar was to provide students an environment in which they could wrestle with concerns related to their academic, professional and personal development. In this context, students from various disciplines and degree programmes engaged in exercises focused on individual life stories, understanding personal competencies and reflecting both on experiences as students and life beyond the university. The course design was highly student-centered and allowed students to pursue topics of their own choosing (e.g. master thesis, professional career, work-life balance and so forth) and freely shape the content of assignments and assessments.

## Learning goals

At the end of this seminar, students will have developed:

- The ability to reflect on one's own journey as a student and formulate goals based on past experiences and future interests
- Soft skills related to group collaboration, giving and taking feedback and narrative competence in presenting individual life stories
- Knowledge of and technical capacity for using digital tools (Mahara)

The seminar was designed so that students could explore different topics and groups and share findings from guided self-reflections. They had the opportunity to relate to one another's experiences and perspectives and discuss questions of civic responsibility and professional life after their studies. Work with a Mahara-based e-portfolio platform accompanied seminar sessions and provided students a forum for documenting and engaging more deeply with their thoughts and experiences from the seminar.

During the course of the semester, students were introduced to a variety of scholarly and practical perspectives on personal development. Special focus in this context was given to the topics of personal identity, the nature of university education and dimensions of social responsibility for university graduates. The semester began, for example, with a comparison of one's own "classic" curriculum vitae with a more personally and creatively articulated life story in order to address the topic of narrative identity at play in personal development processes. As a homework assignment, students carried out self-assessments of their interdisciplinary competences using the UniWiND Competence Grid (German version only: [https://www.uniwind.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publikationen/2019-UniWiND\\_Bd.10\\_web.pdf](https://www.uniwind.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/2019-UniWiND_Bd.10_web.pdf)). In the next session, these competences were related back to life stories in narratives that students presented to each other. In the remainder of the course, we worked with similar approaches, including creative texts, responding to quotations, associative picture cards, methods for decision making etc. E-Portfolios supported reflection processes along the way and helped students to build learning communities in the classroom. Students gathered different artefacts during the seminar's activities (e.g. posters as outcomes from seminar sessions, pictures, quotes, videos) and integrated them into their personal portfolio sites. These websites were further enriched by students through personal reflections and additional materials helping to create personal academic and professional profiles.

## Course assignments

During the semester, students had to complete two different assignments. They were:

- Oral presentation of a page from their e-portfolios illustrating chosen topics, motivating questions and lines of personal inquiry from the semester
- Written meta-cognitive reflection addressing students' experiences throughout the semester

## Recommendations

- The role of the instructor needs to be clear (Teacher as a guide; not lecturer).
- Instructors should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the affordances and challenges of the e-portfolio platform chosen for use in their course.
- Students, too, should be given adequate technical introduction to the use of eportfolio-software before or at the start of the semester (for example, through online tutorials appropriate for self-study or via group webinars).
- Clearly defined goals and intended outcomes for working with e-portfolios should be explained to students.
- An appropriate assessment framework for evaluating portfolio work should be discussed, and when possible, developed with students.
- While peer feedback offers vital enrichments for courses keynoting e-portfolios in student inquiry, instructors should be aware of the importance of offering students forms of feedback more continuous and frequent than is conventionally offered in other course formats.