

**Assignment form I Lab 2022**  
**Outreaching program, Tilburg University**

**Main characteristics**

<u><i>Title of Lab</i></u>	Increasing students' strengths awareness
<u><i>Professors/Lab supervisors</i></u>	Prof. dr. Marianne van Woerkom ( <i>Department of Human Resource Studies TiU; Center of Excellence for Positive Organizational Psychology, Erasmus University Rotterdam</i> ) Assistant Prof. dr. Eeske van Roekel ( <i>Department of Developmental Psychology, TSB</i> )
<u><i>General information</i></u>	- English speaking students (preferably studying Psychology and Communication Sciences, students from different disciplines can also apply) interested in the topic of student well-being
<u><i>Number of students:</i></u>	5 - 7
<u><i>Period:</i></u>	February 2022 – June 2022
<u><i>Effort per student:</i></u>	80hr/student
<u><i>Effort for supervisor:</i></u>	Monthly online meetings

***Background of the project***

The isolation and life disruption brought by the COVID pandemic has amplified loneliness and distress among students. Already before the COVID pandemic, studies have shown that Dutch and international university students experience high work pressure and high levels of psychological distress. Four in five students often feel emotionally exhausted (LSVB, 2017) and one in five students suffer from severe loneliness (Radboud Universiteit, 2017).

In contrast, positive emotions and connectedness help students to flourish emotionally and to socially function better in life, including in academic life. Both emotional wellbeing (EWB) and social wellbeing (SWB) are essential elements for effective learning and development, and predict academic performance.

The new reality of social distancing challenges us to re-think human connection, which is essential for students' education and wellbeing. A promising way to foster connection with oneself and with others is through the strengths-based approach. Individual character strengths refer to traits for which higher levels allow a person to perform at their personal best. Gaining awareness of their strengths can reduce students' sense of isolation and help them to better navigate the challenges of their academic journey.

### **Problem statement**

Many students could benefit from using their strengths to cope with the high work pressure and psychological distress, magnified by the COVID pandemic. A lot of students are not aware of their strengths, lack the proper language to define their unique talents and don't know how to take advantage of using their strengths in order to increase their wellbeing. Students across all faculties need to be informed of the strengths approach and develop a common language around strengths, in order to facilitate conversations on this topic, as well as engage in using their strengths more.

### **Stakeholders**

- Students participating in the Honors Program
- TiU students, which will be stimulated to develop their character strengths and increase their subjective and emotional well being as a result
- Tilburg University, as a positive institution which fosters subjective and emotional well-being, as well as a sense of belonging among its students

### **Deliverables**

The team will brainstorm together how to increase on-campus awareness of the strengths approach and help students identify their own strengths. The team will also think of ways to help students use their strengths on a more regular basis. The team can use various types of data to support their ideas (interviews, surveys, participatory observation, literature, brainstorming sessions). The team will attempt to promote the benefits of the strengths approach from the scientific literature in understandable terms.

The students are free to decide on the deliverables of the project and implement their ideas in terms of increasing awareness of the strengths approach, by helping students discover their strengths and find out about the benefits of using their strengths, as well as strategies on more frequent strength usage. The team will brainstorm about possible exercises and examples, which could help students use their strengths more efficiently. The students will tackle the problem by formulating the problem, thinking of ways to approach the problem and how they propose to solve it. They will assess how to measure the effectiveness of their product (e.g. students reached, collecting surveys).

### **Organizational issues**

Students are expected to work independently, to cooperate well in a team and to be highly organized and motivated by the topic of strengths.

There will be several lectures and meetings in which the background and aim of this Lab is explained during the first two months (February/March), monthly meetings with the coordinator and an end presentation. More meetings will be planned, if needed, and there will be email/Zoom during the full term. Between the meetings, students will work independently and together with group members on the problem statement.