UNITA CALL FOR GRANTS ON INNOVATION

IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

DESCRIPTION AND RULES

April 2025

Keeping in line with UNITA's objectives for innovation in teaching and learning, as well as with UNITA's goals for consolidating a sustainable academic community, we are pleased to invite applications to the UNITA Call for Grants on Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The aim of this call is to foster and consolidate cooperation in the area of higher education among the teaching staff of the UNITA European Alliance partner universities.

Proposals may be submitted by scholars across the UNITA European Alliance in various disciplines, respecting the principle that all those **interested in the initiative can submit or in any case participate in only one proposal.**

Article 1. Background

The UNITA Teaching & Learning (T&L) network is devoted to boosting innovation in teaching and learning among UNITA partners. In particular, the network aims to foster educational design and delivery methods, assessment methods and techniques, learning environments, and/or developing new skills and competencies within a European framework. The UNITA T&L network intends to promote connection and cooperation among teachers and students from each partner University to spread excellent practices and foster intercultural competencies. Adapting educational content and delivery methods to address international classrooms is crucial for a successful international education framework. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and intercultural competence-based teaching are powerful tools for exposing students to the intellectual challenges of traditional mobility. Besides this, as students are at the center of the UNITA educational context, the UNITA T&L network is committed to promoting inclusive and equitable learning while leveraging international perspectives to enrich academic discourse and stimulate student learning.

During the first phase of UNITA (2020-2023), the T&L network organized 9 training sessions that involved around 1000 participants. In the second phase of the project (2023-2027), integrating the new partners and associated ones while continuing to offer training opportunities for the UNITA academic community, UNITA, through the T&L network, calls for proposals covering innovative education in an international context.

Article 2. Goals and objectives

The aim of the current call for projects is to strengthen collaboration among UNITA partners by implementing new projects on innovation in teaching and learning. The objectives of this call from the UNITA T&L network are to:

- support strategic projects to promote innovation in teaching and learning throughout the entire UNITA academic community
- enhance the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of best practices among UNITA partners.
- foster community-based relationships to facilitate future collaborative projects.
- develop an international teaching and learning environment that is aligned with the vision of a European University and the UNITA Alliance's objectives.

In the context of the UNITA CALL for GRANTS ON INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING, innovation is understood as the introduction, adaptation, or enhancement of teaching and learning methodologies, strategies, tools, or environments that significantly improve the quality, accessibility, and internationalization of education within the UNITA Alliance.

Article 3. Themes

Any project that aims at promoting innovation and quality of education within UNITA is welcome. However, priority will be given to projects aligned with the declared UNITA pedagogical strategies. Key priority (i.e., non-exhaustive) areas include:

- Innovation in teaching and learning (methods/technologies) (e.g., Competence-Based Learning (CBL), STEAM approaches, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), and student-centered pedagogies) that enhance student outcomes such as motivation, engagement, active learning, and performance, etc.
- Internationalization in the teaching and learning/management of an international class, including effective management of international classrooms.
- Inclusive teaching practices that ensure equitable access to education for all students.
- Assessment strategies tailored for international and intercultural student cohorts.
- Students' agency and student voice, fostering active participation in the learning process
- Methods and teaching strategies that promote lifelong learning, supporting continuous skill development.
- Methods and teaching strategies for micro-credentials, enabling flexible and modular learning pathways.

Article 4. Glossary

- <u>UNITA Full Partner (UFP)</u>: Academic institutions from EU countries which have the role either of beneficiaries or of coordinating institution in the European project UNITA. The UNITA full partners are funded by the European commission acting as the Granting Authority (Grant agreement Project 101124853 — UNITA, Annex 1 Description of Action part A, p. 4): UBI, IPG, UPNA, UNIZAR, UPPA, USMB, UNITO, UNIBS, UVT, UTBV).

- <u>UNITA Associated Partner (UAP)</u>: Academic institutions from non-UE countries which have the role of "associated partner" in the European project UNITA and does not receive funding from the Granting Authority (Consortium agreement UNITA Universitas Montium – Grant agreement no 101124853, 2024, p. 7): HES-SO, CHNU.

- <u>UNITA Partners (UP)</u>: all institutions that are members of the UNITA Alliance (UFP and UAP).

- <u>UNITA Geminae Partners (UGP)</u>: Higher Education Institutions located outside the European Union and which are members of the UNITA Geminae network.

- <u>Principal Coordinator</u> (PC): is the coordinator of the project team (must be a permanent member of the teaching staff from one of the UNITA Partners). The PC will be responsible for the coordination and reporting of the project, and will serve as point of contact, representing the entire team.

- <u>Team Leader (TL)</u>: is the local coordinator of each UNITA Partner team that composes the project team.

- <u>Team Member (TM)</u>: member of the project team, other than PI or TL.

- <u>Beneficiary(ies)</u>: project team (or teams) members, whose project has been selected to be financed under this call or any other UNITA grants call.

Article 5. Eligibility

To be eligible, a project must include at least three distinct University partners from the UNITA Alliance. The only exception applies to Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects, which require a minimum of two university partners due to the complexities involved in synchronizing the different academic calendars.

Each project is led by a permanent member of the teaching staff from the UNITA Alliance, which serves as a coordinating partner and is responsible for managing the project (PC).

Each University partner participates with a team composed of at least one member of the permanent teaching staff, who will lead a team that may also include other teaching staff members, administrative staff, and students. Participation of at least one student is a priority criterion, but not mandatory.

Each coordinating partner or team leader may participate in only one project per call.

Language: all applications and presentations should be conducted in English.

The application's content will be reviewed before the proposals are sent for evaluation, and all the above-mentioned eligibility criteria must be met before evaluation can be considered.

Article 6. Funding and Budgeting

This call finances projects up to a maximum of €15.000 for three partners or more and €10.000 for two partners. These amounts are, in any case, maximum figures, and may be adapted depending on the project. For the selected projects, the project coordinator and the team leaders will receive the budget allocated to her/his unit directly from her/his university.

The funds requested can be used for:

- Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for meetings, events or projects that take place in the countries of the full partner universities in UNITA
- Logistical expenses and costs related to organizing meetings (including expenses for coffee breaks and working lunches) held in the countries of the full partner universities in UNITA
- Other costs related to the implementation of the project – max. 40% of the budget (consumables, software- open access, licenses, etc.). All expenses are also subject to the constraints of the University partner's internal regulations.

Article 7. Application

1. Project proposals should be submitted via the following application link: https://surveysbg.univ-unita.eu/index.php/446683?lang=en

2. Projects should be written in English and must include the following information:

• Identification of a project coordinator with name, surname, affiliation, ORCID ID, CV (max. 3 pages), correspondence address and phone number. For the rest of the team members, the following information should be offered: name, surname, e-mail, affiliation, and ORCID ID.

• Project description, highlighting, among other things, the innovative aspects of the project in comparison to the state of the art, as well as the expected medium- and long-term impact in the UNITA community.

• The role of each UNITA partner in the project.

• Workplan: timing and phases of the project, along with corresponding indicators, where applicable.

• Budget. The funding requested should be divided into the main items of costs and keep in line with the project's activities and objectives.

• Involvement of students and/or relevant stakeholders from outside of the alliance.

• University or UNITA academic and administrative structures that will be involved in activities/ technical/ operational management.

• Sustainability and scalability of the project.

Before proceeding with the qualitative evaluation of the applications, a content check of the submitted documents will ensure that all required details and documents are submitted, and the application file is complete. A file must be complete to be eligible. Only eligible proposals will advance to the evaluation

stage. Note: Members of UNITA Task 3.3 are not eligible to apply for these grants. Prior to the evaluation and selection phase, there will be a verification of compliance with administrative and eligibility requirements performed by a committee composed of one representative from Task 3.3 from each university and, if necessary, UNITA offices representatives in each university, focusing on the following aspects:

- Status of the team members at UNITA universities (permanent contract)

- Budget

- Control of participation in more than one project.

If a non-compliance is identified, the Principal Coordinator will be informed. A five working-days period/deadline, to be counted from the working day after the notification date, will be granted for rectifying non-compliances.

Proposals that do not meet all requirements and that are not rectified within the deadline defined in this article, will not be evaluated. In case of no compliance with the document dimension established in the call or in the form, the evaluation committees will take into consideration only the part of the documents that fall within the limit.

Article 9. Evaluation and selection

Each project will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The innovative nature of the educational project (e.g. challenge-based methodology, digitalization dimension, etc).
- The medium- and long-term impact of the project on the UNITA community.
- Number of UNITA partner universities involved in the project.
- The degree of involvement of each partner in the development and implementation of the project.
- The degree of involvement of UNITA students and external partners in the project.
- A coherent and clearly formulated work plan (i.e., with attainable objectives and timelines)
- Sustainability (how the project will be financially sustainable once the funding is over).
- Scalability (i.e., the potential for replication or adaptation across UNITA universities or in a broader context).

Evaluation Committee(s)

A Committee will evaluate the eligible proposals. The evaluation committee will consist of members of Task 3.3, student representatives from the UNITA Students Assembly, UNITA vice-rectors responsible in the area of Education and experts in academic development across the UNITA alliance. The Evaluation Committee(s) will have a chairman who will coordinate the evaluation process, centralize the scores, and communicate the results.

Evaluation process

The projects that comply with administrative and eligibility requirements will be evaluated and selected in two stages. An application must receive at least 60/100 points to be financed.

Stage 1. Double peer review of the applications and interview

A double peer review (32%) of the final application is based on the average score given by two independent evaluators, along with an oral presentation component (28%) that assesses the applicant's ability to effectively present and defend their project. Together, these two parts account for 60% of the final score.

Double-peer review (32 points)

Each proposal is evaluated independently by two assessors, using a scoring scale of 0 to 32 points and considering the criteria mentioned above:

- Innovative nature of the educational project
- The level of involvement of UNITA students and stakeholders
- Methodological rigor
- Medium- and long-term impact on the UNITA community
- Number of UNITA universities involved
- Degree of involvement for each partner
- The coherence and clarity of the work plan
- Sustainability
- Scalability

Peer reviewers assess projects according to the established criteria and are required to justify their scores. In a moderated session, the two assessors discuss their evaluations with the Chairman present to reach a consensus score.

Oral presentation interview (28 points)

The oral presentation assesses the applicant's ability to explain, defend, and demonstrate their project's potential. Key components:

- Clarity of presentation
- Engagement and persuasion
- Ability to address questions
- Language and Multicultural Adaptability

The final results are given to an application and cannot be contested by the applicant. The evaluation results will be communicated to applicants by e-mail, and the list of beneficiaries will be announced publicly on the UNITA Alliance website (https://univ-unita.eu/Sites/).

Stage 2. Approval by Vice Rectors (40 points)

Process Overview

Applications reviewed in Stage 1 are forwarded to the Vice Rectors (or equivalent authorities) in charge of academic development or educational portfolios.

Approval decisions will be in line with the objectives of the UNITA Alliance in relation to teaching and learning, with internal partner universities' considerations such as budgetary allowances and strategic alignment of the project with institutional priorities.

Approval Criteria

Alignment with the university's internal priorities and resources:

- The project aligns with the university's internal strategic goals and educational development plans.
- The proposal demonstrates feasibility within the available institutional resources.

Feasibility of implementation within the given budget and timeframe:

- The budget is realistic and appropriately justified.
- The project includes a clear plan for continuation beyond the initial funding phase.

Previous engagement in UNITA activities constitutes an advantage:

- Projects led by applicants with a proven track record of active participation in UNITA initiatives (e.g., previous UNITA-funded projects, COIL programs, faculty exchanges, training activities, curriculum development, or governance roles) will receive additional consideration.
- Long-term contributors to UNITA's teaching and learning network will be prioritized, as their experience strengthens the likelihood of project success and long-term integration within the Alliance.

Scalability and Impact:

- The project has the potential for replication across multiple UNITA universities.
- It demonstrates a clear long-term impact on teaching and learning practices within the UNITA academic community.

Communication of results

Applicants will be informed of their project's status (approved or not approved) after Stage 2. Detailed feedback from both stages will be provided for refinement in future calls.

Article 10. Obligations of the Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries agree to provide information on UNITA's support for their project. This will take the form of using the UNITA and other appropriate logos in all communication related to the project.

Moreover, the beneficiaries are committed to producing a report and to presenting their work in case a restitution event is organized. The beneficiaries will write up their experiences, outcomes, and assessments in a brief report and disseminate their experiences in one of the Collaborative conversations to share teaching practices with faculty colleagues offered throughout the academic year. All publications resulting from funded research must provide a recognition citation that the work was funded (at least in part) by UNITA – Universitas Montium European Universities Alliance.

Article 11. Intellectual Property and Industrial Property Rights

If new intellectual properties are created during the project's development, an agreement between the partner universities will be established. The use of Creative Commons licenses (https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/cclicenses/) is encouraged.

Article 12. Omissions and Additional Information

1. Any situation not covered by this Regulation will be jointly considered and resolved in first instance by all UNITA Offices. Should they jointly declare themselves non-competent in the issue, they will transfer or escalate it to the co-leaders of T3.3, who, in turn, can resolve it or, should it be the case, further escalate it following UNITA's procedures.

2. For any additional information, participants can contact directly the UNITA Office at the respective university, according to the list of emails below:

   a. UBI: unita.office@ubi.pt

   b. IPG: unita@ipg.pt

   c. UPNA: unita@unavarra.es

   d. UNIZAR: unitacontact@unizar.es

   e. UPPA: unita@univ-pau.fr

   f. USMB: unita.office@univ-smb.fr

   g. HES-SO: unita@hes-so.ch

   h. UNITO: unita@unito.it

   i. UNIBS: unita.office@unibs.it

   j. UVT: unita@e-uvt.ro

   k. UNITBV: unita@unitbv.ro

   l. CHNU: unita@chnu.edu.ua

Article 13. Timeline

Launch of the call	28-30th April 2025
Webinar for presentation of the call	Monday, 12th of May 2025, 16.00 CET Time Link: https://datacloud.univ-unita.eu/in-dex.php/apps/bbb/b/zj5Cmbb6T2ekgzG4
Closure of the call	30th of May 2025
Assessment period (Evaluation committees will conduct the peer-review process, oral presentations, and consensus-building sessions to determine the final scores.)	1st of June – 30th of June 2025
Administrative aspects (Finalize agreements with selected projects, notify successful applicants, and provide detailed instructions for the project commencement phase.	30th of June – 23rd of July 2025

Note: Interested parties should ensure that all application documents are complete and submitted before the deadline. Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

Monitoring and supervision of winning projects

To ensure the success of the projects, a structured monitoring process will be conducted, including:

Pre-Implementation Review:

• 1–2 weeks before implementation begins to confirm readiness and address potential gaps.

Quarterly Monitoring:

• Frequency: Every three months from the start of implementation until project completion.

• Methods:

     o Short/Simple Templates: Standardized reporting templates to capture updates on objectives, activities, and milestones (mandatory).

     o Online Meetings: Virtual check-ins to review progress, address challenges, and provide guidance (optional).

Article 14. Treatment of non-rewarded projects

Non-rewarded applicants will receive detailed feedback summarizing the evaluation of their project, including its strengths and areas for improvement based on the established criteria. This feedback is intended to help refine their ideas for future calls. Applicants may also revise their proposals for resubmission in future calls, provided they address the feedback and align with updated requirements. Informal mentoring or guidance may be available to support this process. Additionally, non-rewarded projects might still be included in UNITA's broader teaching and learning innovation network, offering opportunities to collaborate with other initiatives within the Alliance and refine their ideas.

Article 15. Payments/reimbursement of the grants

The grants budget spending will be processed via the UNITA Office of each partner involved in the proposal.

Article 16. Final Dispositions

1. The participation in the call implies full acceptance of these rules.

2. The UNITA Partners, as organizers of this call, do not assume any responsibility for applications that are not in perfect condition or that are lost for reasons beyond the control of the organizers.

3. The UNITA Partners reserve the right to modify this regulation for reasons of force majeure.

4. Duration of projects and final report: projects last between 12 and 18 months. A final report on the project must be submitted within three months of the completion of the project.