

## **PART 1**

### **Description of the course**

**Course: Values-Based Leadership and Administration**

**Institution: VID**

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In this chapter, the online course, “Values-Based Leadership and Administration” from VID University in Norway will be presented as a case to illustrate methods in leading digital didactics. It will first provide a brief overview of the course and its objectives, a sketch of the structure of the course and its implementation strategies, and it will then present two scenarios in which digital didactic methods are used in two distinct modules in the course.

#### **I. General Information about the course**

##### **Context:**

Values-Based Leadership and Administration is a bachelor's level course taught completely online. It is a required course for a 1-year program in values-based leadership and administration (continuing education) as well as for completing a major in values-based leadership and administration in the university's bachelor's program in social sustainability. The course is only offered in the autumn semester, making it one of the first courses that students in the 1-year program will take at the university.

Importantly, this course (and the others in the 1-year program) is part of a development project, funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, which means each semester it is evaluated by an internal team as part of a process of iterative development. Therefore, this course provides an opportunity to try out different tools, approaches, and methods, and then after receiving feedback from students, to develop the course further.

There are normally around 35 students in the course, who come from diverse backgrounds both in terms of education and vocations. Since it is part of 1 year study program on leadership, some of the students have already had several years of working experience and want to develop leadership competence. Also, since the course is taught at the bachelor's level, some students are young and do not have much academic or work experience. Some students already have bachelor's or master's degrees, and some are new students. 10 ECTS are awarded upon completion of the course.

**Teaching objectives and learning outcomes:**

The course, Values-Based Leadership and Administration, covers themes related to organizational leadership and management, leadership roles, values-based leadership, social sustainability, civil society and public administration.

The following list of outcomes is taken from the course description of the course (Can be found online, in Norwegian, at <https://www.vid.no/studier/sosial-baerekraft/>):

**Knowledge attained from the course:**

The student:

- ✓ has a good overview of the main perspectives within organization and leadership studies
- ✓ has knowledge of how organizations' systems of values affect leadership practice
- ✓ has knowledge of how organizations' values and sustainability are managed, developed and changed in practice
- ✓ has knowledge of the UN's sustainability goals and how these affect the work of organizations
- ✓ has knowledge of administration and management

**Skills attained from the course:**

The student:

- ✓ can reflect on the organization's structure and operation
- ✓ can apply relevant knowledge in understanding and interpreting the daily work of leaders and can reflect on the connection between management, values and leadership
- ✓ can apply values-based leadership in practice
- ✓ can apply different theoretical perspectives in assessing administrative management challenges in public organizations and civil society
- ✓ can identify value conflicts in various cases and reflect on relevant action options

**General competence attained from the course:**

The student:

- ✓ has insight into the subject of organization and management and can apply knowledge-based perspectives in practice
- ✓ has an understanding of the interaction between administration, management, organization and leadership
- ✓ can integrate the UN's sustainability goals into the company's strategy and practice

Some of the concepts listed above are more difficult for students to grasp than others. Students generally need time to reflect upon and to grasp ideas such as “organizational values” and how organizations can develop their own “cultures”, which has implications for the practice of leadership within organizations and the ways they interact with society. To give students adequate opportunities to reflect on abstract concepts and develop knowledge together, this online course organizes the course in modules that are focused on specific concepts that build upon each other. The students work in groups to explore the concepts and ideas further and to apply their knowledge as they produce knowledge that they share with the rest of the class. They also reflect upon abstract concepts through examples from their own lives and experiences via online discussions.

## **II. Course Design**

The course is run completely online throughout the autumn semester each year, and it is broken down into 10 individual modules, which generally take 1 week to complete each module includes a reading assignment, a pre-recorded video lecture, an assignment (or part of a larger assignment) that the students should be working on (in groups or individually), and a live class where the students and teacher gather together for an interactive lecture. Generally, each of the modules builds upon one other, and concepts from one module are useful for understanding a later module.

To foster good communication and a sense of belonging and to help be sure students understand what is happening in the course, the students and teacher also gather for informal meetings. This happens three times during the semester on a different day of the week from the live class gathering. This is generally a small group of students who come with questions about the subject and assignments, but they can also discuss topics outside of the course content. The students drive the agenda on these days.

Each module has a start page, informing the students about the goals and learning objectives of the module, providing a summary of the activities for the week, and listing specific reading assignments that are essential for completing the module. Each module normally contains both asynchronous and synchronous elements. After completing the reading assignments for the module, the students should watch an asynchronous video lecture, which lasts about 20 minutes. They should also work on group or individual assignments. Finally, the students will gather with the teacher for the interactive lecture, which lasts two hours.

The learning approach for the course is “student-active learning”, which involves the students in the learning process and relies upon their input for the learning objectives. This approach can be seen in the scenarios that follow as students work together in groups on a digital project throughout the semester and as they use examples from their own lives to illustrate abstract concepts through discussion threads, which later come to be part of the lecture.

Throughout the course, the students work individually and in groups, and they deliver individual and group assignments. These are obligatory assignments that are graded as

pass/fail and serve the function of “assessment for learning”, as they direct the students’ focus to course materials to reflect upon and answer questions about leadership, organizational culture, and other topics. At the end of the semester, the students take a seven-day home exam in which they write a 2,500-word essay to answer a question given to them. They can use course materials, as the exam is “open-book”, and the exam is then graded A-F, measured against course objectives and learning outcomes.

### **III. Content and Technology**

In order to facilitate the course objectives and learning outcomes, the teacher uses various types of content, media, and technology as elements in the learning modules. The course is organized and delivered using the learning management system (LMS) Canvas. Canvas is the central hub for the course, as it provides a place for students to access all course content, deliver assignments, and communicate with the teacher and other students.

The prerecorded lectures that students watch in each module are often recorded in the office of the instructor using a web camera and editing tools. The university has licenses for unlimited use of WeVideo, which is an online editing tool that has all the basic elements needed for editing video. The students also have full access to WeVideo, which they can use to create their digital stories that are described in Part 2.

The reading materials for the course are organized through Leganto, which is a reading list management system. Leganto contains links to all literature in the course, whether it is an article in a database, a book from the library or part of the course compendium. Leganto is integrated within the Canvas course, so it appears as though it is another part of the online classroom.

Zoom is a central element of the online course since it is the digital classroom for live synchronous sessions that happen one time in each of the 10 modules. Zoom provides a way for the teacher to deliver a lecture with a presentation, to interact with students throughout the session, and the place the students into breakout groups where they can discuss certain aspects of the course or work in groups.

Another useful tool in the course is Mentimeter, which is a platform that allows for collaborative presentations. For example, the presenter can pose questions to the class, which the members of the class can respond to, either in polls, short answers, votes, word clouds etc. This helps to create a more dynamic presentation in which students can give immediate feedback and see that feedback on the screen alongside other students’ feedback.

### **IV. Implementation of the Course**

Before the course begins, the students who are part of the 1-year academic program join together for an online orientation. The orientation sets the tone for the year, for this course and other courses the students will take. This gives the students the opportunity to see what

is expected in the courses, to meet a few of the other students, and to hear from the course instructors.

The course begins the following week, and during the first two weeks of the course, two advisors join with the course instructor to help the students find the resources they need to successfully complete the course. In the first week, a librarian joins the live synchronous session to show the students how they can use the library databases and to discuss good writing practices. In the second week, a digital media expert comes to show the students how they can make digital stories, which is described in more detail in part 2.

Communication is vitally important from the time before the course begins (around the orientation meeting) up until the end of the course during the exam. Each week, the instructor posts an announcement with links to the module, asynchronous teaching, the zoom link for the synchronous class, as well as links to assignments or other relevant resources. Throughout the semester there is a Q&A thread where students can post questions about the course, and the instructor and other students can answer. At the end of the semester at exam time, the instructor opens a discussion thread related to the exam. If students are unclear about aspects of the exam question, they can post their questions there, and the instructor's answers are available to all students. The exam thread is only open for questions on the first day of the exam.

## **V. Evaluation of the Course**

Since the course is part of the development project funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, it goes through a detailed evaluation each time it runs. The first part of the evaluation is a midway evaluation, which takes place in the middle of the semester. It is informal and oral, and it is essentially a conversation with the teacher and students about what is working well in the course and what might need to be addressed or altered to make it better. The second part of the evaluation is more formal and detailed. In it, the students have the opportunity to respond to an online survey that covers different aspects and elements of the course. They give feedback on synchronous and asynchronous elements, social aspects, group and individual assignments, reading materials, exam forms and other elements of the course.

The evaluations are taken up among the teachers in the section as well as in the project group to discuss what could or should be done to improve the course. Because the course is part of the project funded by the Directorate, it is seen as a learning lab in which the course can be developed iteratively each semester it is run.