

Call for Applications for the 2025¹ Innovative Teaching Award Teaching and Learning outside the Classroom

Teaching and learning outside the classroom opens up a wide range of opportunities to create innovative learning processes and impart knowledge in an authentic, student-centered and experience-based way. By incorporating authentic learning environments outside the university, using real-life problems and socially relevant challenges or integrating innovative digital technologies, teachers can support students in establishing a link between theory and practice and developing transversal skills. For the 2025 Innovative Teaching Award, we invite you to submit course designs that foster student learning in places outside the university.

1 Objectives

To promote the quality of teaching at WU, the Innovative Teaching Award recognizes particularly innovative course designs.

The Vice Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, in cooperation with the review panel (a full professor, a member of the junior faculty, a representative of the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, an expert on the didactics of higher education, and a student nominated by the ÖH Austrian Students' Union), proposes to the Rectorate a maximum of ten course designs to be awarded at WU.

There are three main objectives:

- Honor the continuing **efforts, dedication, and commitment** of teaching staff members working to improve teaching quality at WU.
- Increase awareness of innovative and exemplary teaching methods. The winning courses serve as **models and inspirations** for other teaching staff members to further develop their teaching methods.
- **Stimulate new ideas and concepts** to enhance the didactic quality of courses and lectures at WU.

¹ Courses held during the 2024 calendar year (summer semester 2024, winter semester 2024/25) are eligible for the 2025 Innovative Teaching Award. Courses held over two semesters (WS 2023/24–SS 2024) can also be nominated.



2 Focus: Teaching and Learning outside the Classroom

The methodological and didactic design and implementation of innovative teaching and learning concepts outside conventional classrooms are the focus of this year's call. Teaching and learning outside the classroom can be realized through various approaches comprising both physical and virtual spaces: When learning is deliberately shifted to authentic learning environments outside the university, it is referred to as **field-based learning**. Theoretical content is made tangible through active observation, exploration and co-creation in order to enable learning experiences with a focus on reflection and knowledge transfer (e.g. excursions, case analyses, workshops or on-site project work).

Challenge-based and community-engaged learning take place in collaboration with external stakeholders such as organizations, companies or local communities. Students work on real challenges such as specific questions from companies or organizations, interdisciplinary projects, local challenges or service-learning initiatives. The aim is to come up with solutions for the partners' needs and at the same time to particularly promote the students' future skills (problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, reflection skills and social skills).

Digital tools and virtual learning environments are used to create **online learning spaces**. Analog and digital teaching and learning are combined in innovative ways. Whether it is synchronous or asynchronous online learning activities, hybrid formats or digitally supported customized learning paths, the aim is to enable highly interactive, flexible and application-oriented learning experiences beyond physical boundaries.

2.1 Field-based learning:

The prize is awarded to course designs that deliberately shift learning processes to authentic environments outside the university. Field-based learning focuses on the experience "in the field" and enables students to transfer theoretical content into practice and reflect critically on it through active observation and participation. Such concepts strengthen students' independent learning and their problem-solving skills in interdisciplinary contexts. Examples include excursions with case analyses in which business models are examined and optimization proposals are developed. Also, workshops and project work can take place directly with partners. Excursions to specific locations relevant to learning offer practical insights into various subject areas and invite students to adopt new perspectives thanks to the unfamiliar surroundings.

Field-based learning:

- *What criteria do you use to select and design learning environments outside the conventional classroom?*
- *What methods do you use to actively involve students in the learning process in real-world contexts?*
- *How do you prepare students to work in authentic environments in order to promote their independence and problem-solving skills?*
- *How do you evaluate students' learning success in learning settings outside the university, especially with regard to the connection between theory and practice?*
- *What strategies do you use to guide and promote reflection processes during field experiences?*
- *How do you collaborate with external partners to create sustainable and high-quality learning opportunities outside the conventional classroom?*



- *What didactic challenges do you see in the implementation of field-based learning and how do you address them?*

2.2 Challenge-based and community-engaged learning:

Award-worthy course designs draw on challenge-based and community-engaged learning to connect students with real-world challenges and foster practical skills. Collaborating with external stakeholders such as companies, organizations or local communities, students work on real-world tasks requiring the development of innovative solutions to meet the partners' needs. By applying their theoretical knowledge to practical issues and communicating their findings to different target groups, they also practice knowledge transfer.

In addition to technical know-how, students strengthen future skills such as problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, reflection capability and social skills. Moreover, these approaches promote the students' creativity, capacity for innovation, cooperative abilities, self-organization as well as their sense of responsibility.

Methods of implementation include interdisciplinary projects to solve complex problems, service-learning initiatives with a contribution to society, collaborations on local challenges that establish a connection to students' real lives as well as entrepreneurship projects in which students develop innovative solutions and their own business ideas.

Challenge-based and community-engaged learning

- *What criteria do you use in selecting external partners (e.g. companies, NGOs or public institutions) and how do you involve them?*
- *How do you design projects so that they meet both the learning objectives of the students and the needs of the partners?*
- *How do you help students develop innovative and sustainable solutions?*
- *How do you support students in establishing and reflecting the connection between practical project experience and academic knowledge?*
- *What innovative didactic approaches do you use to combine learning and social engagement in the context of community-engaged learning?*
- *What methodological and didactic approaches do you use to enable students to research and analyze information systematically and independently?*
- *Which digital technologies and tools do you use to enable and promote location-independent collaboration between students in the context of challenge-based learning?*



2.3 Online learning spaces:

The prize is awarded to course designs that shift teaching and learning partially or completely to virtual learning environments and offer flexibility in terms of time and location for students. Particular emphasis is placed on how the physical classroom can be replaced or extended by innovative approaches. The approaches include synchronous and asynchronous e-learning as well as hybrid formats. The use of innovative digital tools, virtual and augmented reality environments, personalized learning paths and collaborative learning platforms not only increases learners' flexibility in terms of location, but also promotes the development of future skills. The focus lies on digital competence, self-management, creativity and problem-solving skills. These skills are specifically strengthened by overcoming physical boundaries and involving learners in realistic, interactive online scenarios such as virtual case studies and business games, simulations or virtual rooms.

Online learning
spaces

- *How do you facilitate teaching and learning processes independent of time and space in an innovative way?*
- *What methodological approaches do you use to make the most of the potential of online learning spaces for the learning success of your students?*
- *Which digital tools and platforms (e.g. videos, streaming, tools for surveys and quizzes, virtual reality, AI) do you use and how do you meet students' individual needs and guarantee access for everyone?*
- *How do you integrate learning activities in flexible online environments to ensure an interactive, cohesive and engaging learning experience?*
- *What criteria do you use to select virtual learning environments and digital tools to ensure that they meet the content and methodological objectives of your course?*
- *How do you promote the application of skills acquired in online learning spaces in real-life professional or social contexts?*
- *How do you design virtual learning spaces for your course? What innovative methods do you use in virtual classrooms to promote individual learning processes?*



3 Award criteria

- **Innovative didactic-methodological concept**
To be considered innovative, course designs must be unprecedented at WU with regard to the focus area or use new, uncommon or unorthodox combinations of teaching and learning concepts. The submission must include a description of the innovative character and added value of the didactic approach employed.
- **Transferability**
Course designs considered for the award should serve as examples and models to be followed and should be planned in a way that allows for the didactic concept used to be transferred to other courses.
- **Reflexivity**
The teacher has to reflect on the course concept, its goals and the implementation in a systematic way to enhance the teaching and learning quality at WU.
- **Logical connection between course design and learning outcomes**
There should be a logical, well-founded connection between the individual didactic elements of the course and the intended learning outcomes of the course (or the learning outcomes of the program or module).

4 Award guidelines

- Individuals or groups can submit an application for the Innovative Teaching Award. In case of a group application, a group representative has to be designated. It is the responsibility of the designated applicant to distribute the prize money among the members of a group. Only individuals or groups that actually perform the eligible activity can receive the award.
- Award winners agree to make the presentation of their course design together with the submitted application form available for publication on WU's website.
- The submission has to meet the standards specified in section 5 of this document. Submissions that do not meet the formal criteria will not be considered for the award.
- All faculty members with teaching activities at WU (or the Executive Academy) in the calendar year 2024 (SS 2024, WS 2024/25) for which the award is presented are eligible to apply or to be nominated for the award.
- Award-winning course designs will be posted on the WU website and possibly on the Teaching and Learning Academy to serve as models for other courses.



5 Required documents

Please provide the following documents with your application:

- A **completed application form**: A detailed and publishable **presentation of the course concept** using the template provided in digital form (pdf or doc). This presentation should not exceed a maximum of **5 pages**.

Appendix: e.g. evaluation results (if applicable), screenshots from the online learning environment (if relevant).

6 Application and selection process

The deadline for submissions is **January 31, 2025**. Please send the completed form and the attachments to lehrenundlernen@wu.ac.at.

The winning entries will be announced by the Vice Rectorate for Academic Programs and Student Affairs in May 2025.

The prizes will be paid out together with WU's other performance bonus payments.

