

**STRENGTHENING  
RESILIENCE AND CREATIVITY  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS**

**A workshop playbook to initiate a  
multileveled reflection process**

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# **STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND CREATIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

A WORKSHOP PLAYBOOK TO INITIATE A MULTILEVELED  
REFLECTION PROCESS

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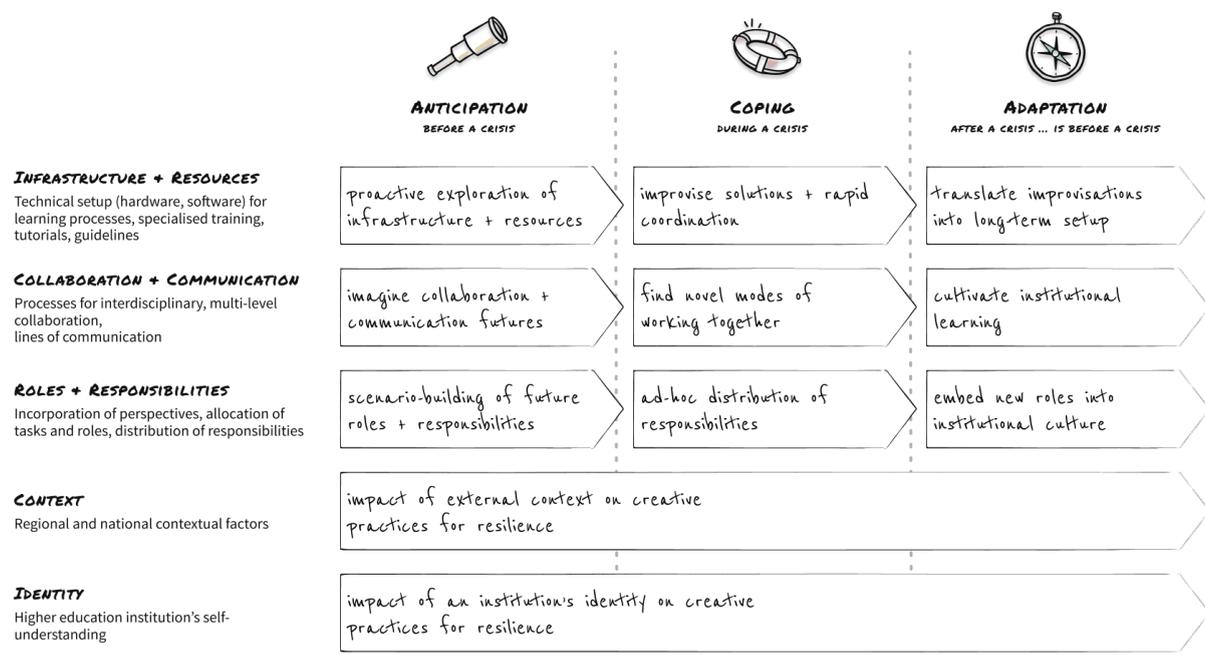
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# INTRODUCTION

This playbook is part of the Learn-and-Do Kit to Strengthen Resilience through Creativity within Higher Education Institutions, developed at the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society. It is designed for higher education institutions that aim to initiate a multileveled reflection process on their resilience strengths and vulnerabilities. The Learn-and-Do Kit supports universities in exploring existing and potential creative practices that can help them strengthen resilience. This is based on an understanding of resilience as a process that goes beyond merely coping with an immediate crisis and includes anticipating crises as well as adapting afterwards. This processual perspective enables a comprehensive view of how resilience and creativity interconnect and how they can be reflected in practice.

This playbook provides guidance to facilitate a workshop within higher education institutions and initiate exchange around resilience among different stakeholder groups within the university: leadership, teaching staff, technical and didactical support. The key element of the workshop is the Resilience & Creativity Canvas, which offers role-specific perspectives to reflect on practices at the interplay of resilience and creativity:



The canvas is horizontally structured across the three phases of resilience – anticipating disruption, coping under pressure, and adapting afterwards. Vertically, it is structured across five empirically developed dimensions, in which creativity and resilience manifest: Infrastructure & resources, collaboration & communication, roles & responsibilities, context, identity. The canvas breaks down the complexity of teaching as one of the core functions of higher education institutions. Separate canvases are provided for each of the four stakeholder groups mentioned above (leadership, teaching staff, technical and didactical support).

## IMPORTANT NOTES FOR WORKSHOP FACILITATORS



Before convening the workshop, please take note of the following important information:  
The [duration of the workshop](#) is approximately 2.5 hours



When [selecting the workshop participants](#), we suggest to ensure a diversity of perspectives by including at least 3 people each from leadership, teaching, technical support and didactical support:

- **Leadership:** people involved in strategic decision-making like (vice-)presidents, (vice-)chancellors as well as leadership of central units (e.g., IT units or teaching development/ e-learning centres).
- **Teaching:** people delivering teaching in practice like professors and lecturers. Remember that some teaching staff hold additional roles (e.g., deans, study programme directors, members of academic self-governance), which can add valuable insight into both implementation and decision-making dynamics.
- **Technical support:** people contributing to technical enablement like IT staff (e.g., learning management support, system administrators, service desk). Aim to include both hands-on staff and leadership of IT units to represent operational realities and strategic constraints.
- **Didactical support:** people contributing to didactical enablement like instructional designers, staff at teaching and learning centres. Aim to include both unit leadership and staff working directly with teaching staff to capture what is feasible and what is needed.



For a productive collective reflection process, please ensure a substantial [preparation of the workshop](#) by

- sharing the [Learn-and-Do Kit](#) and [this short introduction](#) to resilience and creativity among the workshop participants to ensure common ground and make working with the Canvas easier,
- defining (and sharing) the crisis scenario you want to apply when working with the Canvas. This can be a previous, a current or a possible future crisis. For consistency across the canvas, all questions are phrased in the present tense. Depending on your selected crisis scenario, you may naturally adjust the tense as you work through the canvas,
- clarifying the organisational identity of your higher education institution (for example through mission statements, teaching culture, sense of belonging, routines and practices of communication and collaboration) and determining the external context of your institution (for example policies and regulations, funding, disciplinary culture, faculty guidelines, IT accessibility).



To best facilitate the workshop, please prepare the following [workshop materials](#):

- Print out the Resilience & Creativity Canvas for each of the four different stakeholder groups
- Print out the workshop cards (double-sided)
- Keep a corkboard/whiteboard, pens, sticky notes and sticky dots at hand



When [setting up the workshop room](#), please make sure that

- there are four tables for groupwork, each equipped with the respective Resilience & Creativity Canvas and workshop cards (i.e. one table with the workshop cards for the leadership group and so on) as well as pens, sticky notes and sticky dots
- there is space for organising discussion among all the workshop participants, ideally, through a corkboard or whiteboard for you to take notes during the first and third part of the workshop



## OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop is structured around three parts:

- 1. Getting started (30 minutes)** serves as the kick-off for the workshop with all participants coming together to lay the groundwork for the reflection process.
- 2. Reflecting different roles (60 minutes)** divides the workshop participants into their respective stakeholder groups to work through the canvases.
- 3. Merging perspectives (60 minutes)** then combines the work of the four groups to generate a comprehensive understanding of your higher education institution's resilience-creativity nexus.

## GETTING STARTED

Once you have identified the relevant stakeholders that need to be included in the reflection process and have gathered everyone in your workshop, there are a few things to consider to initiate the collective reflection process within your higher education institution. This first part of the workshop is conducted with all participants and takes about 30 minutes and is structured into the following three activities:

### 1. Kicking of the workshop (~ 15 min)

At the beginning of your workshop, it is important to set the scene, clarify goals and address some organisational aspects. This scene setting also needs to include the introduction of the selected crisis scenario. Remember: The more you specify the crisis scenario of your use case, the easier it will be to work through the canvas.

Since the workshop focuses on discussions among the different stakeholder groups, each stakeholder group needs one person to document the results and another person to lead the group work along the designated tasks. Take a moment to clarify these roles within each stakeholder group.

### 2. Defining your institution's identity and context (~ 15 min)

As organisational identity and external context serve as two major enabling (and constraining) factors in the resilience-creativity nexus, it is important to keep these in mind when working with the canvas. Because navigating crises is not a uniform capability that unfolds in the same way across all higher education institutions, you need to reflect on your specific institution's identity and context. The following questions may provide a starting point for this examination:

- How would you describe your institution's self-understanding?
- What are external conditions (e.g. infrastructure, funding and access constraints) that lie beyond the university's control?

During the discussion of your higher education institution's organisational identity and external context among the workshop participants, note down the most important aspects mentioned on a blackboard or flipchart where everyone in the room can see it throughout the workshop.

## REFLECTING DIFFERENT ROLES

For the second part of the workshop, the workshop participants break into the four groups of their respective stakeholder groups for a **60-minute** role-specific reflection:

### FOUR STAKEHOLDER GROUPS FOR ROLE-SPECIFIC REFLECTION

**Leadership:** This group includes everyone involved in strategic decision-making related to teaching development (strategic direction, mandates, resource allocation) like (vice-)presidents and (vice-)chancellors as well as leadership of central units that shape teaching-related decisions (e.g., heads of IT units or teaching development/e-learning centres).



[download the Leadership Canvas](#)

**Teaching:** This group includes those who teach like professors and lecturers of different disciplines.



[download the Teaching Canvas](#)

**Technical Support:** This group includes those responsible for technical enablement, who provide and stabilise the technical infrastructure and support for teaching (e.g., learning management support, system administrators, service desk).



[download the Technical Support Canvas](#)

**Didactical Support:** This group includes those responsible for didactical enablement, who translate teaching goals into feasible formats, templates, training and course design support (e.g., instructional designers, people working in teaching and learning centres).



[download the Didactical Support Canvas](#)

Once the workshop participants are in their respective groups with the workshop cards specific to their perspective at hand, they can start reflecting on their role-specific perspective on the interplay of resilience and creativity. Address one dimension at a time and work through the questions of each dimension for all three phases of resilience. Discuss your different points of view and remember to note down your answer on the respective workshop card. If you need some inspiration, you will find the answered questions from the perspective of [personas](#), one for each of the stakeholder groups, to help you get started if you get stuck.

# MERGING PERSPECTIVES

Having had intensive discussions among the four stakeholder groups, this last part of the workshop brings the workshop participants together again for **60 minutes** of merging perspectives in three steps:

## 1. Gallery walk and rating (~ 15 min)

To begin the final part of the workshop, conduct a gallery walk to get an understanding of how the other stakeholder groups worked with the canvas. For that, the participants move through the room on their own and read the workshop cards of the other groups at their own pace. Participants may also take notes during the gallery walk for the following discussion among all workshop participants.

Once participants have completed the gallery walk, it is time to rate your institution's resilience according to the first three dimensions on a four-level Likert scale for each of the resilience phases on the designated rating cards using sticky dots. *Note:* As organisational identity and external context are broader influencing factors, they are excluded from the rating.

The rating makes differences in perception visible: each stakeholder group rates the statements using a distinct colour of sticky dots, so patterns across dimensions and resilience phases become evident. This helps to identify shared strengths, blind spots, and priorities for improvement, especially where different groups experience the same structures in very different ways.

**ANTICIPATION**  
BEFORE A CRISIS

**COPING**  
DURING A CRISIS

**ADAPTATION**  
AFTER A CRISIS ... IS BEFORE A CRISIS

**INFRASTRUCTURE + RESOURCES**

Our institution has robust, flexible infrastructure and resources to be prepared for new demands in teaching and learning.

Strongly disagree (1) (1) (1) (1)    Disagree (2) (2) (2) (2)    Agree (3) (3) (3) (3)    Strongly agree (4) (4) (4) (4)

RESILIENCE & CREATIVITY CANVAS RATING CARD

**ADAPTATION**  
AFTER A CRISIS ... IS BEFORE A CRISIS

Decisions are reviewed  
solutions are

Strongly agree (1) (1) (1) (1)

CREATIVITY CANVAS RATING CARD

## 2. Identifying commonalities and differences (~ 30 min)

After this individual exploration of how the different stakeholder groups worked with the canvas, it's time to come together to share the most interesting insights from the role-specific reflection. The following questions can help guide the discussion:

- When looking at the other stakeholder groups discussion results, what surprised you?
- Where are the biggest differences?
- Does that rating differ? If so, in what ways?

This part is meant as a discussion, so make sure to allow every voice to be heard.

## 3. Pinpoint next steps (~ 15 min)

To conclude the workshop, it's important to specify where to go from here. Based on the group discussions as well as the merging of perspectives, use the following questions to guide your definition of the next steps:

- Where do you see a need for action and who needs to be involved?
- Which further actions are must-haves, which ones are nice to have?
- Who is taking the lead on the identified must-haves?

With this final step of the workshop to collectively reflect on your higher education institution's resilience and creativity, you are well equipped to navigate the next crisis.