

PROPOSAL FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING OF THE FUNDS FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN LEARNING AND TEACHING (FIRLT)

Approved by Senate on 1/12/2004

1. Background

The Strategy for Learning and Learning (SLT) calls for more attention to improving teaching and learning at Stellenbosch University, and for the stature of teaching and learning to be enhanced. (Action plan 6.8 and 6.9 in the SLT and 3.3 in the Teaching Management Plan) Faculties, programmes, departments and individual lecturers are requested to respond to the challenge to improve performance with regard to research, teaching and community service. The teaching role requires support in response to the following challenges:

- Increased diversification of the student composition,
- massification of higher education
- economic and national policy pressure on the university, and therefore on lecturers, to increase efficiency
- calls for the curriculum to become increasingly responsive to needs of the economy and society.

Experience in teaching learning innovation in HE shows that the most effective innovations are those which occurs at the initiative of the lecturers themselves, rather than via projects led by or policies imposed by others. These innovations can be supported via consultations or partnerships with dedicated curriculum and professional development staff, for example the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and via allocations of small sums of money for research and development projects.

2. Aim of this document

The aim of this proposal is to set out the purpose for the Fund for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (FIRLT), how it would be managed, by whom, and what the costs and possible funding sources for this would be.

3. Purpose of the FIRLT

3.1 The purpose of the FIRLT is:

- to provide additional financial support to lecturers, departments or programmes wishing to introduce teaching and learning innovations;
- to support academics to enhance their teaching;
- to demonstrate the value of teaching to the institution;
- to encourage a research-based approach towards teaching and learning;
- to help academics to do what they want to do more effectively.

4. What kinds of activities would the FIRLT support?

Activities designed by Faculties, Departments, Programmes or individual lecturers can be supported by the FIRLT. These activities must aim to investigate any aspect of learning and teaching, or to devise an innovation to enhance an aspect of teaching.

The innovation or investigation could target an entire module or programme, or a component of a module.

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

- teaching methods in the large or small class;
- use of text base resources or multimedia;
- use of new methods of assessment;
- use of multilingual methods;
- team teaching;
- new content requiring new methods;
- reflective teaching methods;
- use of peer teaching;
- use of mentors for post-graduate students;
- use of mentors for young/new lecturers;
- investigations into learning problems existing in specific programmes or courses;
- use of methods to support learning in student residences;
- integrating generic skills into content specific courses.

5. What would the funds be used for?

The funds could be used for:

- contracting in of teaching, learning or evaluation expertise (if an outsider does the teaching, this would be as an evaluated pilot – it is therefore preferable that the lecturer involved does the teaching);
- paying a replacement so that lecturers can spend more time on the innovation;
- purchase of equipment or software;
- other expenses required to pilot an innovation, eg. for students to go on a site visit.

6. Management of the FIRLT

Money will be made available twice a year for a six month period, renewable for an additional six month period. A letter from the Vice Rector (Teaching) will inform all faculties via the Deans and the daily bulletin of the availability of the fund.

The team selecting the proposals will be nominated by the KLO. It will comprise two members of the CTL and two Faculty members.

The fund will be managed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning in conjunction with the Faculty of Education, with annual reports to the ABK via the KLO. The use and effectiveness of the funds will be evaluated after three years.

The CTL will provide additional support for the innovations where possible, in the form of consultations, identification of experts and support for the dissemination of the results within the US, for example in the CTL biannual bulletin or support for less experienced writers to publish the results in accredited journals or conference proceedings.

7. Selection of proposals

All proposals must be endorsed by the Head of Department or Programme Convenor and Dean

All proposals must indicate the activities, timelines, budget and intended outcome on a designated form.

All proposals must demonstrate the value of the project for the relevant module, programme, faculty or the university, as well as the value for other lecturers, modules or programmes at the university.

All proposals must indicate how the results could be disseminated within Stellenbosch University or at regional or international workshops or conferences.

All proposals must demonstrate how the innovation will be sustained, should it be successful, or how the findings of the investigations will be taken up in future teaching and learning innovations.

All proposals should demonstrate a logical relationship between the need or problem, the proposed activities and intended outcome.

The selection must attempt to ensure a range of disciplines, faculties and types of innovation, but will not specify in advance the number of proposals to be selected, or that there will be one per faculty.