

## Mentoring and profiles at EMSS

Enrolled at the EMSS programme students have the opportunity to design their own profile within environmental management and sustainability science. Problem-oriented project work constitutes 90 ECTS and students have the opportunity to choose topics for the project work that summarize into a strong competence profile.

To support this process, students at EMSS are offered formal mentoring sessions with key staff members throughout their education. In addition to the mentoring, EMSS at Aalborg University is characterized by a continuous and informal interaction between staff and students. Compared to other universities, students receive much attention in their personal and academic development.

Strong research groups related to the programme support the students' choice of profiles. These research groups cover environmental management and sustainability science within industry, product development, spatial planning, environmental assessments, stakeholder engagement, etc. Based on the research strongholds and input from future employers of candidates, a series of profile opportunities are developed [see link]. These profiles are opportunities – the students are free to design their own profile.

The profiles vary from specialised and narrow set of competences aimed at specific expert positions in certain organisations to quite generic and broad competences aimed at jobs with varying tasks.

More specifically the mentoring and profile development takes place as follows:

- **The first semester** serves as an introduction to EMSS as taught at AAU and to the opportunities in the problem-based project work in groups. Students are encouraged to reflect on their interests and career dreams and after a few months, the first formal mentoring session is provided.
  - Focus is on organisations and products at a micro level of EMSS. Many students have a technical background and it is our experience that this theme is a good way to get into the field of EMSS.
  - Students' profiles are generic and a rough classification.
- **The second semester** has its point of departure in the students' ideas for profiles. The 15 ECTS group work is then fully targeted the profiling. In the beginning of the semester, the second formal mentoring session is provided. This session partly concerns the students' development of their profile and partly concerns the arrangement of and content of the internship in the third semester.
  - Focus is on society and institutions at a macro-level of EMSS. The argument is that it is an important supplement to the micro-level at the first semester.
  - Students' profiles are generic, but have a clearer aim. It might be that students change their visions about the careers and thus needs to change profiles.
- **The third semester** is typically internship, but there are also other opportunities [see link]. Here, the students' competence profile will be tested in reality in an organisation outside the university. Formal mentoring sessions will be provided at the students' return to the university. Focus of this session is how to continue the profile development in the fourth semester, hereunder what organisations to collaborate with.
  - Students' profiles become distinct. Only few radical changes are made.

- **The fourth semester** is the thesis writing. In the middle of this semester, a formal mentoring session is provided. Here, the focus is to support the student in getting the first job after finishing studies. A representative of an external organisation related to the competence profile is invited to participate in the mentoring session to give advice on how to sell the profile to employers.
  - Students' profiles become very distinct as strong sets of competences.
  - The mentoring is carried out by the supervisor of the thesis work.

The intention is that the development of the profiles will serve as a platform for an increased cooperation with the employers in the sense that the employers then might feel ownership of providing the right cases, collaboration, and guest lectures to make the candidates that they prefer.