

Call for Applications for the 2021¹ Innovative Teaching Award

The 2021 Innovative Teaching Award focuses on course designs that provide students with learning environments in which originally distinct and separate parts (e.g. offline/online, formal/informal, individual/socially integrated) are connected to ensure a continuous learning process for students.

1 Objectives

The goal of the Innovative Teaching Award is to reward instructors who use innovative teaching methods at WU.

Every year, the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs and a group of reviewers (a full professor, a member of the junior faculty, a representative of the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, an expert on the didactics of higher education, and a student nominated by the ÖH Austrian Students' Union) compile a list of no more than ten courses selected for the Innovative Teaching Award. This list is then presented to the Rector's Council.

The award aims to:

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

2 Seamless learning: shaping learning environments

"Seamless learning" means to design learning environments in a way that allow students to experience continuous learning processes. Due to the special circumstances in the summer semester 2020, this was exceptionally important when learning environments had to be quickly transferred from an analogue to a digital environment. The situation in the winter semester 2020/2021 also requires considerable adaptations of the learning environment. Consequently, the focus of this year's innovative teaching award lies on innovative course designs which aim at providing a seamless learning environment.

¹ Courses held during the 2020 calendar year (summer semester 2020, winter semester 2020/21) are eligible for the 2021 Innovative Teaching Award. Courses held over two semesters (WS 2019/20–SS 2020) can also be nominated.

Seamless learning environments can be designed in various dimensions. In these special times the focus often lies on the dimension analogue/digital. In this regard, analogue learning shall be connected and combined in an innovative way with digital learning as well as online learning with offline learning. Technology is important in this respect, but not the sole focus. Instead, one of the challenges is finding an adequate use of technology in order to bridge different contexts.

“Seamless learning” environments do not only connect analogue with digital settings, but also aim at bringing together knowledge and skills acquired in different learning contexts, e.g. formal or informal contexts. This means that learning outside the institutional context is encouraged and connected with formal, institutionalized learning. Hereby knowledge and skills which are acquired outside the analogue and virtual lecture – e.g. during leisure times or within the family – are integrated into the course. Another aspect is the involvement of external partners, for example practitioners, which allows interconnecting their knowledge with scientific approaches. Moreover, non-academic knowledge and skills of students, as for example skills gained in internships, can be incorporated into the lecture to ensure a continuous learning process.

With learning at various places and at various times a fourth dimension is taken into consideration. Students study at a variety of public and private spaces. Seamless learning environments encourage learning across different places and acknowledge its positive effects. Simultaneously, available learning environments (at WU) are integrated and used to support learning independent from institutional time frames, so that students can study whenever it is most efficient for them.

Innovative course designs in the field of “Seamless learning: shaping learning environments” can be designed as followed:

- **Course designs in which analogue and digital elements are creatively combined**

Which methods are used in your course to connect the physical and digital learning environments available at WU? How is technology-enhanced learning combined with analogue elements in your course? How do you combine different technologies in your course? How do you integrate digital elements in analogue courses? Which didactic approaches do you apply to ensure a seamless transition from analogue to digital and vice versa? How do you design teaching and learning materials, so that students can access them from different devices? How do you utilize augmented, mixed or virtual reality in your course?

- **Course designs in which the integration of knowledge gained in various contexts is encouraged**

While formal learning comprises institutionalized and structured learning of previously defined content, informal learning takes place outside of formal institutions and settings, e.g. during leisure times, in everyday life or during internships. Which methods do you apply to encourage students' informal learning? How are informal and formal learning linked? How is non-academic knowledge, e.g. gained through internships, volunteer work or professional activities, integrated in the course? What methods do you use to connect individually acquired knowledge and knowledge gained in groups? How do you incorporate the input of external partners constructively in your course? What role do experts from the field play in your course design? Which (technical) tools do you use to interconnect knowledge from different contexts?

- **Course designs which facilitate learning independent from time and space**

Students make use of various places and times for their learning: On their way to the university, in public places, in teaching and learning spaces on campus, but also at home. Which assignments do you use to support students' learning outside established learning and teaching spaces? How do you make use of the facilities available in WU's learning and teaching spaces (e.g. smartboards)? How do you use the physical and digital infrastructure at WU (e.g. videos, streaming, tools for surveys and quiz) to encourage learning at various places and times? Which methods and approaches do you apply to encourage students to transfer their knowledge and skills to various fields? Which innovative activities do you use to encourage learning independent from pre-established schedules? How do you integrate WU's learning environment to enable time-independent learning?

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 2020 (SS 2020, WS 2020/21) 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 the application form in digital form (pdf or doc). This presentation should not exceed a **maximum of five pages** (excluding appendix).
- Appendix: e.g. evaluation results (if applicable)

6 Application and selection process

The deadline for submissions is **February 10, 2021**. The documents can be sent to lehrenundlernen@wu.ac.at.

The winning entries will be selected in May 2020 and the Innovative Teaching Award will be presented at the WU Awards Ceremony. The prizes will be paid out together with WU's other performance bonus payments.