

NYKØBING KATEDRALSKOLE

Academic Achievement
Democratic Decision Making
Development through Diversity
International Activity



Nykøbing Katedralskole is an upper secondary high school preparing young people at ages 16 – 19 for studies at universities and colleges.

Previously the school was owned and run by a county in Southern Denmark, The Storstroem County south of Copenhagen.

A few years ago the administrative regulation of high schools was changed, and today the school is an independent, self-governing institution. It is, however, financed by the Danish state. Tuition and textbooks are free.

The school is self-governing in the sense that it receives a money bag from the state (in Danish a *taxameterbevilling*), which has been fixed in accordance with the size of the student intake, and on this basis the school is free to spend money as it pleases, that means as the governing bodies, for instance the Board, may decide. There are, however, a few constraints. Staff wages are decided by collective bargaining on a national level, and the Danish Ministry of Education sets a national curriculum and arranges written exams at a national level, the standards of which the school has to adhere to. Otherwise, the school is free to prioritize how money should be spent on textbooks, computers, laboratory equipment for science subjects, extracurricular activities. and so on.

THE STUDY LINE HIGH SCHOOL - WHAT'S THAT?

In 2004 a new law on higher secondary education was passed in the Danish Parliament (*Folketinget*) which instituted the so-called *gymnasireform*, i.e. a reform of the three-year high school and the two-year higher preparatory exam (*HF*) the two types of secondary education that the school offers.

The main aim of the reform was to adopt a more interdisciplinary approach to learning. It was thought that the pupils in higher secondary education should learn competences that will make them qualified for academic study in a society that is undergoing rapid change due to technological development and globalization. Rote-learning is considered outdated. Students must learn how to acquire new knowledge. That called for an interdisciplinary approach and for more project-based learning.

In the new *gymnasium*, Nykøbing Katedralskole has to offer optional study lines (*studieretninger*) to new pupils, at least one science study line/class, one social science class and one humanities class.

CLASSES

The number of classes actually set up will depend on the choices the applicants make. Each gymnasium must establish at least one science class. The number of classes established at entry

level in the first year depends on the number of applicants. Nykøbing Katedralskole normally sets up 7-8 *gymnasium* study lines/classes and 3 *HF* classes, with a maximum class size of 30-32. A study line may be doubled or tripled into two, three or even more classes, depending on the number of applicants.

In 2011 **11 study lines** are on offer. These are:

1. English - German - (psychology)
2. English - Spanish - (Social Science)
3. English - French - (Geography)
4. English - French - German
5. English – Social Science - (psychology)
6. Englis – Social Science - Philosophy
7. Social Science - Mathematics - (business economics)
8. Biology - Mathematics - (Athletics/sports)
9. Biotechnology - Mathematics - Physics
10. Mathematics - Physics - Chemistry
11. Music – English - Drama

Most of these subjects are obligatory as well, i.e. a pupil who has not opted for a study line with English or mathematics, must have the subjects anyway, but at a lower level. In addition to the subjects mentioned above, there are extensive courses in Danish and History, and less extensive courses in Religion and Classical Arts and Philosophy (*oldtidskundskab*). Religion is a non-confessional, secular subject in Danish schools. Instruction has to be given on main world religions and on sociology of religion.

In the course of the 3rd year of gymnasium students spend two weeks writing their study line project. In HF it is called an exam project.

The first semester in the gymnasium constitutes a basic course that at Nykøbing Katedralskole is the same for all pupils. At this point there is no “curricular profile” in the study lines. This is due to the fact that the school wants to give the pupils an opportunity to opt for another class after the first semester, than the one taken in August at the start of the school year. By mid-January the study line choice is final.

In the middle of January the curricular profiles start being implemented. From then on each study line has a specific profile. It is up to the teacher team running the study line to define the profile of the study line in cooperation with all the teachers of the class. This is supposed to be

done with some consideration of what may be the profile of the whole school. A school is supposed to adopt a study plan for the gradual academic progress of the 3 years so that the individual pupil is transformed into a student, who will be capable of academic study at a university or college.

Thus it is an aim of the 2005-reform of the Danish *Gymnasium* to qualify students for the knowledge society. It is necessary to develop not only the capacity for reproducing old and well-known facts and material, but also to develop the students' capabilities for problem solving, for working collaboratively in teams, and for taking part in democratic decision making.

HIGHER PREPARTORY SCHOOL

The HF department is not divided in study lines. The HF students can choose among a number of optional subjects, in addition to the obligatory subjects (Danish, English, mathematics, social and culture studies, etc). Some of the obligatory subjects may also be chosen at a higher level as optional subjects. The same principle of options in addition to study line subjects applies to the gymnasium students as well.

ALMEN STUDIEFORBEREDELSE

The students are expected not only to learn, but to learn how to learn ("meta-learning"). They are supposed to develop a reflective attitude to their own way of learning, in order to develop the capacity for intellectual self-improvement. Therefore, theory of science has become part of the curriculum in a subject called *almen studieforberejdelse*, which may be translated into something like "general conditions for cognition/preparedness for learning". The aim is to make the pupils familiar with scientific methods and how these are employed in the academic pursuit of knowledge.

Thus ***Almen studieforberejdelse*** is interdisciplinary and with a focus on the theory of scientific cognition. It is arranged thematically in 8 - 9 weekly sequences throughout the the school period of 3 years.

In the course of a thematic sequence, the pupils must make a problem statement (*problemformulering*) and find ways and methods to solve it. They write a synopsis about the problem statement they have been working with, and the synopsis is presented to the teachers/the class. At the end of the 3-year *gymnasium* there is a national test in *almen studieforberejdelse* for all students. Nationally, a common subject has been chosen, for instance travel, war, or any other subject that calls for an interdisciplinary approach. The Ministry of Education sends out a CD/DVD with resource materials, such as E-books, articles, video-clips, links to the Internet, etc., to help the students in the formulation of problem statements and finding relevant material in the subject area concerned. The students present their synopsis individually to their teacher/advisor and an external examiner (a teacher from another school, who has been commissioned by the Ministry of Education).

Student participation, Social Life, and Activities

Student participation in decision making is actively encouraged at Nykøbing Katedralskole. Pupils are asked to work with teachers in the "policy formulating" committees of the school. There is an active student council, which elects the student members of committees, and which holds meetings on a regular basis where school policy is discussed and resolutions adopted, especially with regard to matters of student interest.

It is difficult to give a lot of influence to every one of more than 700 pupils. Therefore pupils are encouraged to have a say in the daily teaching processes. That includes the methodology of teaching (classroom dialogue, computer work, or project learning), as well as the question of what themes should be dealt with in various subjects. Of course, this is subjected to the limitations imposed by regulations in the curriculum made by the Ministry of Education and the national tests arranged by the Ministry.

IT

Information technology and computers have become indispensable at a modern Danish high school. At Nykøbing Katedralskole, all pupils and teachers are expected to be able to log on to the intra net of the school (www.nykat-gym.dk → *Fronter* and *Lectio*). Everybody is supposed to be equipped with a codename and password. The weekly schedule and study plans can be viewed at <http://www.lectio.dk/lectio/114/default.aspx>. When students log on to *Lectio*, they can see, not only their weekly schedule, but they can also view and download reading materials, tests, assignments, and links for lessons that the teachers have prepared and uploaded to the system. – The textbook is in for a tough fight for attention these days!!

Written assignments can be uploaded to *Lectio* by pupils, - to be downloaded by teachers for grading and marking, - and finally to be uploaded back again to students. In that way students can keep track of their career and progress throughout their stay at the school. And the material can be used when they prepare for *studentereksamen*, the final exam at the end of the three year period (likewise, *HF* students prepare for their final *HF* exam).

Students are also expected to be able to log on to *Fronter*, (<https://fronter.com/stam/>), which is a more extensive conference system with e-mail, folders for texts and assignments, and forums for consultation with teachers and discussion of topics of general or particular interest.

International Profile

Nykøbing Katedralskole has worked actively to develop its international profile for many years. One of the aims of the school is that all students should get abroad on a study tour or exchange tour at least once in the course of their two or three year stay at the school. We are in favour of exchange study tours (visit/re-visit), because in our view they give maximum opportunity to get acquainted with people and cultures in other countries.

A few facts of history and geographical location

Nykøbing Katedralskole celebrated its 500 centennial in 1997. Originally it was a so-called *Latin school*, teaching Latin, Greek, and Christian theology to prospective clergy. With the industrialization of Denmark in the 19th Century the national curriculum for upper secondary high schools was changed. It was necessary to educate the young to fill out the posts in business, factories, and with the growth of the welfare state in the 20th Century, in the rapidly growing public sector.

New subjects like mathematics, physics, and modern languages came into the curriculum. In a school reform in 1903 the *Gymnasium* was divided in three lines: Mathematics-science, Modern languages, Classical Languages. In 1971 Social Studies was introduced as an optional subject, reflecting both the widening of the student-intake and the need for a broader set of qualifications. In the 1980's a new reform introduced a number of new optional subjects, such as psychology,

technology, business studies, drama, media studies, and philosophy. And finally, with the 2005 reform, we got the study line *gymnasium*.

Nykøbing Katedralskole is located in the town of Nykøbing on the island of Falstria, about 80 miles south of Copenhagen. In the old days it may have been associated with ivory tower isolation as the school of the "learned middle class". Only a small segment of the local youth got an education there in the beginning of the 20th Century. Now it is about 40-50 per cent of the young who get an education at upper secondary level.

Nykøbing is the administrative centre of the Guldborgsund municipality, with a population of 63.000. About 20.000 people live in the town proper. Today the school is an integral part of a vibrant local community.