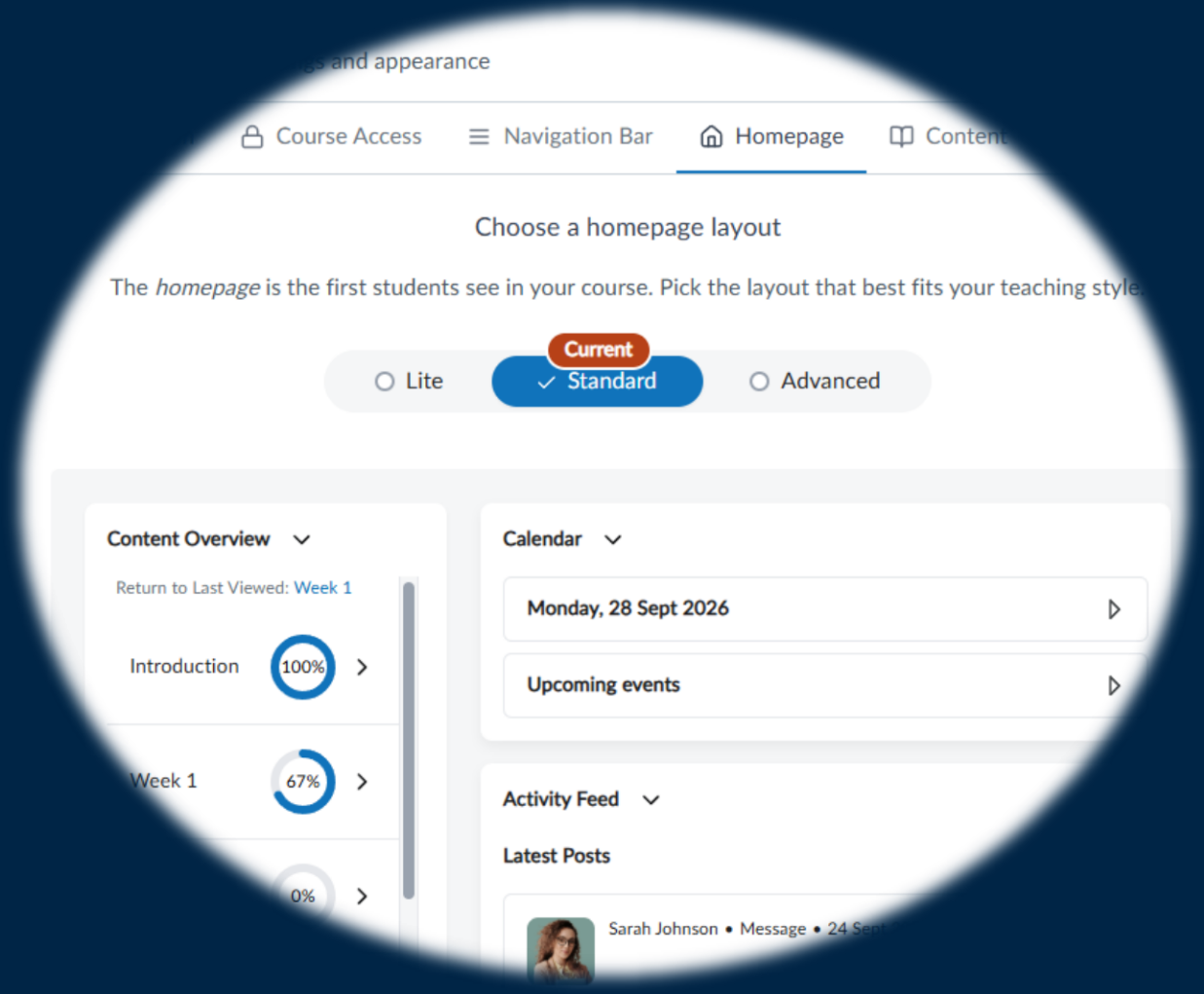
NO NEUTRAL DEFAULT

Demo of Aarhus University self-developed Course Design Setup Widget inside Brightspace



CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - CED

AARHUS UNIVERSITET

30. OKTOBER 2026

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AGENDA

Context of our development –
Short intro to Aarhus Uni & CED

How we ended up here -
Short intro to our Brightspace

The problem we see -
No neutral default

Our solution -
Demonstration



Jens Hartmann Schmidt/AU Foto

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A BIT OF CONTEXT

Centre for Educational Development

Organized directly under senior management (not under any faculty) – *signifying our position and intended influence.*

60 pedagogical consultants across 3 departments focus on Education, Teaching and Ed-tech.

In Ed-tech we have our own developers, UXers, project managers and research group with postdocs and Ph.D.s



Jens Hartmann Schmidt/AU Foto

Aarhus University the numbers

37,500 students

5 faculties

9,000 employees

2,000 Ph.D.

27,600 live courses

Traditional lectures
Class teaching
Hybrid
Fully online

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2021: BLACKBOARD TO BRIGHTSPACE

University leadership set out several principles or “loose” goals:

Principle	What it produced
Students meet the same overall course layout	Strict limits on instructor permissions and less feature discoverability
Customisation mainly at faculty level	Generic templates that fit many, and no one
One central unit (CED) runs the platform	Distance between instructor needs and CEDs platform development processes

All principles are reasonable – but together, they created a default no one had chosen.

Today: We design the platform to show range rather than enforce sameness, so instructors can see what is possible and make the choices their teaching calls for – i.e. we design for discoverability and inspiration.

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WHO DECIDES: INSTITUTION OR INSTRUCTOR?

menti.com

2515 7615

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NO NEUTRAL DEFAULT

Wherever you placed yourselves, someone made the choices.

And where no one did, the platform did...

Every instructor works in a unique context, balancing research, teaching, career and just managing life. Under those conditions the default is likely to become the standard;

Empty default — **Prescribed default**



Lost and confused: too many choices, and an LMS too big to discover alone

Overwhelmed, caught off guard, even robbed of the pedagogical choices their profession calls for

This is not instructors failing. It is an interface shaped by everything classic IT development is rightly criticised for - **We aim to: show range, inspire and design for discoverability.**

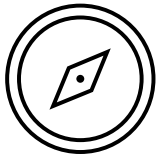
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FROM 25 CLICKS IN 4 PLACES, TO ONE PLACE

Main problem



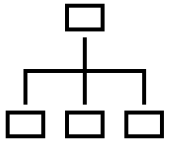
Course availability
6 clicks



Navbar
6 clicks



Homepage
6 clicks



Content template
7 clicks

The vision

- streamline navigation and workflows
- support deliberate course design decisions *inside* Brightspace
- make course setup scalable and customizable for different types of courses

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DEMO

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Course Design Setup Widget

- A date picker and reset course button
- Configurations based on type of course and content Masters based on pedagogical view and position
- Copying previous year's course design including content or start using CreateSpace?!

Impersonator app

Enhancing the impersonator feature so instructors easily can spawn test-students to impersonator and check their course setup: exploring group setup, feedback processes, release conditions etc.

Housekeeping policy

A housekeeping policy as a security measure to keeping access, roles and old users and courses clean and under control

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QUESTIONS

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