

# UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

## How to establish an English-taught semester

Example from UiO

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# Background

University	Launch English-taught semester
University of Oslo	2002
Norwegian University of Science and Technology	2004
University of Bergen	2013

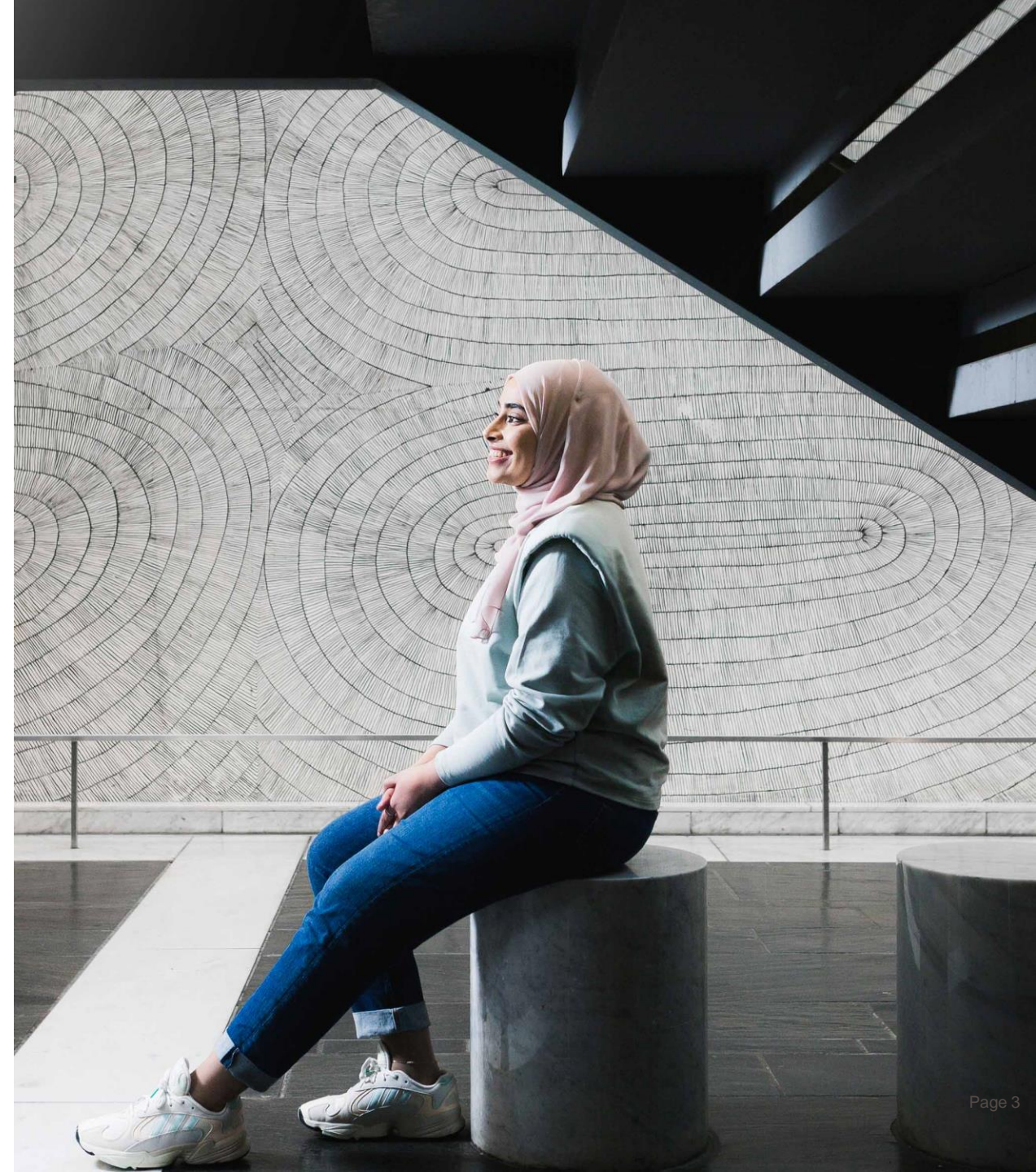


# Background

- Teaching exclusively in Norwegian seriously limited student exchange
- Increased internationalization: a University and Faculty strategy



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# Aim of project



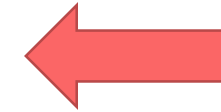
- Make the Faculty more attractive for students and teachers from outside the Nordic countries
- Increase the number of exchange agreements with quality universities, especially in English-speaking countries
- Increase students' and teachers' competence in English
- Internationalization at home

# Why did we choose the 9th semester, now Module 6?

- Students in their 5th year of study are relatively confident in their professional development
- Students have some knowledge of the health care system in their own country
- The theme of the semester (Reproduction. Mother and Child) has important global features
- Logistical reasons: Curriculum compatibility with partner universities

# Curriculum, year four to six

Semester/Module		ECTS
7th Module 4	Neurology, ENT, Ophthalmology	27
8th Module 5	Psychiatry, Forensic Medicine, Pharmacology	19
9th Module 6	International semester: Gynaecology/ Obstetrics, Paediatrics	30
10th Module 7	Community Practice and Primary Healthcare	24
11th Module 8 - I	Clinical medicine	55
12th Module 8 - II	Clinical Medicine	



# Challenges in the preparatory phase

- Funding
- Time – it took 3 years from Faculty Board decision to implementation
- Preparing the teaching
  - Specially organized, intensive English courses for teachers
  - Translation and updating of teaching material in English
  - Study tours for academic staff to English-speaking universities and hospitals
  - Visits of academic staff from partner universities
- Obtaining bilateral exchange agreements with universities in English-speaking countries

# Challenges when running the semester

- Teaching in English is more demanding for the Norwegian teachers
- Some healthcare workers, like midwives and nurses refuse/are reluctant to speak English
- Communication with patients may be difficult
- The number of non-Norwegian exchange students is critical for making teaching in English natural. Ideally 20-30% of the class.
- Maintaining the academic quality despite the language barriers



# Organization of the semester

- The semester is mandatory for all Norwegian students
- All plenary teaching is conducted in English
- All learning material is in English
- Exchange students are preferably accompanied by Norwegian students in the clinical duty
- Norwegian students are responsible for translating or summarizing if it is not possible or appropriate to speak in English
- Students can choose the language on the OSCE exam, but not the digital exam (English)

# Learning outcomes

- Norwegian students: teachers' ability to convey knowledge and the pedagogical planning do suffer
- However; other factors than the quality of teaching determine the exchange students' overall opinion
- Weak coherence between students' evaluation of the arrangement and their English competence
- Strong coherence between teachers' self evaluation of language skills and how well they think the teaching works and their comfort with this teaching
- Initial phase: Criticism from teachers towards the handling of certain organizational and practical matters

# Learning outcomes

- Teachers feel that the teaching is less nuanced, detailed. Teaching context feels more constrained
- Information has to be translated into English (Covid-experience!)
- Incoming students contribute to new knowledge and viewpoints
- International students contribute to internationalization at home and give the local students an international component in their education
- The international students are often more active in class
- Most of the Norwegian students and teachers report that they have improved their English language skills

# Immediate results

- Increased number of exchange agreements
- Substantial increase in number of exchange students to/from partner universities for semester exchange after a couple of years
- What is the recipe for maintaining high numbers, and balancing incoming and outgoing students?

	1999/ 2000	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2011/ 2012	2018/ 2019
Incoming students	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>59</b>
Outgoing students	<b>6</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>49</b>

# Concluding remarks

- Norwegian is still the main teaching language in the Oslo medical curriculum
- The quality loss in the 9th semester is not such that teaching in English cannot be justified
- Teaching in English is a challenge. However, the semester now runs quite smoothly, with practical obstacles largely overcome.



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# Workshop

Discuss in groups these 3 questions:

1. Do you have an English-taught semester for medical students at your faculty?
2. What do you think would be the main challenges at your institution in establishing an English-taught semester?
3. What do you think would be the main benefits at your faculty in establishing an English-taught semester?