



**REGULATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF
THE FUND FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN LEARNING AND TEACHING (FIRLT)**

Purpose	To enhance learning and teaching for lecturers and students through the funding of learning and teaching projects that are either innovative or research-focused. To provide continuous support from the institution to the sustainability of the FIRLT.
Type of document	Regulation
Accessibility	General (external and internal)
Date of implementation	These regulations were presented and accepted at the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT) on 18/04/2019.
Revision date	August and September 2021
Previous revisions	FIRLT was first implemented at SU in 2005. Regulations previously revised in 2019.
Owner of this policy ¹	Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching
Curator of this policy ²	Senior Director: Division of Learning and Teaching Enhancement

¹ Policy owner: head(s) of responsibility centre(s) in which the policy functions

² Policy curator: administrative head of the division responsible for implementing and maintaining the policy

Date of approval	Revisions adopted by FIRLT committee on 15 July 2021 and by CLT on 26 August 2021
Approved by	FIRLT committee and CLT
Keywords	SoTL; FIRLT; Innovation of T&L

SU policies are available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/policy>.

INTRODUCTION

Stellenbosch University's (SU) Vision 2040 states as its aim to “be Africa’s leading research-intensive university” (p.14) recognised for excellence, inclusivity and innovation to “advance knowledge in the service of society” (ibid). The Strategic Framework 2019-2024 requires networked and collaborative learning and teaching that “encourage intellectual inquisitiveness” and “research for impact”. The framework further calls for “optimising the scientific, economic, social, scholarly and cultural impact of our research” as core strategic themes. It also promotes the continuous renewal of academic programmes that include the integration of learning technologies.

The Teaching and Learning Policy 2018-2022 aims to promote an enabling institutional environment where quality learning and teaching can flourish across the student body, the academic staff cohort, support services divisions and management bodies. This policy is premised on the principle that quality learning and teaching should be informed by scholarship. The **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)**¹ and the body of knowledge underpinning it, should inform both the professionalisation of academics in their teaching role, and the scholarship of their teaching practice. **Scholarly university teachers** are distinguished from reflective practitioners by actively engaging in SoTL with a view to researching and subsequently publishing on teaching practice.

In line with these SU strategic documents and policies, the Fund for Innovation and Research in Learning and Teaching (FIRLT) aims to enhance learning and teaching for lecturers and students through the funding of learning and teaching projects that are either innovative or research-focused. Continuous support from the institution is key to the sustainability of the fund (FIRLT), which is overseen by the FIRLT committee.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

The regulation will be implemented and managed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) with annual reports to the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT).

DEFINITIONS

Scholarship is considered as linking practice to theory, and theory to practice, encapsulated by the dimensions of discovery, integration, application and teaching (SU T&L Policy 2018-2022).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) refers to a broad body of knowledge originally arising from seminal work by Boyer (1990), which draws on the notion of scholarship to bridge the false dichotomy between teaching and research (SU T&L Policy 2018-2022).

Innovation is considered the introduction of a new teaching strategy, approach, idea, method, or device with the aim to enhance and “produce quantifiable gain” for student learning and teaching. Evaluation of the proposed innovation is essential to indicate whether the idea, method or device did enhance learning and teaching.

PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION

The regulation document serves as a guiding and supporting document for managing the FIRLT application and awards processes at SU.

The FIRLT supports the institutional goals to encourage and create an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching innovation with an evaluation component. It also supports these goals with regard to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The purpose of the FIRLT is to provide financial support to lecturers, departments or programmes in order to:

- demonstrate the value of teaching to the institution;
- encourage a research-based approach towards learning and teaching;
- support academics to enhance and/or change their teaching;
- support SoTL at SU; and
- assist academics to effectively innovate or research their learning and teaching.

AIMS OF THE REGULATION

The aim of the regulation is to set out the purpose for the FIRLT and the management of the fund, and to identify sustainable funding sources.

¹SoTL refers to a broad body of knowledge originally arising from seminal work by Boyer (1990), which draws on the notion of scholarship to bridge the false dichotomy between teaching and research.

REGULATION PRINCIPLES

These regulations make provision for measures to enhance learning and teaching research and innovation through the provision of financial support for:

- i) Longitudinal research projects; and
- ii) Short-term research/innovation projects.

Funding will be commensurate with the kind/nature of project proposals.

The FIRLT committee has the obligation and the responsibility to decide on the funding amount depending on the available funds. The committee decisions are made in accordance with the FIRLT guidelines and the feasibility of each application.

REGULATION PROVISIONS

The FIRLT committee will be nominated by the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT). It will comprise members of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and faculty members.

The FIRLT committee will report to the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT) on an annual basis.

Implementation of the FIRLT

The call for proposals will go out twice a year in May and November. A letter from the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) will inform all faculties via the deans, SU media channels and posters of the availability of the fund.

The CTL will, where possible, provide support for proposal writing in the form of consultations, identification of experts and writing retreats as well as support for the dissemination of findings.

Selection of proposals

Requirements for proposals to be considered by the FIRLT committee:

- It must be submitted via the application system as indicated in the Call for Proposals;
- It must be endorsed by the Head of Department/Dean/Director (the approver may not be a co-applicant);
- It must indicate the intended outcome(s), activities, timelines, budget, names and roles of all parties involved;
- It must demonstrate the value of the project for the relevant module, programme, faculty or the university, as well as the possible value for other lecturers, modules or programmes at the university;
- It must indicate how the results would be disseminated within SU and/or at regional and/or international workshops or conferences;

- If marked as *Innovation*, it must demonstrate how they will be evaluated and sustained (should the project be found to be successful);
- If marked as *Research*, it must offer a theoretical framework, research design and findings; and
- It must demonstrate a logical relationship between the need or problem, the proposed activities and intended outcome(s).

Applicants are responsible for obtaining the necessary ethical clearance before beginning the project. New proposals from previous applicants will only be considered if reports from previous projects have been timeously submitted.

The committee will attempt to select proposals from a range of disciplines, faculties and types of innovation/research, but will not specify in advance the overall number of proposals to be selected or the number of proposals per faculty.

Types of activities supported by the FIRLT

Activities designed by faculties, departments, programmes or collaborating and individual lecturers can be supported by the FIRLT. These activities must aim to investigate an aspect of learning and teaching, or to devise an innovation to enhance an aspect of learning and teaching. The innovation or investigation could target an entire module or a component thereof.

The following are illustrative examples of aspects of learning and teaching that could be the focus of a proposal:

- Learning and teaching methods in large or small classes;
- Use of text-based resources or multimedia;
- New methods of assessment;
- Multilingual learning and teaching strategies;
- Team teaching;
- Integrating graduate attributes into content-specific courses;
- Reflective teaching methods;
- Peer teaching;
- Investigations into challenges existing in specific programmes or courses; or
- New methods to support learning in student residences and/or student communities.

Funds may be used for:

- contracting in of teaching, learning or assessment expertise;
- paying a replacement lecturer so that the primary investigator (PI) can undertake the innovation and/or research;
- transcription costs;

- purchase of equipment or software if proven to be integral to the successful implementation of the project;
- tutors/student assistants;
- other feasible expenses required for the success of the project;
- editing costs of FIRLT-funded research papers; and
- journal page fees for FIRLT-funded papers.

Funds may not be used for:

- cost of travel to, registration and attendance of conferences;
- translation services;
- master's and doctoral studies;
- proposals for the implementation and/or design of short courses which generate third-stream income;
- payment to the applicant or co-applicant(s) for research work undertaken (full-time SU staff);
- payment to the applicant or co-applicant(s) for work undertaken (contract staff for their normal working hours);
- payment of a primary investigator involved in more than one application at the same time; and/or
- back-dated payment of work already done.

Commencement of approved projects and taking up of funds:

Where approved projects have not commenced or allocated funds have not been taken up prior to the following Call for Proposals, the allocated funds will be added to and paid out from the budget of the latest call. Further details are set out in the Call for Proposals.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict within these regulations should be resolved within the structures of the university.

REGULATION CONTROL

In the event of non-compliance – i.e. no proof of ethical clearance, project remains incomplete for six (6) months after proposed date of finalisation, misuse of funds, failure to submit progress and final reports or renegeing on the commitments to any of the stipulated criteria – the committee reserves the right to retract the full or part of the amount initially granted.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Item No	Name of Document	Status (e.g. identified, in process, approved)
	Proposal for the Management and Funding of the Fund for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching(FIRLT)	Approved 2019
	Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024	Approved 2018
	Teaching and Learning Policy 2018-2022	Approved 2018
	Guidelines on Teaching and Learning Materials	Approved 2016
	Boyer, E. 1990. <i>Scholarship Reconsidered – Priorities of the Professoriate</i> . Princeton University Press, 3175 Princeton Pike, Lawrenceville, NJ08648	