

6 October 2023

Dear Colleagues

Call for Proposals
Fund for Innovation and Research into Learning and Teaching (Finlo)
Closing date: 17 November 2023

Stellenbosch University (SU) offers staff opportunities to enhance teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) through the Fund for Innovation and Research into Learning and Teaching, hereafter referred to as Finlo. This is in line with both the current 2018 [Teaching and Learning Policy](#) and the new draft [Teaching-Learning policy \(2023\)](#), which emphasises the promotion of a learning-centred institutional environment where TLA interactions and curriculum can thrive. The fund was established in 2005 to encourage a culture of innovation and research in TLA at the University. The fund provides an opportunity for lecturers to innovate and evaluate effective TLA practices and processes, and investigate TLA challenges, solutions, and trends. It also provides a mechanism for the dissemination of results designed to improve the quality of TLA. Any lecturer, team of lecturers or centre responsible for TLA may apply.

Finlo is awarded twice a year by a subcommittee of the Committee for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (CTLA). Proposals are funded up to a maximum of R60 000. Additional funding for international collaborative projects is available from [Stellenbosch University International](#) (SUI), if the project adheres to specific requirements. A discussion with SUI is advised in such cases. The contact person is Sarah Jane van der Westhuizen at the Centre for Global Engagement – sarahvdw@sun.ac.za.

SU academic and support staff are herewith invited to submit proposals for funding of research and innovation projects which aim to enhance TLA at SU, with a focus on reviewing, re-designing, and renewing the academic offering. Such a focus encourages reflection with a view to transforming and improving TLA. The webpage for the [Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement](#) provides answers to *frequently asked questions* about TLA.

The current November 2023 call encourages submissions for

- (1) longitudinal research projects, as well as**
- (2) collaborative TLA practices¹, projects and research within and across disciplines, departments and modules as aligned to the academic renewal game changer at SU.**

Longitudinal research projects – The Finlo Committee will fund projects that are (or may recommend they be) conceptualised as a longitudinal project. Longitudinal approaches “are well suited for investigating phenomena that change over time such as developmental processes, responses to interventions, and societal trends” (Plano Clark et al, 2015)². Finlo will agree to fund the requested amount in stages (ring-fenced) subject to all reporting conditions.

The Finlo Committee will also fund projects related to **collaborative TLA practices and research** in alignment with the SU strategic theme of “Networked and collaborative teaching and learning”. Within the SU context ‘collaborative TLA’ refers to a holistic, dynamic process that fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and engagement, reflecting on real-world challenges and transformation, to inspire future-focused thinking and create a positive societal impact. ‘Collaborative TLA’ integrates diverse perspectives about TLA, while ensuring sustainability of projects through

¹ If you would like to learn more about “teaching collaboration” in the SU context, contact finlo@sun.ac.za. A professional development opportunity could be arranged to consider a potential pathway towards applying for an SU Collaborative Teaching Award in future.

² Plano Clark, V.L., Anderson, N., Wertz, J.A., Zhou, Y., Schumacher, K. and Miaskowski, C., 2015. Conceptualizing longitudinal mixed methods designs: A methodological review of health sciences research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 9(4), pp.297-319.

ongoing critical reflection to enhance TLA practices³. Newell and Bain (2018: 17)⁴ allude to “two or more agents” (lecturers) collaborating on a TLA project to reach “a common goal or mutual benefit”. Furthermore, Lock et al. (2016)⁵ aptly define ‘collaborative teaching’ as teaching collaborators bringing their skills and competencies to the collaborative relationship in ways that create a TLA dynamic greater than can be achieved individually.

Academic Renewal was identified as one of the SU game changers by the Rectorate in 2021 and further refined at the Institutional and Executive Planning forums in 2022. During February 2023, Academic Renewal for a Transformative Student and Staff Learning Experience was further specified to contain a number of foci (click [here](#) for a graphic summary of all foci). Finlo proposals aligned, but not limited to the foci listed below are invited:

- **Programme renewal** – SU places a high premium on the quality of its academic offerings, including TLA practices, through continuous academic programme, module and curriculum review, re-design and renewal to facilitate a transformative student learning experience. Addressing aspects of Decoloniality and/or Social Justice, inter-/multi-/trans-disciplinarity and globally networked learning⁶ as part of programme renewal is crucial (refer to the new draft [Teaching-Learning Policy \(2023\)](#)). SU also aims to provide a continuum of learning opportunities for a diverse range of students. Given the unique post-pandemic context and the need for flexibility (pace, place, mode and scale), proposals could explore aspects and dimensions of this context in line with the [Finlo guidelines](#). Hybrid learning offerings could be one such example. Click [here](#) to access the HL webpage for information.
- **Assessment** – Assessment is an integral part of the TLA process. Critical consideration of assessment practices is important to enable learning and to support a transformative student experience. Academic Integrity and the use of learning technologies form part of this consideration, especially in the light of recent developments around [AI \(Artificial Intelligence\)](#), e.g. ChatGPT. Alignment with the 2021 Assessment Policy is recommended (refer to the [SU Assessment Policy](#) and accompanying explanatory [Infographic](#)).
- **Graduate attributes** – Society, universities and employers are currently facing unique situations, which will lead to a change in the profile of the desired graduates and employees. The VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) challenges foreground the need to develop students’ future-readiness for engaging with and responding to, for example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, protect the environment and planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all citizens on earth by 2030. Each SDG balances social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This requires pertinent attention in determining future strategies in higher education. How can we integrate the current SU Graduate Attributes/new draft SU Graduate Profile in the academic offering – inside and outside of the classroom, to develop students as 21st-century citizens and for achieving their full potential upon graduation? The draft reviewed SU Graduate Profile is available [here](#).
- **Student success** – Student success is viewed holistically as part of a journey (from our first contact with prospective students until they graduate and embrace the role of alumni) where students are guided and supported on a transformative student experience in service of society (CHE 2014:ii and draft revised T-L Policy). As a learning organisation with a learning-centred approach, SU guides and supports student success by offering the best opportunities and enablers for enhanced learning experiences. The Extended Curriculum Programme, peer-to-peer learning, [student feedback](#), [co-curriculum offerings](#), etcetera, are some examples of such enablers.

How to Apply for Finlo

To apply, complete the 2023 application form electronically [here](#). Only applications made on this electronic form will be considered. You can view an inactive version of the application form [here](#).

³ The definition was the outcome of a literature study and workshop in March 2023 where a group of SU academics brainstormed the notion of ‘collaborative’ TLA at SU.

⁴ Newell, C. and Bain, A., 2018. *Team-based collaboration in higher education learning and teaching: A review of the literature*. Bathurst: Springer.

⁵ Lock, J., Clancy, T., Lisella, R., Rosenau, P., Ferreira, C. and Rainsbury, J., 2016. The lived experiences of instructors co-teaching in higher education. *Brock Education Journal*, 26(1).

⁶ Globally Networked Learning – Projects aligned to and emphasising the SU strategic vision of building effective collaborations through partnerships and networks with international institutions and contributing to excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. Examples include virtual exchanges or collaborative online international learning. Such projects may apply for additional funding and require additional consultations between the applicant and SU International.

You should pay special attention to the guidelines and criteria for the application for Finlo funding, available [here](#).

See [here](#) for the Regulations for the Management of the Fund for Innovation and Research in Learning and Teaching (Finlo).

All applications are considered by the **Finlo Committee**:

- Dr Nicoline Herman, Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning, nherman@sun.ac.za
- Dr Anthea Jacobs, Senior advisor: Centre for Teaching and Learning, jacobsa@sun.ac.za
- Dr Taryn Bernard, Senior lecturer: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, tbernard@sun.ac.za
- Dr Jan Petrus Bosman, Director: Centre for Learning Technologies, jpbosman@sun.ac.za
- Prof Ashraf Kagee, Professor: Psychology Department, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, skagee@sun.ac.za
- Prof Elize Archer, Head of Simulation and Clinical Skills Unit, Acting Director: Centre for Health Professions Education, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, elizea@sun.ac.za
- Prof Shantelle Weber, Senior lecturer: Practical Theology and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, smweber@sun.ac.za
- Prof Gretha Steenkamp, Senior lecturer: School of Accountancy, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, gvn@sun.ac.za
- Dr Zelda Barends, Senior lecturer: Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education, zbarends@sun.ac.za
- Prof Robbie Pott, Professor: Department of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, rpott@sun.ac.za

For more information, contact Finlo at finlo@sun.ac.za.

Kind regards



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