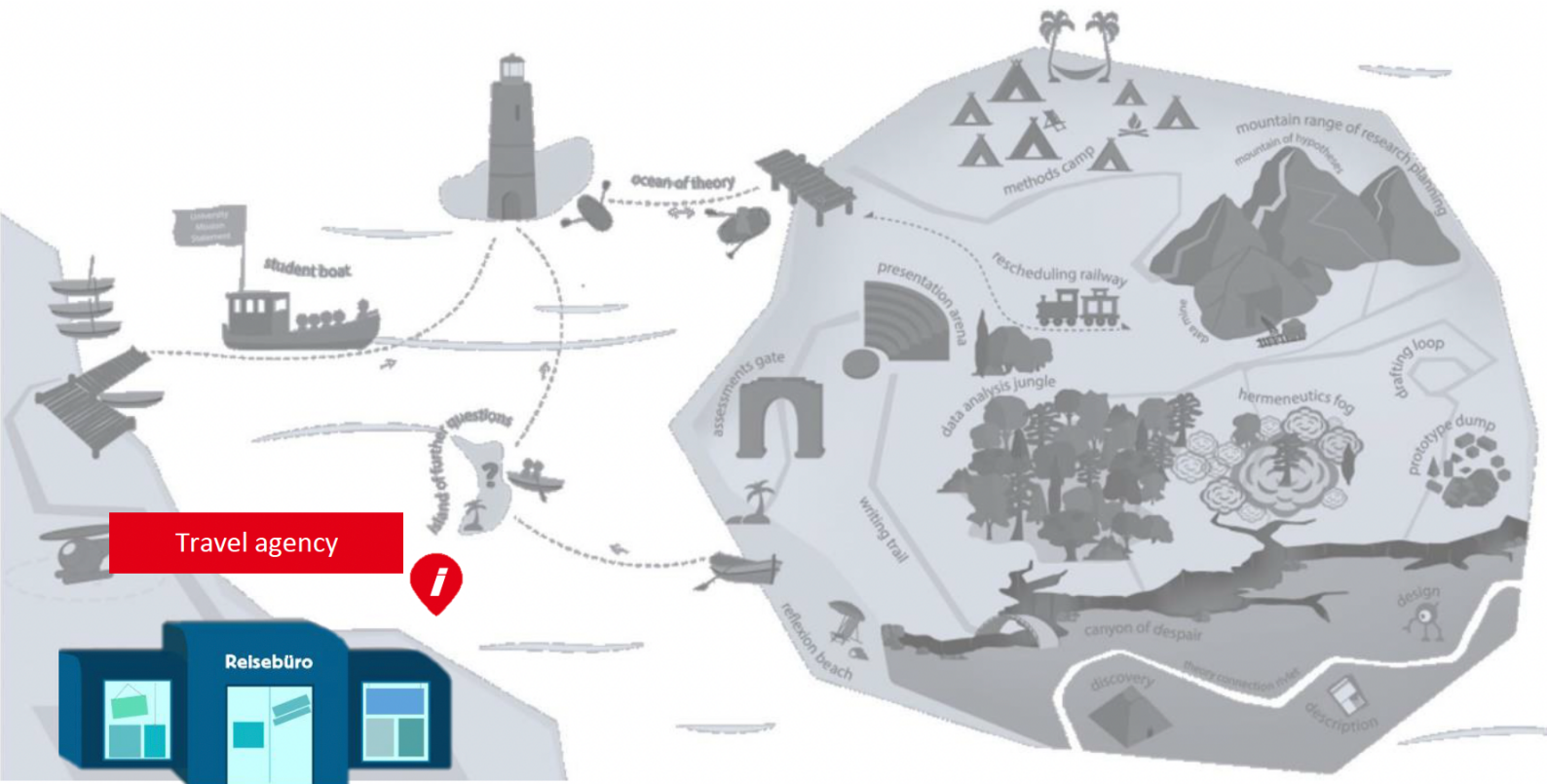




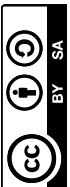
## Exam stress

Vignette #9



### KEYWORDS:

EXAMS



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GEFÖRDERT VOM

## #9: Exam stress



The following text sequence or vignette describes a situation in the context of a teaching that aims at research-based learning. The situation described challenges you as a teacher and may require you to act directly. The aim of the vignette is to allow you to think about what you are doing in such a situation or how you could prevent it. But you may also consider the situation to be problem-free and more conducive to learning. Either way you can preventively familiarize yourself with possible challenges and reflect upon your own evaluations and impulses for action.

The situations described are taken from interview data with coordinators of research-based learning projects and have been sharpened for the purpose mentioned above. The most common challenges in teaching courses to promote research-based learning have been selected and converted into vignettes.



### Exam stress

Planning for the upcoming study course. You are already full of anticipation because this time you are finally offering research-based learning in a seminar. You have almost completely worked out the concept. But there is still a big gap in the plan: What should the examination of the students look like? After all, you do not yet know what the students will ultimately learn in the course of their research activities. In addition, there are module requirements that you have to adhere to – but do they really fit into your new format?

**Keyword: Exams**



### Reflective questions

The situation described above is a typical challenge that you could face if you implement research-based learning in your teaching. The following questions of reflection serve as impulses to look at such or similar situations from different perspectives and then to come to different decisions:

**Which experience of the students has the highest priority for you in your course concept – and how could an examination be designed for this?**

**What are the module requirements at your university?**

**Which artefacts of the students that arise in the research process are suitable for examination?**



## Attitudes and actions

In the following, attitudes as well as preventive and intervening actions in the situation described are presented. First of all, attitudes are described which have an impact on whether and how to react. Then actions are presented. They are practical examples of how teachers at universities deal with the situation in a preventive or intervening manner. In addition, indirect measures are listed which involve a more subtle approach yet may have a strong impact.

### Actions

In the following, approaches are outlined that were described by the interviewed coordinators of research-based learning provision.

#### (E-)Portfolio as examination format

**Students create an (e-)portfolio during the course of the semester, for which you initially determine the structure. It can take on very different forms, for example, it can be used for documentation, planning and reflection purposes, e.g. as a report portfolio. It can also be composed of various artifacts, such as meeting documentation, written work, but also moderation services, etc.**

Benefit of this action: The students can use the structuring elements of such an (e-)portfolio for the ongoing process. This will also encourage them to reflect on the process again and again. If the portfolio is used as an examination, the examination phase is thus distributed over the entire project duration. This allows not only the final result to be evaluated and given feedback, but the entire process to be reviewed.

#### Presentation of results at a conference or to partners in practice

**You organize the participation at a conference where the results of the student research projects are presented, plan your own small (poster) presentation or, if necessary, the presentation of the results to partners in practice.**

Benefit of this action: Students have the opportunity to get to know the professional context in which they conduct their research and can use the high standards to motivate themselves. By presenting the results to third parties, they also experience a genuine part of the research process.

## Set the drafting of an application for research funding as exam

**The students work out a fictitious funding application for a real institution.**

Benefit of this action: Students must first deal with the potential object of research, explore the state of research, define a research question and select a suitable method. In this way they already gain a deep insight into essential steps of a research process. In addition, the students are familiarized with the modalities of applying for funding.

## Ungraded exam performance

**If the examination regulations do not necessarily require grading, you can, for example, use minutes, reports, presentations of results or simply the artefacts created in the research process (as direct evidence of research performance) as a prerequisite for passing.**

Benefit of this action: The focus is shifted away from the grade to the actual process, which gives the students the opportunity to act more independently and to be more critical of their own work.

## Group work with recognisable personal contribution

**Students hand in a term paper or project report prepared in the group and mark their own text sections.**

Benefit of this action: Students do not have to deliver an „unnatural“ individual performance if they have worked in groups; nevertheless, their own contribution is clearly visible, so that grading can be done individually.

## Combined exam

**If a written exam is planned for the course, but you also want to include the results of the research project in the grading, you can split the assessment equally between the written exam and the presentation of results.**

Benefit of this action: If you cannot do without the written exam, this will ensure that the project presentation are also given high priority and do not risk being treated by students as secondary.

## Process-oriented project report

**In the project report, students should explain how their research process has progressed and explain why they have made certain decisions.**

Benefit of this action: The evaluation is rather oriented towards reflection than towards the outcome of the research process. Students can experience that, for example, the disclosure of challenges and naming of limitations is part of scientific work.

## Presentation in front of a jury

**Students present the results of their research project to a jury, e.g. from the faculty or to more advanced students.**

Benefit of this action: In addition to presenting the results, students must also prepare for critical questions from the jury and practice defending their research work.

## Multistage procedure

**Students first tackle an individual research question (based on the major topic) in the context of a small term paper. Then students with similar questions join together in groups and write a joint research exposé. At the end of the research activity, a final conference is held at which students present their results to the university public.**

Benefit of this action: You combine several partial performances so that the note is not based on a single artifact. The evaluation of the exposé and the presentation of results also emphasises the importance of these phases of the research process.

## First paper ungraded

**Before the actual examination you have a first draft prepared, which is commented but – in contrast to the examination at the end of the project – not graded.**

Benefit of this action: The resulting ideas and texts are much more open and bolder when it is clear that they will not be evaluated equally, which can have a positive effect on the course of the project and the motivation of the students.

## Let students design exam questions themselves

**Instead of designing an exam yourself to check the learning progress, you can delegate this task to the students.**

Benefit of this action: In research-based learning, it is almost impossible to set single learning goals beforehand and to check their achievement. When students think about their own examination tasks, they are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned in the course and what they actually remember. The examination can then be made up of developing the questions and answering them. You can still decide on the form of editing (individually in attendance or a freer format) after viewing the exam questions.

