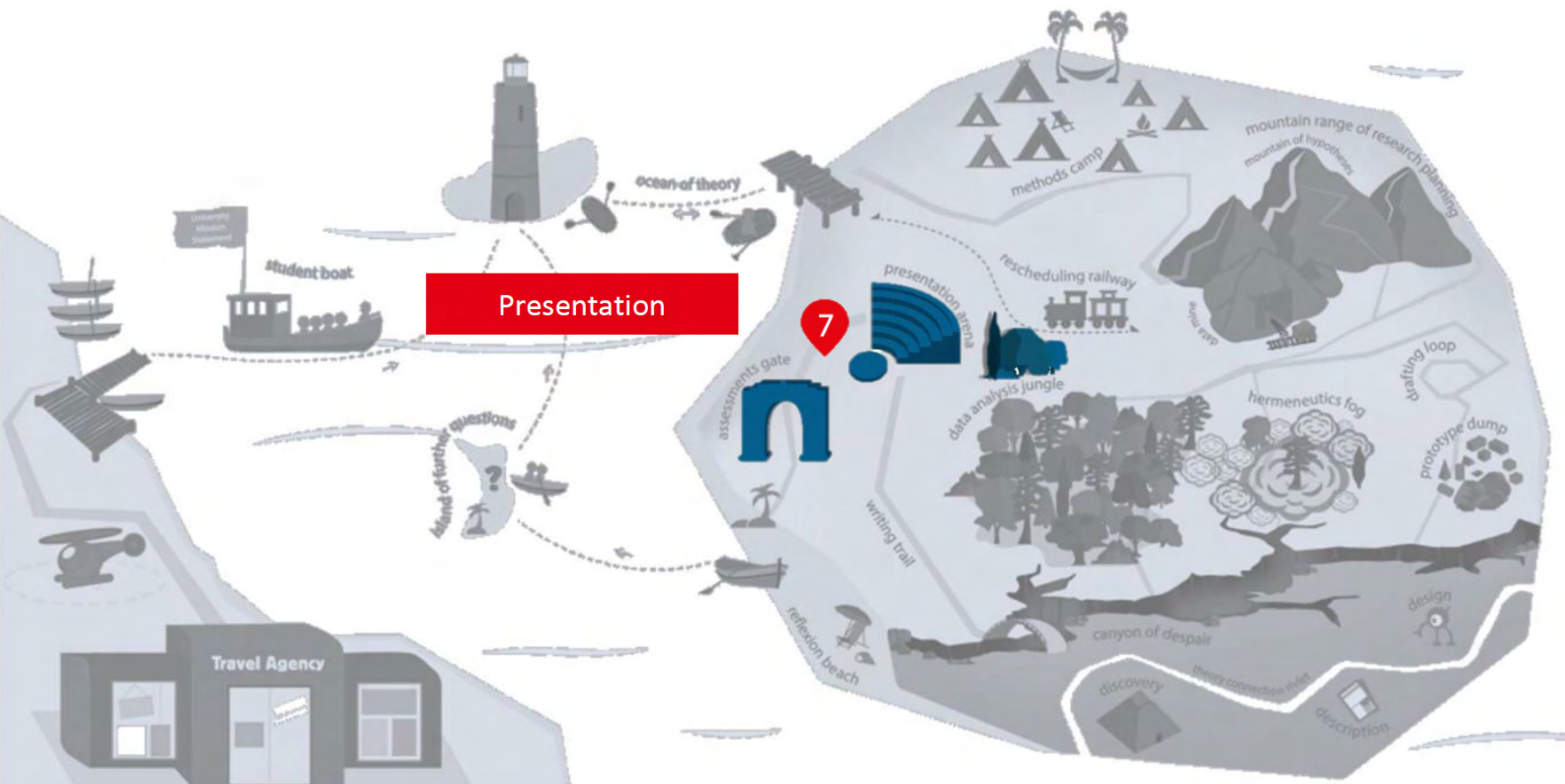




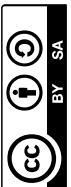
Early Stage Fright

Case vignette for tutors



KEYWORDS:

PRESENTATION, OVERLOAD &
INSECURITY



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GEFÖRDERT VOM



#13: Early stage fright



The following case vignette describes a situation in a teaching and learning context that aims to promote research-based learning. The situation described comes from interviews with coordinators of research-based learning projects and was adapted for both instructors and tutors. The case vignette addresses a typical challenge that occurs in courses designed to encourage research-based learning. This case vignette can help you reflect and consider how you as a tutor would react in or how you might prevent such a situation. To encourage this, each case vignette provides questions for reflection and proposes various attitudes and approaches.

Instructions for tutors




Tutors are employed for a wide variety of activities in the context of research-based learning. Additionally, the lecturers' expectations of their tutors differ widely. It is therefore important for you to clarify in advance what is expected of you. Which decisions can you make? Can you advise student groups? What authority do you have, and where are your limits?

At the same time, it is important that you know your own limits. What do you wish to take responsibility for, and what don't you? Which skills do you have, and which don't you have?

Depending on your role as a tutor in a research-based learning context, the attitudes and possible reactions presented in the case vignettes could suit quite well or may exceed your skills and authority. This is why it is important that you understand the case vignettes as suggestions. If you are unsure which approach you should take in a tutorial or if you can choose one of the proposed actions, be sure to ask the responsible lecturer.

An icon behind each suggested measure for a case vignette indicates our estimation of whether you can take this path independently and without consultation or should probably discuss it with the lecturer first. However, these estimations are only preliminary and need to be scrutinized within each concrete context.



Icon	Meaning
	<i>You are on land with solid ground under your feet ...</i> this symbol means that the actions and reactions so designated can be implemented easily and without much effort. You can probably take these paths in your tutorial independently and without consulting the lecturer.
	<i>You have left the island and are at anchor, but are still near the shore ...</i> the actions and reactions designated with the anchor symbol might take some more time to implement, and may have a more substantial impact on the tutorial and the connected research-based learning courses. Consider carefully whether your skills and authority suffice to act independently. If you are unsure, discuss them with the lecturer.
	<i>You are on the high seas and in an uncertain situation in which unpredictable weather can occur ...</i> this icon is used to indicate that certain actions or reactions may require substantial efforts on your or the students' part and have a strong impact on the research-based learning. It is advisable to discuss these suggestions with the lecturer.



Early stage fright

It's the third week of the semester. Full of anticipation you enter the session to proudly announce a conference at the end of the semester at which your students can present their research results. Until the last minute the possibility of the conference was uncertain, and you have needed all your energy and powers of persuasion to make it work. But in the course you quickly realize that the students are not so excited about this opportunity. One student gets straight to the point: "and what if we don't have any good results? What if we just embarrass ourselves?"

Keywords: presentation, overload und insecurity



Questions for reflection

The situation described above is a typical challenge for tutors and lecturers when they support students in research-based learning. The following questions for reflection can help to look at such situations from various perspectives and then to come to different decisions:

- Have you discussed with the students what counts as "good results" in the research process?
- What is the point or learning aim of the final presentation?
- Should presentations at the conference convey only scientific results or also the learning development during the research process?



Attitudes and Approaches

The following sections will describe attitudes on the one hand and on the other hand preventative or intervening measures on the other hand for handling the situation described. First, attitudes will be described that could influence whether and how to respond. Following that, potential measures are presented. These are examples from concrete praxis in higher education, either preventative or intervening.

Attitudes

By attitudes we don't mean concrete measures, but rather the perspectives of lecturers and tutors in various situations. Depending on these attitudes, situations can be interpreted as "problematic" and "challenging" or as "desirable" and "normal". As a tutor, it is important for you to know both your own attitude and that of the lecturer in order to support the student as well as possible. The lecturer's attitude can also give you orientation to align your own attitude and to communicate the lecturer's expectations to the students accordingly.

Letting students endure their worries

You and the lecturer believe that failure is an inherent part of the process and therefore also acceptable. Mistakes are the best learning opportunities.

In the situation described here this could mean: You share your attitude with your students: it is also acceptable if they do not achieve presentable results, because they can still learn a great deal. In this concrete situation, however, you would make sure that the failure is not perceived as a personal defeat, and frame it so that it is clear that mistakes are part of the process and can happen to anyone, and what learning opportunities have arisen from it.

Prevention

Preventative action prevents the situation described or at least makes it less likely. Of course there is no guarantee.



Set up a "dress rehearsal"

Two days before the conference you set up a dress rehearsal where all students also have an opportunity to do a dry run of their presentations and receive feedback.

For the specific situation described here: The students gain the confidence that they are not jumping into untested waters, but rather you have pointed out potential problems and errors.

Intervention

As a rule, we use intervening measures “after the ship has sailed”. That is, these are urgent responses to the situation.



Ensuring results

By closely mentoring your students you can ensure that they have something presentable to show by the end of the semester. It needn't be what was originally expected or aimed for – sometimes it is result enough to use the presentation to show why something didn't work.

For the specific situation described here: The students will certainly have something to present, even if it is not what they were hoping for. With the help of close supervision they can still make a presentable result of their learning process.

Forms of final presentations

In the following you will find a list of possible formats for final presentations that differ by framework / format / timeframe / aims and may inspire you to further develop the format of the final presentation. Ideally, you should discuss the various formats with the main lecturer and consider which format is most suitable for your students.

Openness of the conference

- closed (only course participants)
- open to other interested parties
- obligatory for other parties (e.g. previous students of the course)
- advertised extensively
- embedded in the institutional culture
- externally organized (e.g. a conference on student research projects)

Format of the Conference

- **Conference**
- **Poster presentation**
- **Lecture**
- **Demonstration**

Time-frame of the conference

- **Final course session**
- **Full-day conference, e.g. annually**
- **Full-week conference**
- **Poster exhibition**
- **Journal publication**

Aims of the conference

- **Student self-assessment of performance**
- **Increasing intrinsic motivation**
- **Self-advocacy of the students for their performance**
- **Recognizing own progress**

Tips and tricks

- **Hold a dress rehearsal or dry run**
- **Reconsider failed projects to offer a new presentable learning aim: why did it not work?**

