

Challenges and opportunities of teaching at the newly launched interdisciplinary Bachelor's programme in Computational Social Science

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University of Amsterdam

Anglia Ruskin University
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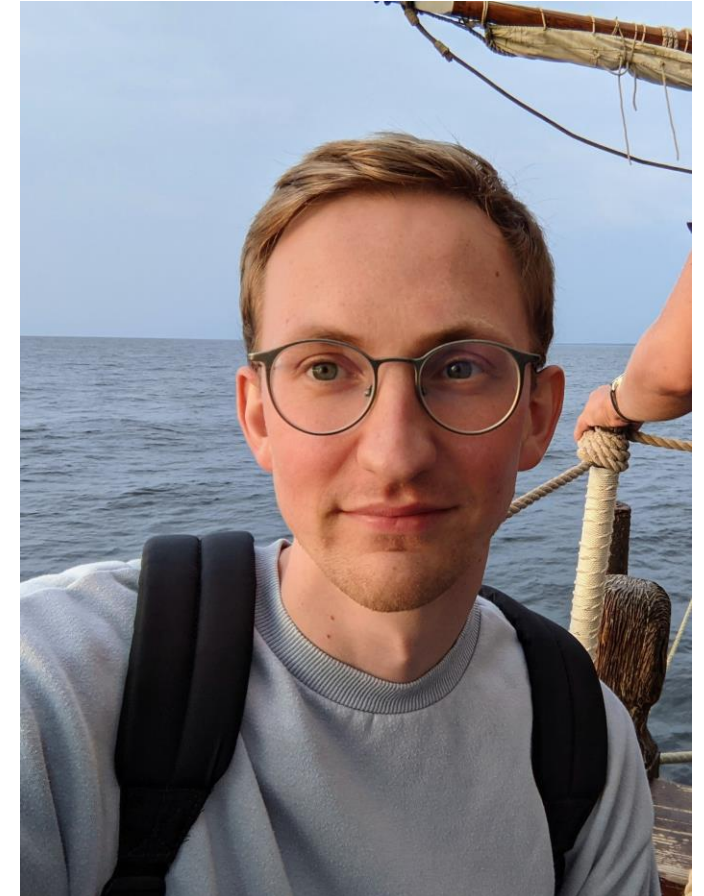
Outline

- Introducing the CSSci programme
- Theoretical foundations of the programme
- Reflections as a lecturer

About me

Kirils Makarovs

- Lecturer and Mentor
- PhD in Sociology, University of Essex (2017-2021)
- Associate lecturer in Social data analysis, University of Exeter (2021-2022)
- Quantitative data analysis and public perception of science/scientists



1. Introducing the CSSci programme

AI continues to become a bigger part of our daily lives, but is it going too far?

Resisting the rise of facial recognition

Growing use of surveillance technology has prompted calls for bans and stricter regulation.

Who is really to blame for climate change?

**2015 in review:
how Europe
reacted to the
refugee crisis**

**Spot the bot: How to navigate fake news about
Russia's invasion of Ukraine**

**World hunger surged in 2020, with 1
in 10 people on Earth
undernourished**

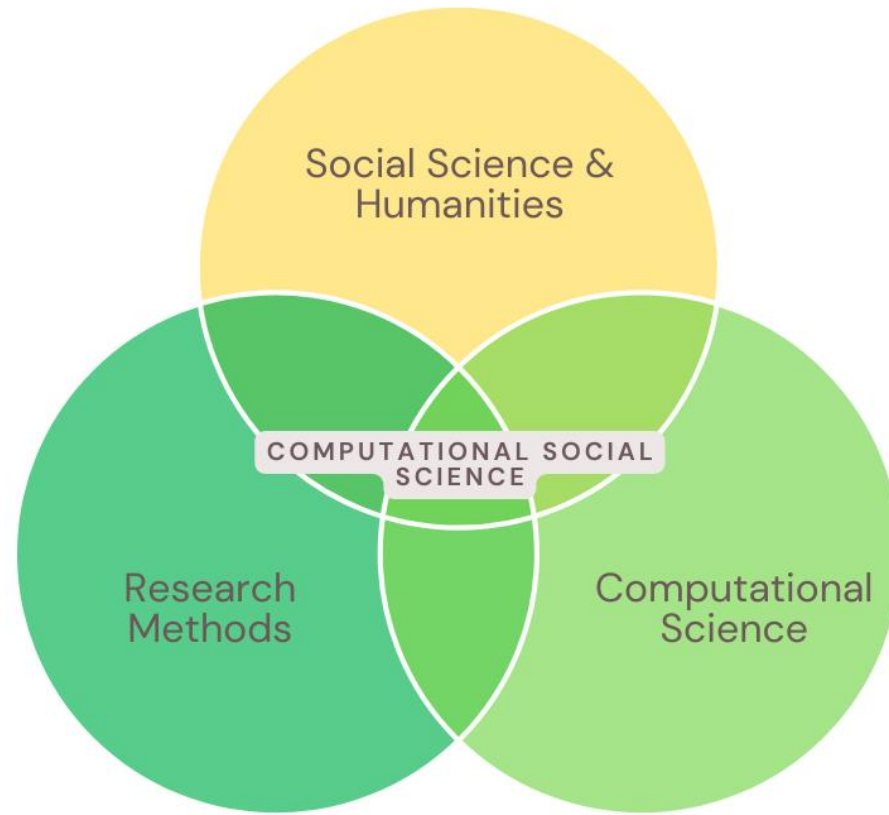
**What's the Right Way to Reverse the
Obesity Epidemic?**

CSSci

- More and more wicked problems
- Rise of Data Science
- Making social change
- Bridging the gap between academia and 'industry'
- Making theory work



“Digital interventions for social change”



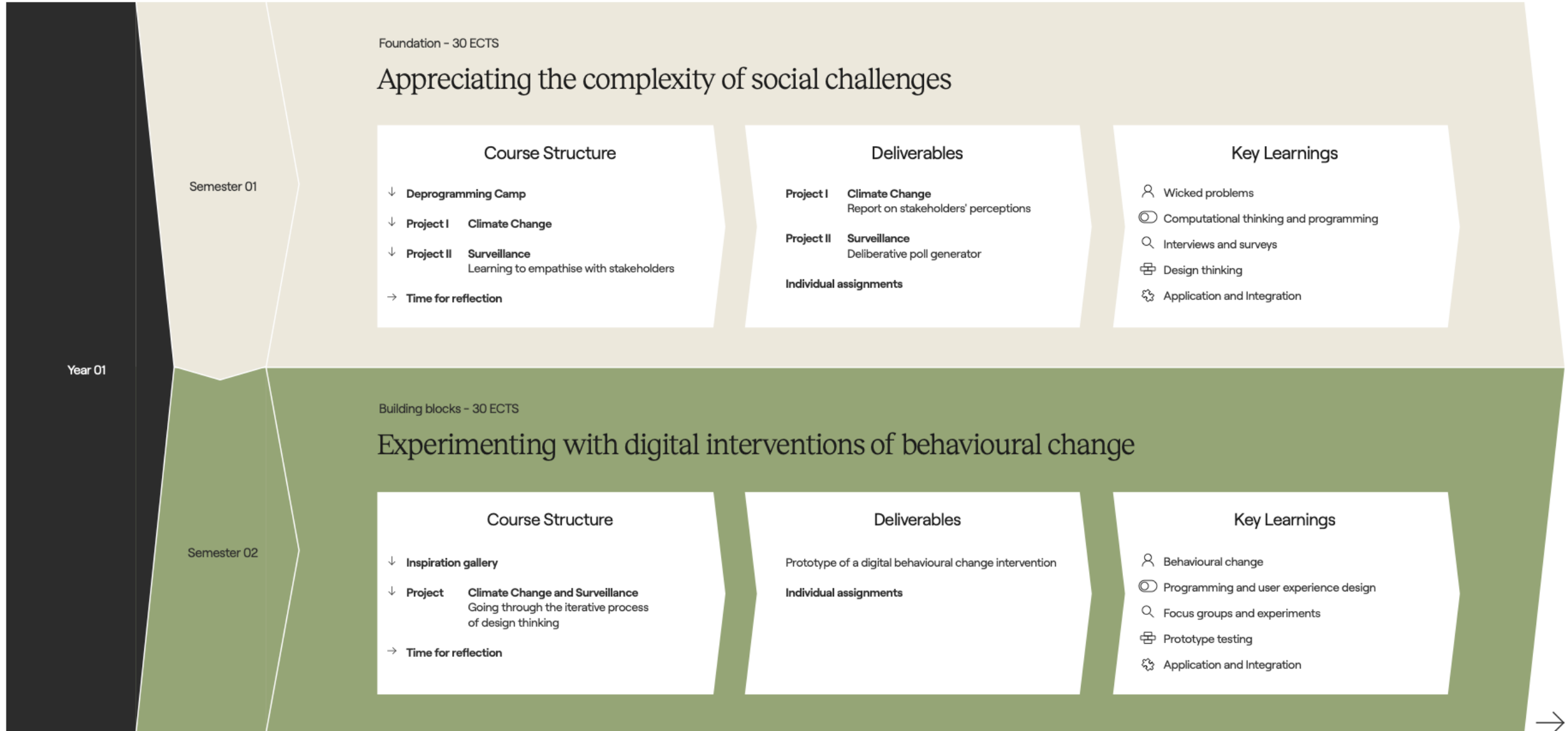
CSSci

- 180 ECTS, 36 months
- International classroom
- 3rd year: internship/minor and capstone project
- Working with partners outside university
- Courses as (group) projects
- No exams



Study Overview

Year one



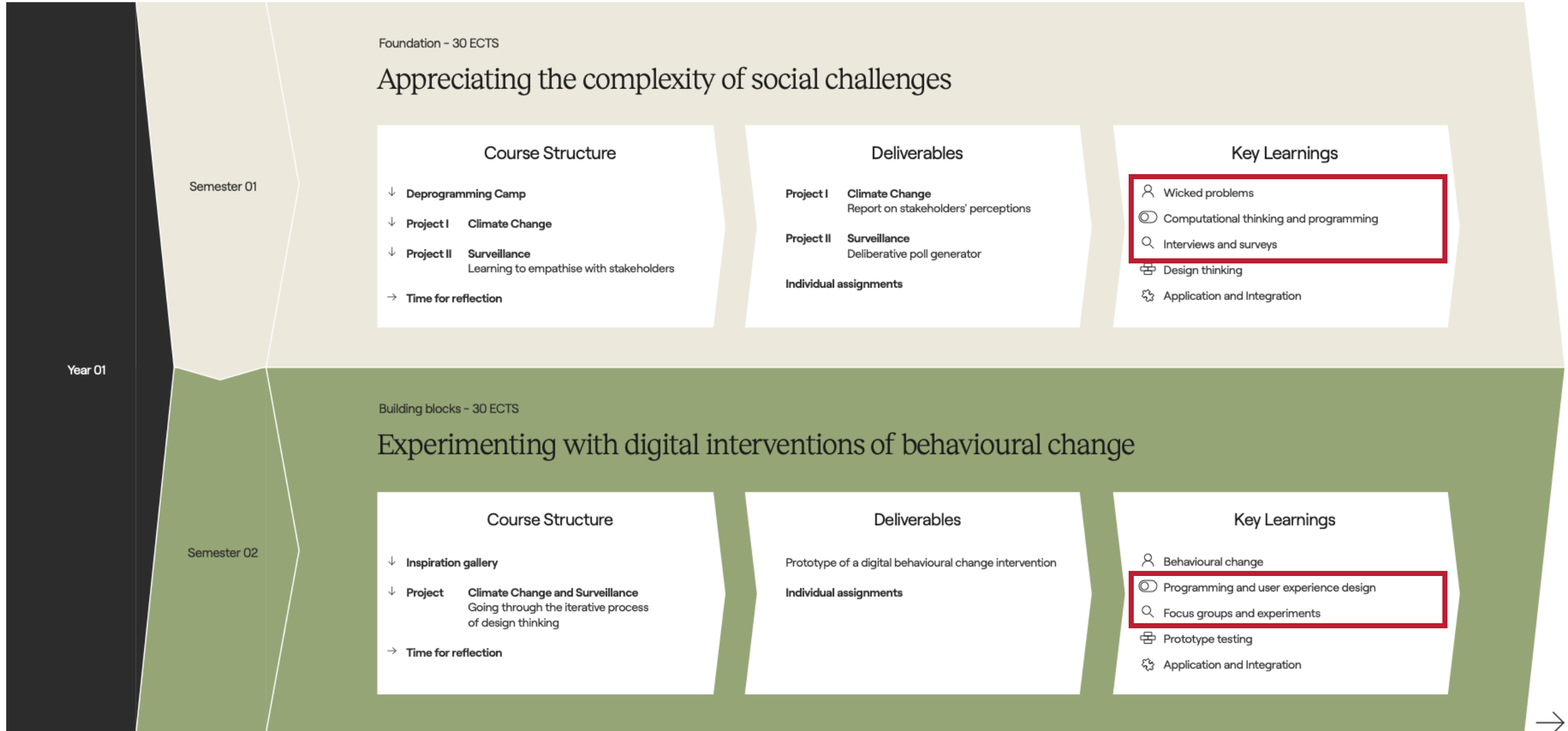
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Year one



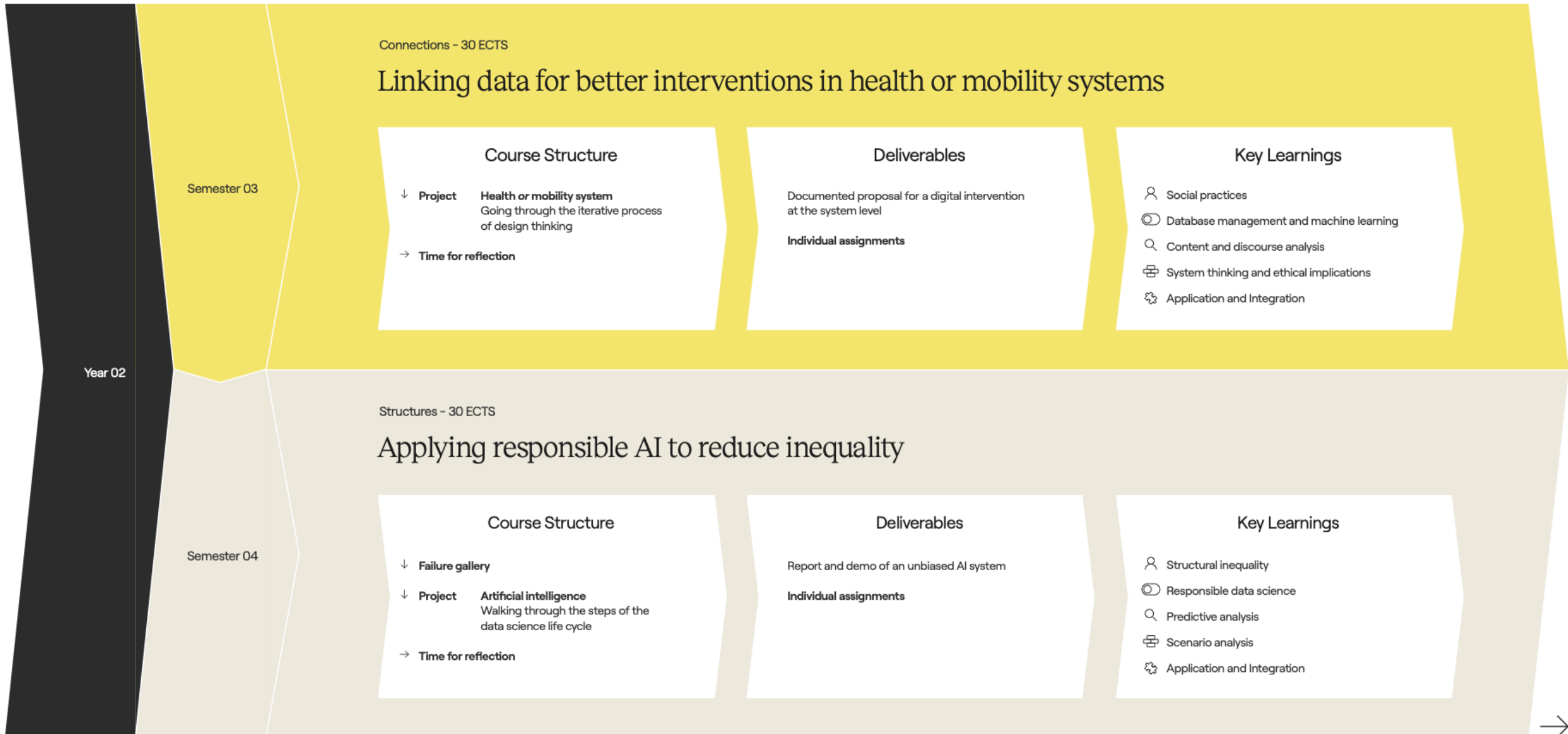
Study Overview

Year one



Study Overview

Year two ↴



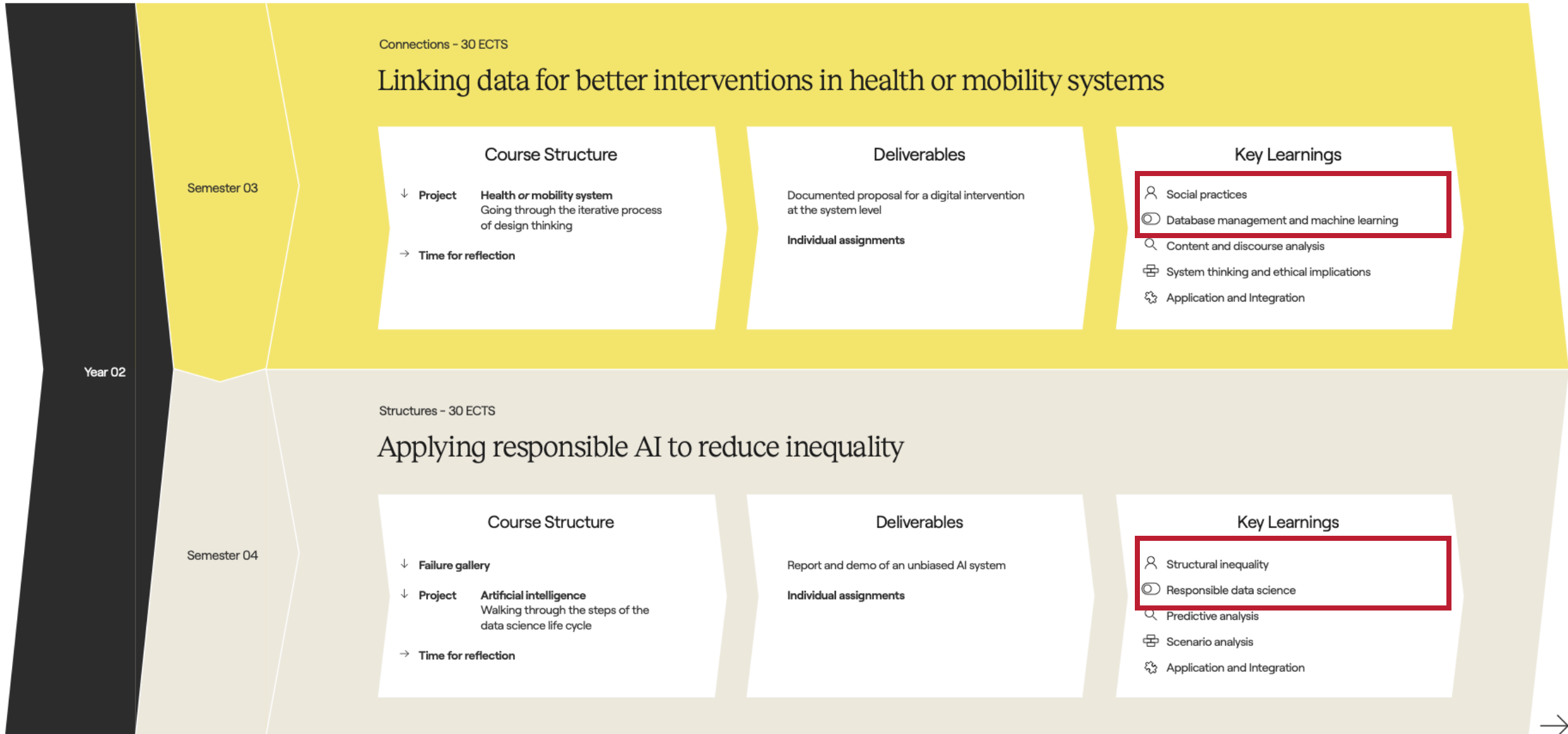
Study Overview

Year two



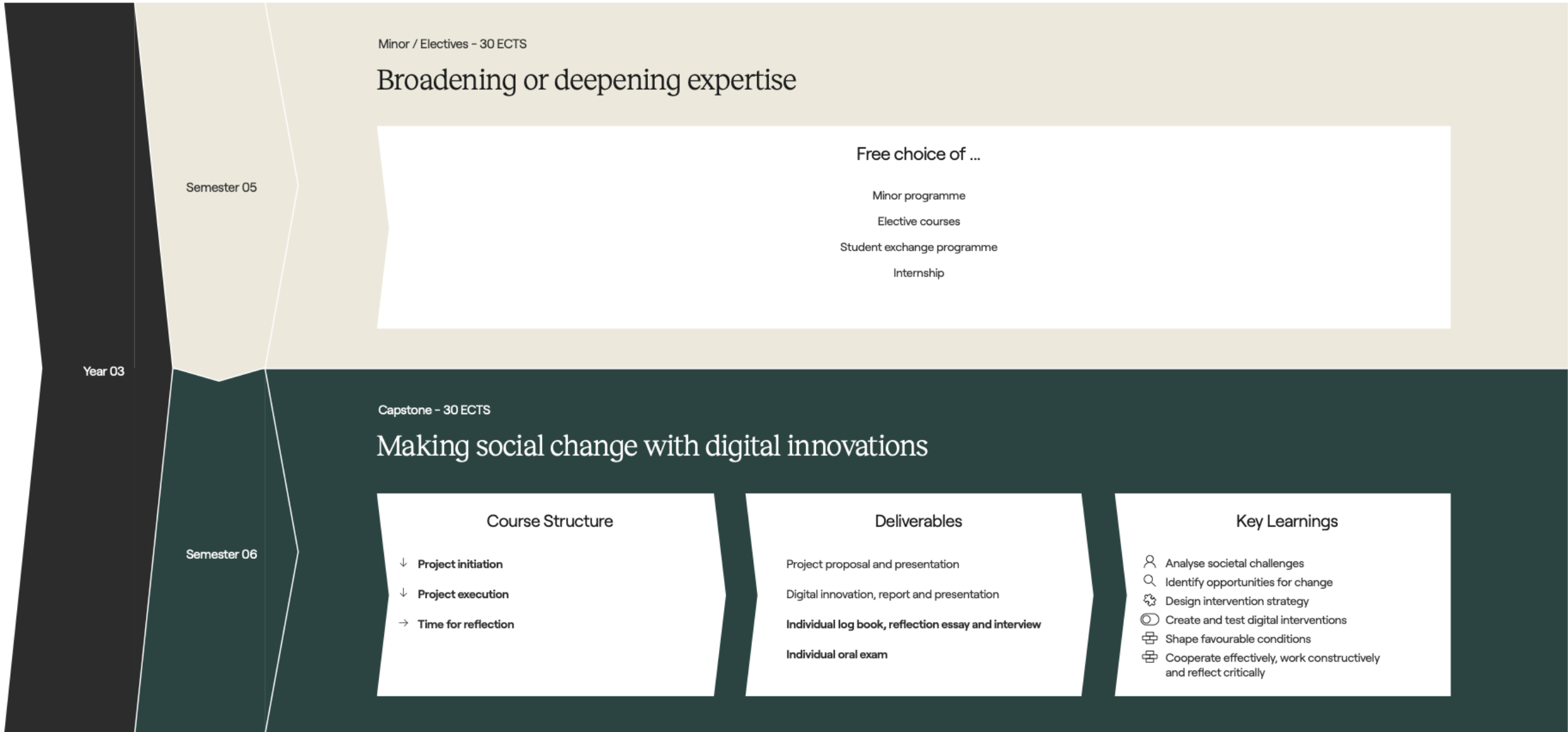
Study Overview

Year two



Study Overview

Year three



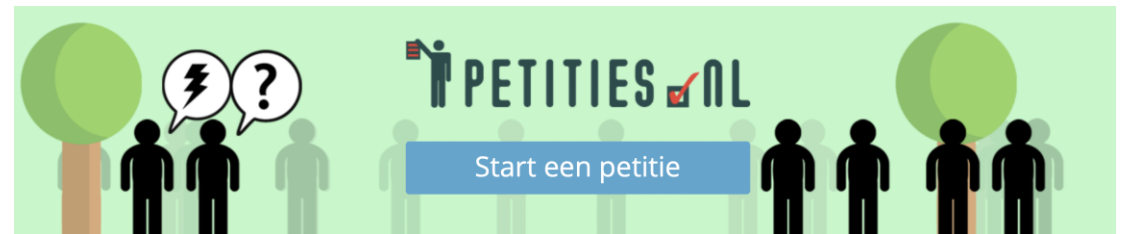
Project partners

**Urban
Cycling
Institute**

 **waternet**
waterschap amstel gooi en vecht
gemeente amsterdam

JoinThePipe


GROENE HUB



Project challenge example

Approved

Wind Energy? Yes! But, Not in my Backyard (NIMBY)

Wind energy could be a leading solution in reducing emissions and fighting climate change as the energy sector is the largest contributor of global greenhouse gas emissions. But what do ordinary people think of windmills in their neighbourhoods? Petities.nl offers a platform for citizens to run petitions on any possible subject. Its mission is to enable individuals in the Netherlands to exercise their democratic right to be heard by their government. Successful petitions have the potential to raise awareness, set political agendas, and even to spark change.

By looking at data from Petities.nl, in this challenge students can start mapping answers to the following questions:

- Who are the stakeholders that are involved in the discussion and decision-making on where to locate windmills?
- Where in the Netherlands are people most receptive to windmills to be installed?
- Is there a NIMBY problem in windmill discussions, and what might be potential solutions?

Preferred amount of teams: **2**

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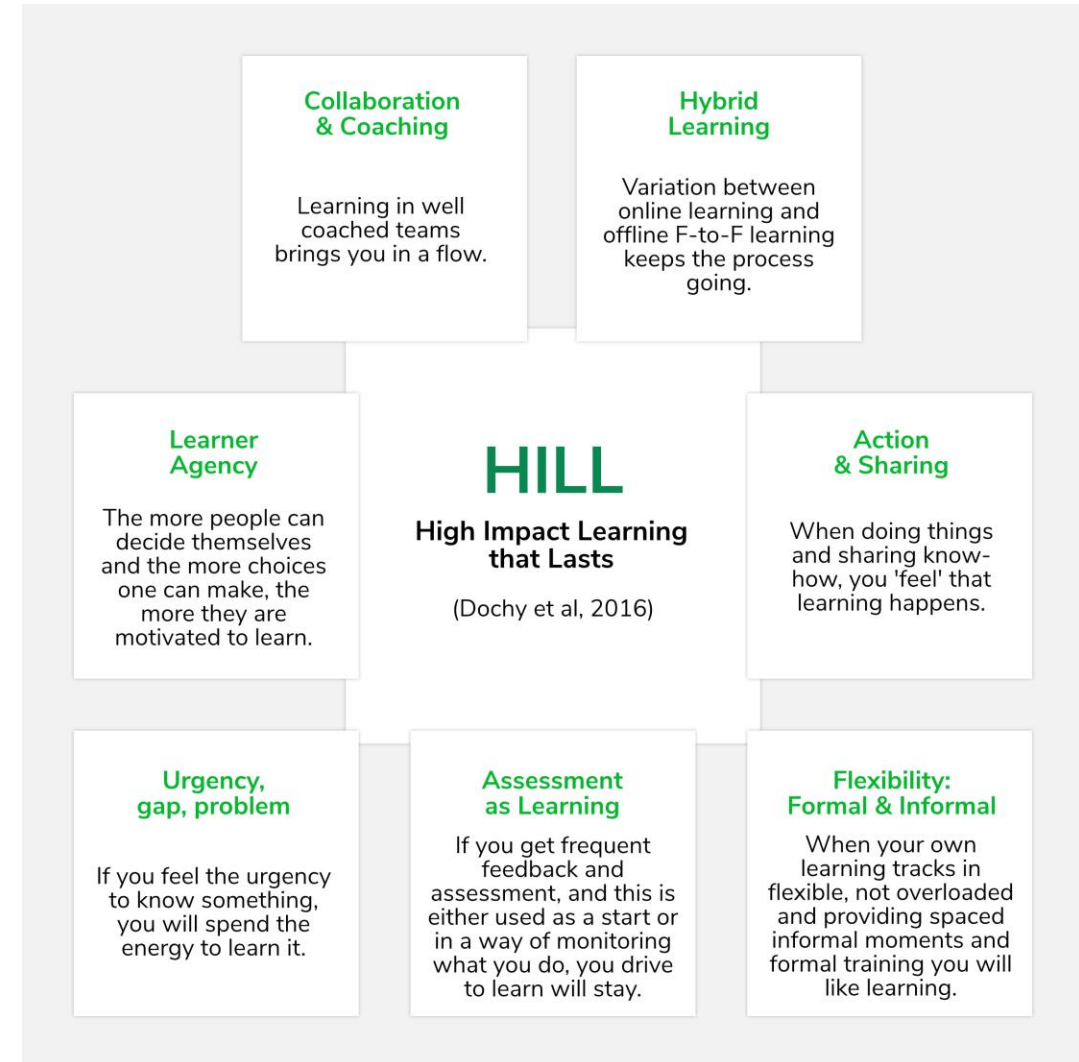
2. Theoretical foundations of the programme

Theoretical foundations of the programme

- High Impact Learning that Lasts (HILL)
- Design thinking

High Impact Learning that Lasts (Dochy and Mien, 2018)

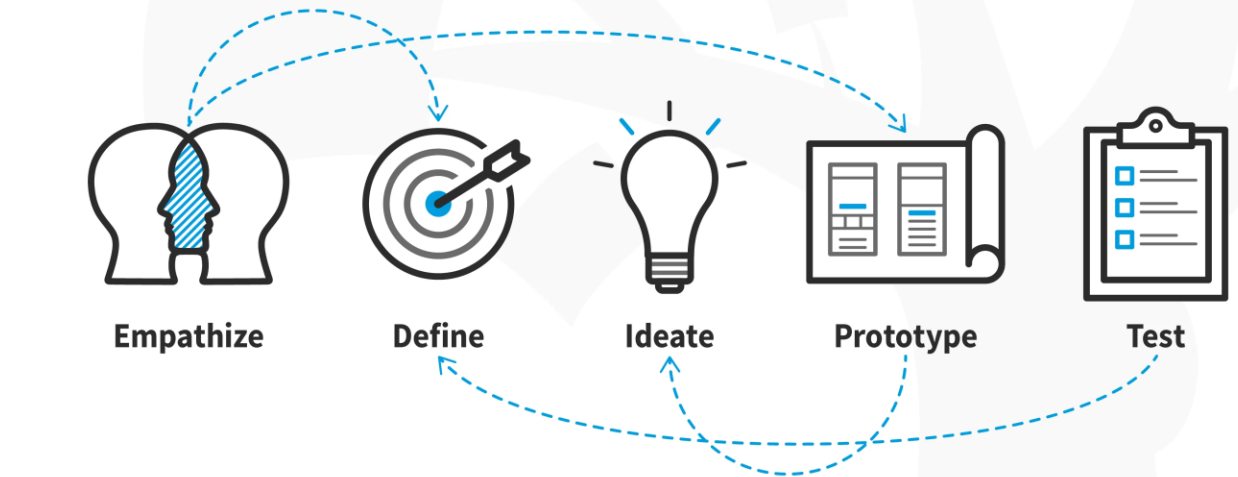
- Urgent societal problems that require intervention
- Collaborative learning environment
- Active learning and student agency
- Facilitation rather than didactical teaching
- Feedback and feedforward
- De-emphasized grades



Design thinking (d.school)

- Crucial for project-based curriculum
- Helps in addressing complex wicked problems (climate change, surveillance)
- Fundamentally iterative process
- The interplay between students, academic staff, and project partners

Design Thinking: A 5-Stage Process



Interaction Design Foundation
interaction-design.org



3. Reflections as a lecturer

Reflections as a lecturer

Challenge

- Managing project partners' expectations

Solution

Reflections as a lecturer

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- Engaging with **relevant** project partners
- Thorough onboarding
- Frequent communication

Reflections as a lecturer

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- Managing project partners' expectations
- Ensuring healthy student project group dynamics

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- Frequent communication
- Regular check-in and check-out meetings
- 1-on-1 mentoring sessions
- Trying to feel the 'spirit' of a group

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- Frequent communication
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- Trying to feel the 'spirit' of a group
- Regular feedback and feedforward
- Clear overview of the curriculum
- Iterative learning process

Reflections as a lecturer

Challenge

- Addressing the diversity of students' educational needs

Solution

Reflections as a lecturer

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Solution

- Setting up extracurricular activities e.g. reading group
- Students' Personal Developments Plans

Reflections as a lecturer

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- Ensuring that ILOs and Exit Qualifications are met

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- Finding a balance between the individual assignments and group projects
- Multiple tracks / electives (?)

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- Embracing the interdisciplinary nature of the programme

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- Embracing the interdisciplinary nature of the programme

Solution

- Setting up extracurricular activities e.g. reading group
- Students' Personal Developments Plans
- Finding a balance between the individual assignments and group projects
- Multiple tracks / electives (?)
- Be ready to (quickly) learn new skills
- Expand own vision of what it means to be a lecturer in social sciences
- **Get excited about what's going on!**

Thank you!

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