



# How external quality assurance can support the HEIs' handling of diversity among students



## Outline of the presentation

- Brief background: Development of enrollment of students in Denmark and the focus on diversity
- Study of the Understanding of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) among Danish HEIs and students
- Inclusive process with HEIs and other stakeholders in Denmark to determine EQA focus on SCL
- Examples of how External Quality Assurance can support SCL at HEIs and a focus on diversity

# Situation of Denmark

- Situated in Northern Europe
- Population less than 6 millions
- A youth cohort is made up of approx. 60.000 annual births
- Higher Education is a public good and tax financed





# Development of enrollment of students in Denmark and the focus on diversity

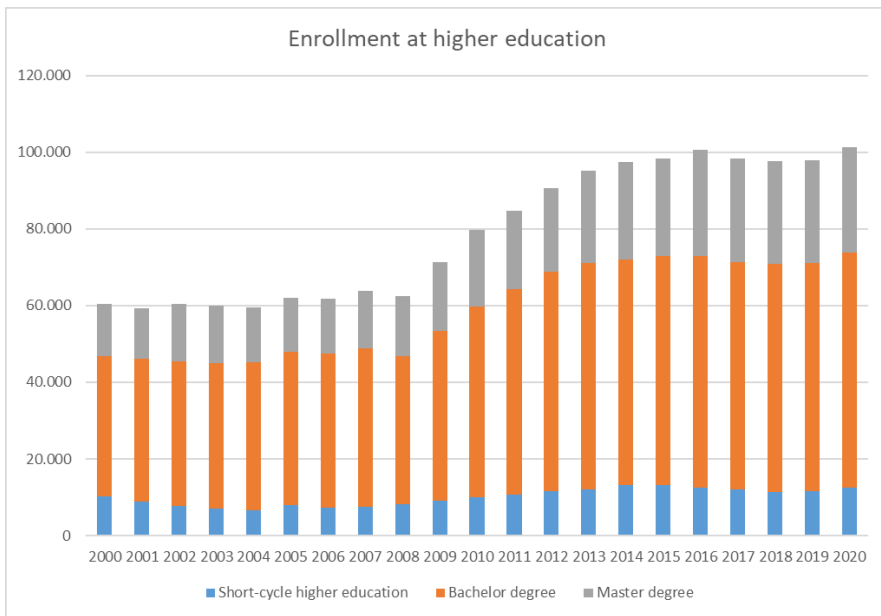
- Denmark has some 40 HEIs, including 8 research universities
- Educational attainment in Denmark has increased significantly since the 1960s
- E.g. in 1977 some 17.000 were enrolled in HEIs. In 2000 it was more than 45.000.
- By 2000 the pace was slowing down
- Booming economy provided job opportunities (also) for less skilled young people



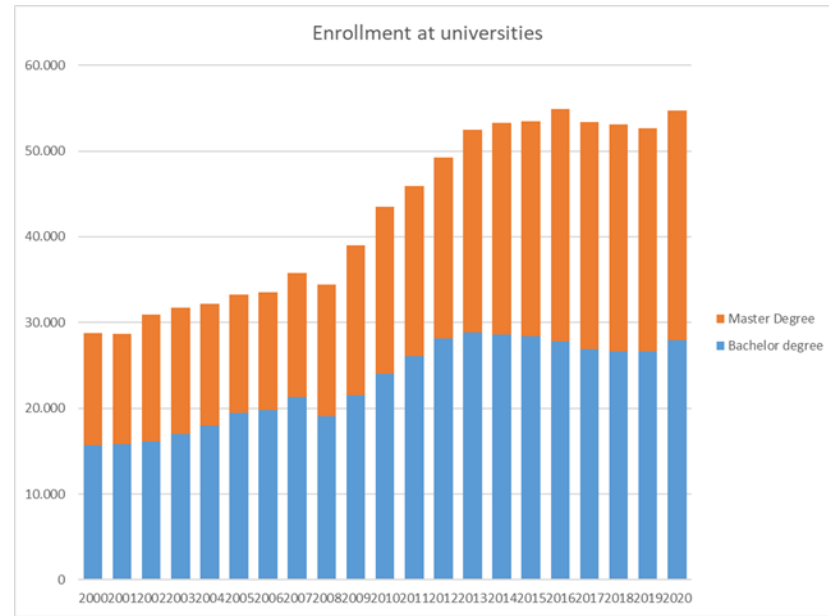
# Development of enrollment of students in Denmark and the focus on diversity

- In 2005 the Government established a Globalisation Commission of national stakeholders
- Conclusion: The key solution to challenge of globalisation was a higher education level and a more skilled labour force >> Ensure taxbased welfare state model
- Conscious efforts to increase higher education enrollment:
  - More funding to HEIs
  - Public discourse on educational attainment as key to effectively facing increased globalisation pressure
  - Target: 60% of cohort enrolled in HEI, of which 25% in Universities

# Results of Efforts to Increase Enrollment in H.E.

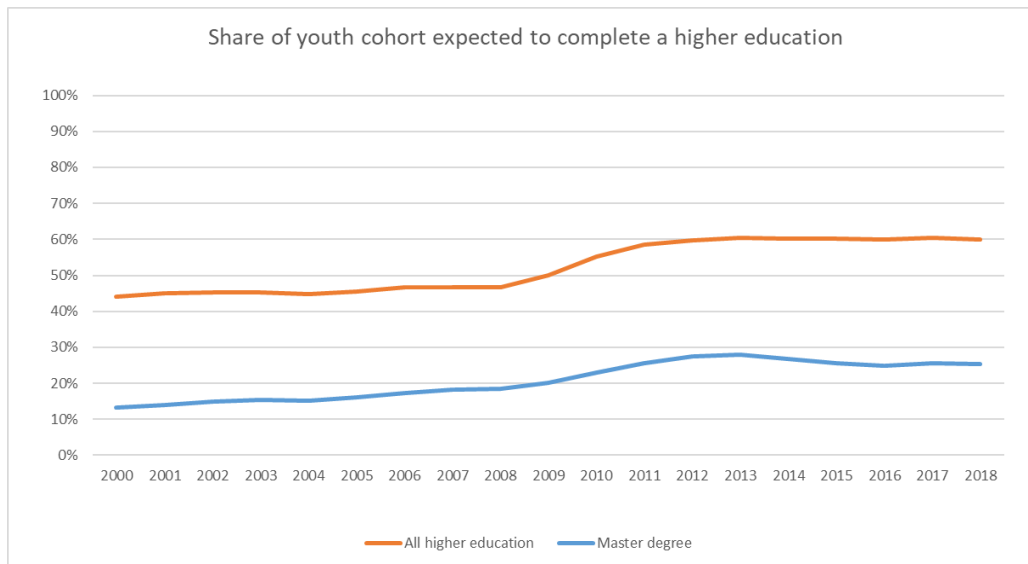


Enrollment at all HEIs (from 2000 to 2020)



Enrollment at Research Universities

# Share of youth cohort projected to complete a higher education (Years 2000 to 2018)



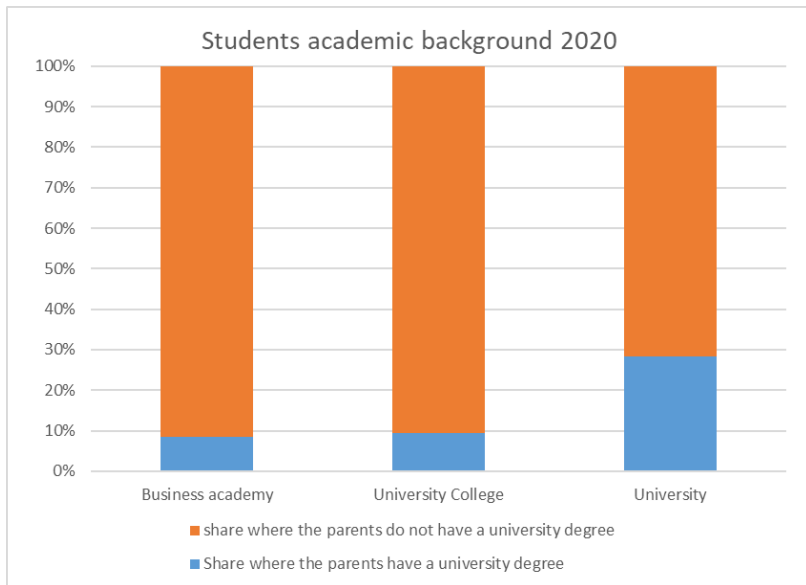


# Development of enrollment of students in Denmark and the focus on diversity

- With increase in enrollment comes an increased diversity
- At the same time growing awareness of diversity in general:
  - Gender distribution in education
  - Social background
  - Cultural background, sexual orientation
  - Different learning styles and preferences among the students



## Parent's educational attainment among students



Share of student's where at least one parent has a university degree.

The share of the Danish population (aged 25-69) with a university degree is approx. 17% (2020)



# Understanding of Student Centered Learning (SCL)

To sum up:

- A growing number of young people enroll in higher education
- It is a diverse group of students
- Need to focus on good teaching with high learning outcome for all
- Therefore a need to determine an External QA approach to SCL

# Revised European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) in 2015

## - the introduction of Student Centered Learning in IQA and EQA

### 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

#### Standard:

Institutions should ensure that **the programmes are delivered** in a way that encourages students **to take an active role in creating the learning process**, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

#### Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in **stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process**. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

#### The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching:

- respects and attends to **the diversity of students and their needs**, enabling flexible learning paths;
- considers and uses **different modes of delivery**, where appropriate;
- **flexibly** uses a variety of **pedagogical methods**;
- regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- encourages **a sense of autonomy in the learner**, while ensuring **adequate guidance and support from the teacher**;
- promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

# SCL is not a new theme in higher education in Denmark

General understanding that SCL has been an integrated element in the approach to teaching and to the role of students since the 1970s

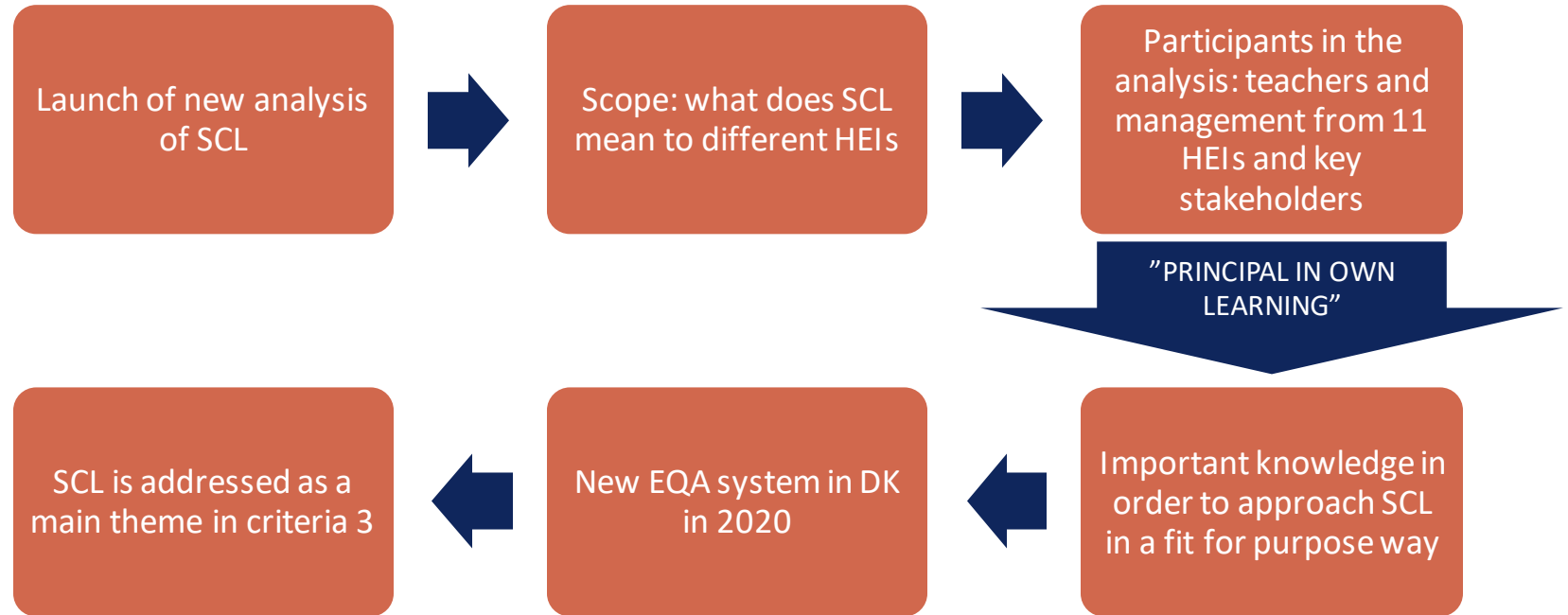
Student activating pedagogical methods such as project based learning, student facilitated learning, group based learning and exams, case based learning ect are everyday life for students at Danish HEIs

The learner-teacher relationship is characterized by mutual respect, dialogue and a flat hierarchy

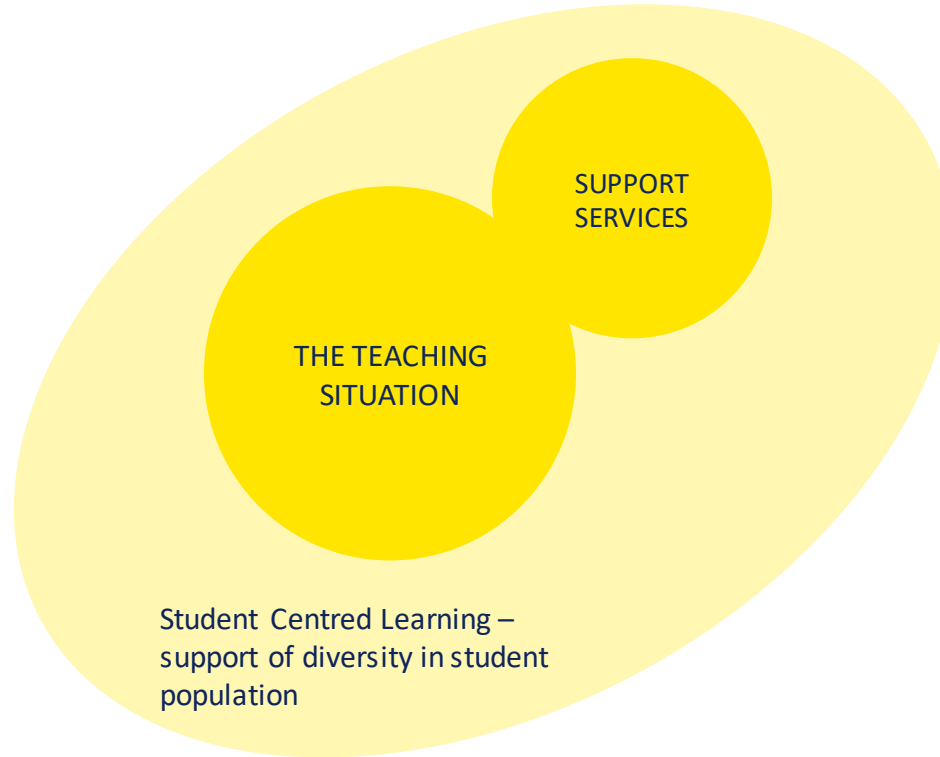
Students are mandatory in decision making bodies at all levels at higher education institutions

**BUT** SCL was a new theme when it came to quality assurance

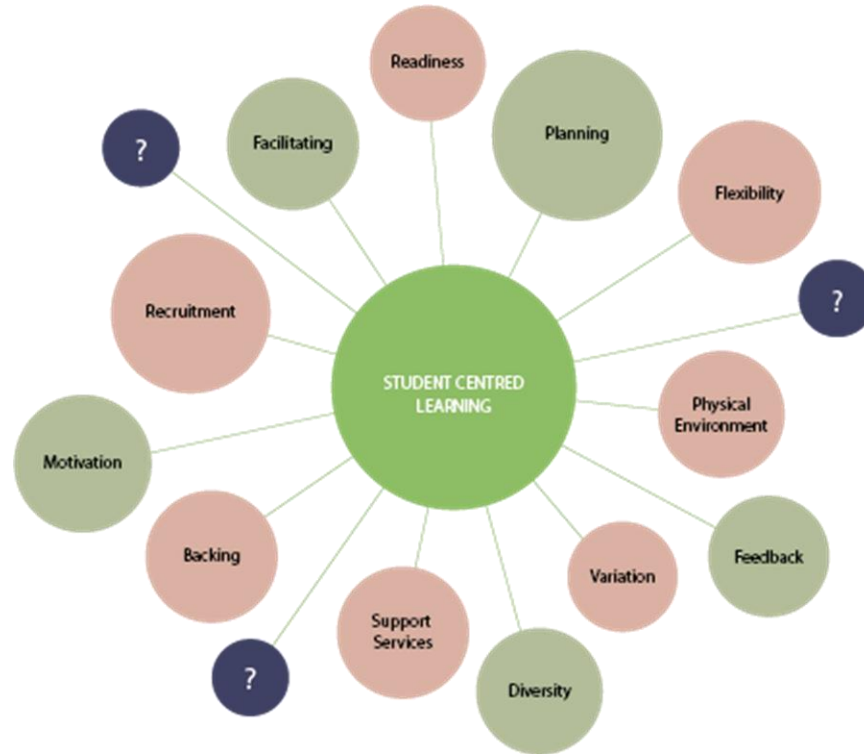
# The Danish Accreditation Institution's response to ESG 1.3



# Diversity and SCL: A fried egg with two yolks



# The meaning of SCL in a Danish context



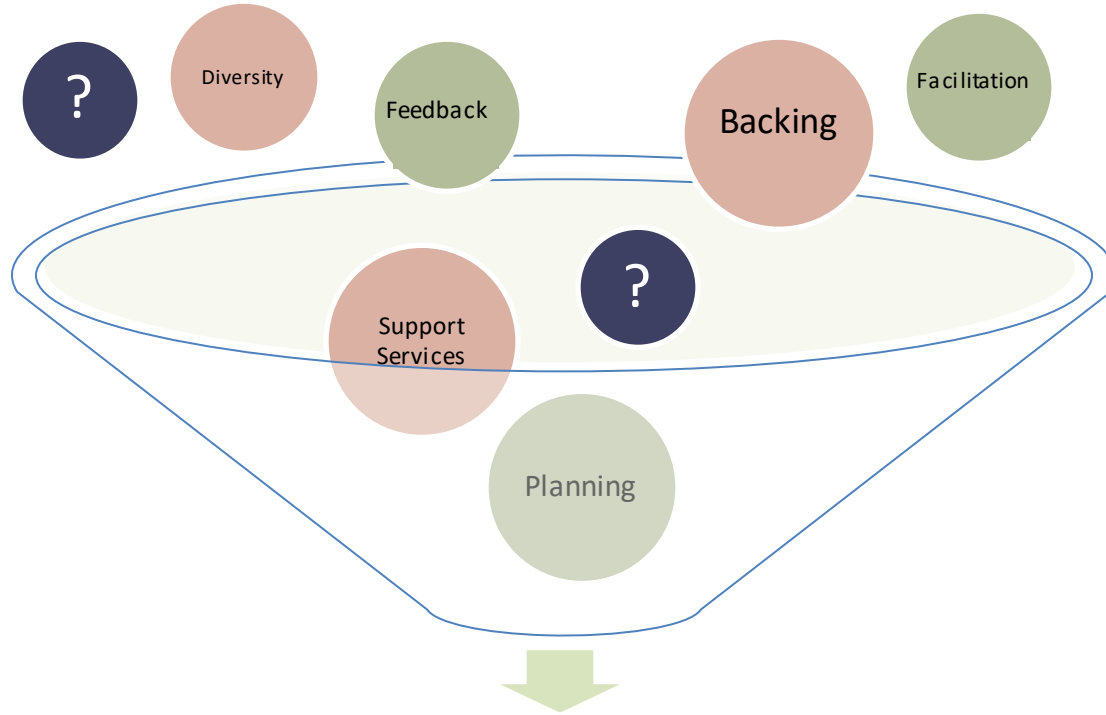


# Many understandings of SCL

- **Variation** in educational and didactic learning styles
- The teacher's role in **facilitation** and **planning** the learning process
- **Flexibility** with respect to the student's study path
- The student's **motivation** with respect to learning and actively participating in the learning situation
- Providing **feedback** on the student's ongoing academic development and performance in exam situations
- Accommodating **diversity** across the student community
- **Backing** from heads of institutions for the learning style
- **The student's readiness** to engage in independent reflection and action
- An offer of **support services** for students where private/personal factors present an obstacle to learning
- **Recruitment** of teachers with the appropriate educational and didactic skills and a passion for the institution's teaching style
- The right **physical environment** for learning which supports e.g. group work and encourages students to interact with teachers



# The big question: How to handle the broad meaning of SCL in a common institutional accreditation system



A new and adjusted institutional accreditation system from 2020

# SCL and the new system of institutional accreditation

SCL is addressed in Criterion III. The programmes' level, content and organisation

The institution has considered and prioritized work to support the approach to student-centred learning selected and quality assures the activities this work entails. There are no specific expectations about what the institution decides, but there is a general expectation that all priorities are well-considered.

The expectation for quality assurance means that the institution systematically plans its own initiatives, implements them, assesses the results of the initiatives and follows up on these.

Student-centred learning means, for example, organization of the programme, including variation in teaching and types of work, so that teaching takes outset in students' skills and qualifications, and the programme supports their commitment to attain the learning objectives (e.g. using specific pedagogical/didactical tools such as feedback, project work etc.).

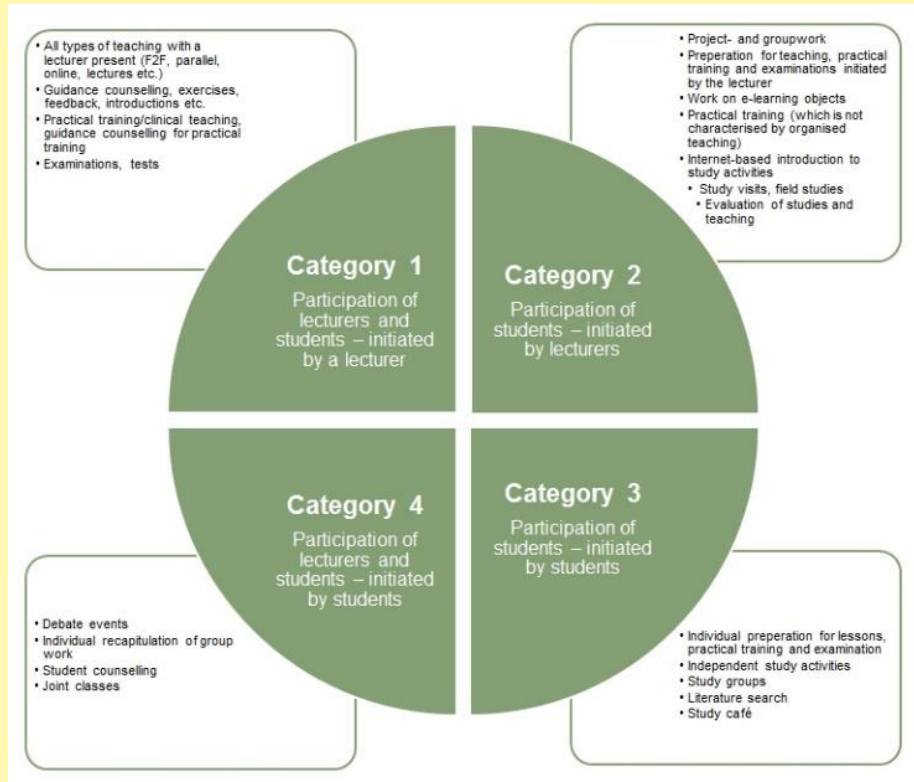
Student-centred learning can also mean student-centred support functions, e.g. student counselling, careers guidance, etc. to ensure that there are no structural barriers to student learning.



## Early examples focusing on SCL in institutional accreditation in Denmark

HEI planned intervention	External QA focus
New initiatives linked to lecturer-student relations, e.g. increased individual feedback to cater for diversity among students	Is initiative implemented across programmes? Student assessment of the initiative? HEI's own evaluation and follow-up mechanisms?
Structuring elements to increase transparency in expectations to roles and student participation, e.g. study activity quadrant used by university colleges	Is this effectively applied? Do Students find practical organisation helpful? Is the actual division of labour conducive to Student learning? HEI's follow-up mechanisms?

# Early examples focusing on SCL in institutional accreditation in Denmark



Study Activity Model:  
Making expectations  
to different modes of  
learning explicit



## Early examples focusing on SCL in institutional accreditation in Denmark

HEI planned intervention	External QA focus
Policies to diversify modes of delivery to reflect student diversity, e.g. blended learning, using podcasts, online support documents, recorded lectures, tests, variety of exam modes	Are intentions reflected in the delivery of the programme? Student assessment of programme quality and delivery? HEI's own evaluation and follow-up mechanisms?
Extracurricular opportunities e.g. courses targeting highly motivated students, or participation in research activities to use full potential	Are offers transparent to all? How is this aligned with standard courses? Which roles are given to students in research activities?



## Early examples focusing on SCL in institutional accreditation in Denmark

HEI planned intervention	External QA focus
Focus on variation in procedures of recruitment of new students with a view to increase diversity among students	What is the foundation behind the chosen approaches to student recruitment? Does data suggest that the aim is achieved? What is the HEI's current assessment and reflections?



## Early focus on SCL in institutional accreditation – Current reflections

- The approach chosen in the External Quality Assurance is consciously focused on HEIs own approaches to reflect diversity among institutions and encourage own, local thinking
- It is based on panel reading of IAQ of a sample of programmes to assess effective implementation and follow-up as well as a thorough dialogue with students, lecturers and management
- We have deliberately situated the external QA focus on SCL at the *“encouragement and dialogue end”* of the EQA spectrum to gain insight and encourage HEIs to experiment

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# Thank you

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The Danish  
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