

Instructions for using itslearning

Why instructions?

Course evaluations generally show that students wish the course rooms in itslearning to be used uniformly from course to course. The instructions aim to ensure that students are provided with the best learning experiences on SDU's e-learning platform.

Start page in itslearning

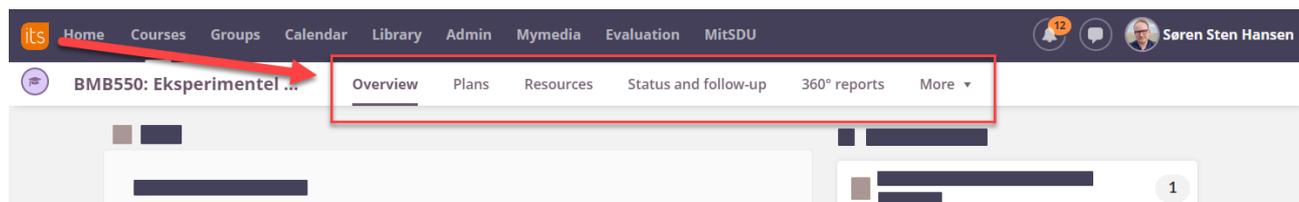
For all users, the page Courses is chosen as the start page. Here, the user will see an overview of the courses in which they are participating, either as a teacher or as a student.

The course room

The purpose of these instructions for the course room (Course) in itslearning are:

- to ensure that students are met with a uniform and well-structured user interface in all their courses, and that it is always easy for them to find the materials and assignments they will be working with.
- for teachers to be able to directly start building their course, as any trivial choices regarding setup have already been made.

At the top of the page, the course room has a top menu:



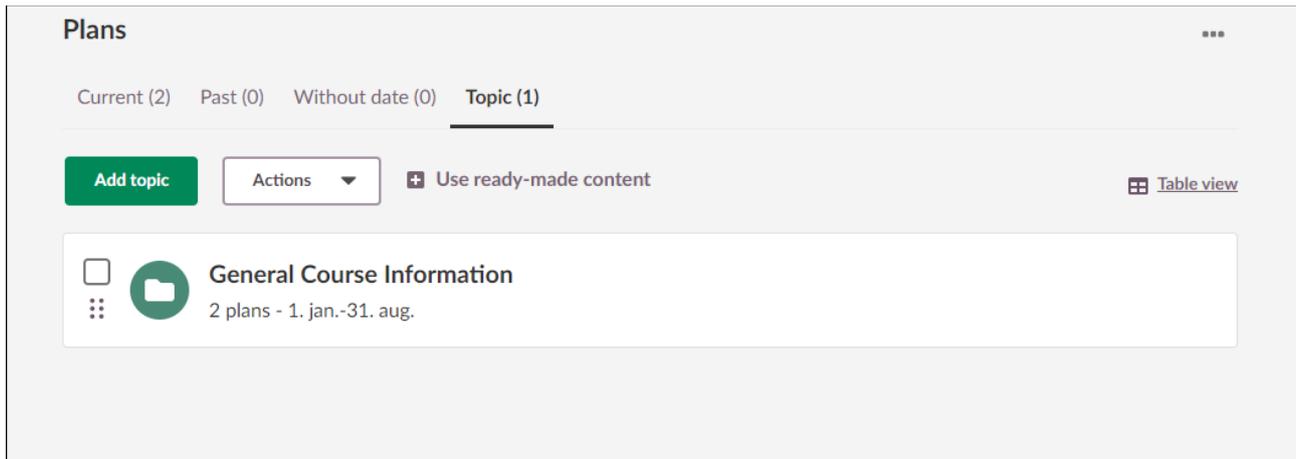
The page Overview is set as the start page for the individual course rooms, and the latest news regarding the course are displayed here. For online courses where the students follow the course at their own pace (self-paced courses), a Page can be used as the start page.

Plans are at the core of itslearning's Courses, and Resources constitute the underlying organization of activities and materials. Plans are a structured form in which the teacher can describe the learning activities of the day or week, provide information about dates, and add the relevant files and assignments etc. in a well-structured format. Hence, Plans can contain lectures/class activities as well as practical or theoretical exercise lessons. Plans can be grouped in Topics adapted to the logic, duration, etc. of the individual course or learning environment, for instance following:

- The course themes
- The course modules
- The course weeks, so a Topic equals one or more weeks (it is important that in addition to week number, an actual title is also specified; it is difficult to navigate in Topics which are simply entitled "Week XX")

Plans

Each course room is born with a Topic at the Plan page, named *General Course Information* containing a link to a page with information to the students about itslearning, mitSDU and digital exams. The individual teacher should as a minimum make a link to the course description and can add further content to the Topic as desired. It's recommended, to ease the students access to the plans via the Calendar, that each plan have a value under date. This could be the first lesson or first week of the course.



The Plan must contain the following columns:

- The Plan title
- Dates must be used to the extent possible where plans are connected to teaching or events in the calendar. However, for self-paced courses, dates can be disabled.
As a general rule, do not write dates in other columns or headers for the sake of being able to re-use the Plan the next time the course is conducted.
- Description. This should contain a description of the expected activities for this plan, e.g. lectures, class lessons etc. It is also an option to describe how the student should prepare for lectures/classes, including readings, assignments etc.
- Resources and activities. Here, it is possible to add a file, video, assignment for hand-in, a quiz, a description of how the student should prepare etc.

The Plan may contain the following columns:

- Learning goals. This column is default 'off' (visible to no-one), but it can be added by the teacher under Settings for Plans. The learning goals are entered in one place in the course room and are fully integrated into itslearnings functionalities. For instance, materials and activities can be connected to the relevant learning goals. Assessment criteria can be added to each learning goal and can then be connected to e.g. assignments and peer feedback activities, where it works as a type of rubrics (feedback forms).
- Teacher: This column can be added e.g. in those cases where different teachers are connected to different parts of the course.

Resources

Upon adding a topic, a folder is automatically added to Resources.

Teaching materials and learning activities, e.g. a file, a test or an assignment can be placed in this folder. It is recommended that sub-folders with meaningful titles are added to the extent that this may increase clarity for the students, for instance if there are many plans and hence much content under one Topic. In this way, the students will be able to locate all teaching materials and activities for the course under Resources, securing a good overview e.g. in connection with exam revision.



In practice, two approaches can be applied when the course is set up with teaching materials, assignments, etc.:

- Using Plans as a starting point: Adding files, assignments, videos etc. in the Plan. All elements will automatically appear in the Topic's folder under Resources. If it is deemed necessary for the students' or teachers' overview, a sub-folder can be added for each plan, and individual elements can be dragged into the sub-folder.
- Using Resources as a starting point: Setting up the folder structure under Resources as the first point of action, and then placing files, assignments, videos etc. in sub-folders which correspond to each plan. Afterwards, the individual elements can be added to Plans.

Communication between teacher and students

Itslearning contains several communication tools, the primary ones being:

- Announcements
- Messages

There are course specific issues which may make it suitable to use these tools in slightly different ways. For the sake of students who attend courses in different faculties, it is required to set up **a welcome message or mention in the course introduction** how the communication between teacher and students will take place. For instance, it can be suitable to let the students know how they can write comments to the course announcements, what response time they can expect from their teacher, whether the internal messaging system will (not) be used in the specific course a.o.

Announcements: The Course Overview page includes the option of posting Announcements. For important information, or information which is more permanent by nature, Announcements can be used. Announcements are sorted with the newest announcements being placed at the top of the page. The use of Announcements should be limited so that older announcements can still be located.

Pr. Default, the students can comment on Announcements. The teacher can disable comments as needed. Furthermore, the students can be granted access to posting announcements as well as commenting on other students'/teachers' announcements. In the latter case, the teacher must consider where to place important announcements of a more permanent nature. E.g. as Pages in a folder under Resources.

Messages: itslearnings internal messaging system, where students and teachers can communicate on individual, group or course level. The internal messaging system should be used as much as possible, e.g. for practical messages which are relevant here and now, and which do not have long term relevance.

In order to optimize communication, it is recommended that students download the itslearning app for smartphone.

There is an on-going process to ensure that MitSDU is henceforth used as a channel for communication which is not directly related to courses. As a supplementary communication channel, faculties can use course rooms in itslearning.

itslearning's calendar

itslearning's calendar displays when the student has a deadline for handing in assignments a.o. and when there are lessons and/or events in which the student can participate. Use of the calendar should be promoted as much as possible, and the students' timetable is integrated with the calendar in order for it to display where and when their lessons take place. The calendar incl. timetable is only useful, if it is subject to continuous updates.