# Unite! Seed Fund Initiative

## Objectives of the Initiative

The Unite! Seed Fund is envisioned to provide financial support to innovative, co-creative and collaborative ideas across the Unite! alliance. The seed fund intends to support the exploration and development of attractive and diverse activities and projects or to carry out cooperation on joint, ambitious, and innovative ideas within the alliance. **This call is envisioned for setting up joint/collaborative teaching formats, particularly exchange modules for the Bachelor and Master level. Applications are expected to set forth a convincing path towards the creation of a Joint Programme after the completion of the Seed Fund project.**

### Funding Line: "Unite! Seed Fund for Teaching and Learning" (Spring 2026)

Funding initiative for promoting innovation and collaboration in Teaching and Learning in Unite!, preferably – but not exclusively – in the following focus areas:

- ➢ **Artificial Intelligence**
- ➢ **Industry 4.0**
- ➢ **Energy**
- ➢ **Entrepreneurship**

- ➢ **Sustainable Cities and Water[1]**
- ➢ **Engineering Biology[2]**
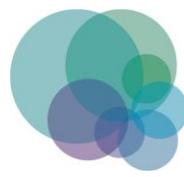- ➢ **Space**
- ➢ **Cybersecurity**

The objective of this call is to foster the **creation of joint courses** within Unite!, i.e. academic programmes that allow students to study at another Unite! university – or at several other Unite! universities – for a certain period, thereby enhancing sustainable student mobility (physical and/or virtual). In the long term, funded projects are **expected to be scaled up into fully-fledged Joint Programmes**, i.e. programmes run by several universities that lead to a Master's degree. *Details under "Objectives and Purpose" (page 2).*

### Award Information and Timeline: Basic Data

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| Seed Fund programme line: | **Teaching & Learning** |
| Maximum budget for each proposal belonging to the programme option "Exploring" | **Up to €10,000** |
| Maximum budget for each proposal belonging to the programme option "Developing":<br>a) 3 participating universities<br>b) 4 participating universities<br>c) 5 participating universities<br>d) 6 participating universities<br>e) 7 participating universities<br>f) 8 participating universities<br>g) 9 participating universities | a) **Up to €20,000**<br>b) **Up to €27,500**<br>c) **Up to €35,000**<br>d) **Up to €44,000**<br>e) **Up to €54,000**<br>f) **Up to €65,000**<br>g) **Up to €80,000** |
| Deadline for proposals: | **20 March 2026** |
| Announcement of results: | **Early June 2026** |
| Funding period for this call: | **October 2026 – December 2027** |

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[1] incl. Resilient Cities and Climate Change.
[2] incl. Biotechnology.

The funding is open to any subject and topic – preferably related to the focus areas mentioned above – and is aimed at **in-person, hybrid, and/or purely digital formats**. The Unite! university alliance invites **teaching staff as well as teaching and learning units** to send proposals of collaborative projects.

## Objectives and Purpose

This call of the Seed Fund intends to support the **creation of joint courses** – be they entirely new or based on preexisting courses that are scaled up or adapted – amongst Unite! members. These can address, e.g., innovative [teaching and learning formats](#) **(e.g. COIL, VECP**, etc.) intercultural or international **learning environments** or **co-creation** of course modules through teaching collaboration, etc.

The joint courses are expected to:

- target the **Bachelor or Master level**
- bear **ECTS credits** (minimum: 10 ECTS)
- be **recognised by the departments/faculties of the universities involved** (relevant letters of commitment are mandatory)
- be devised as **long-term offers**, fully integrated in local course catalogues and replicable beyond the duration of the Seed Fund project
- have a **great potential for being scaled up into Joint Programmes** (typically bearing 120 ECTS)

## Potential Outputs

**Programme Option "Exploring":**
- An initial collaborative educational offer piloting later larger-scale offers
- Contacts for teaching & learning collaboration/ creation of joint consortia established and explored.
- Well-defined collaboration ideas for the next steps towards the creation of exchange modules, Joint Programmes or other large-scale offers

**Programme Option "Developing":**
- Exchange modules developed providing ECTS
- Blended/joint/collaborative courses developed providing ECTS
- New formats of collaborative teaching developed providing ECTS.
- Path towards Joint Programme clearly defined with formation of joint consortia.

## Budgetary Guidance

Eligible costs that can be funded:

- Personnel costs* should be included with clear justification (e.g. conceptualising, preparatory work, accrediting, setting up conditions).
  - The seed fund does <u>not</u> cover staff cost for teaching or grants/stipends for students
  - For regulatory reasons, the Seed Fund <u>cannot</u> be used to cover the costs of grant writing activities (for ERASMUS+ or any other EU funding). Unite! encourages you to write follow-up applications, but these must be covered by your institutional budget.
- Travel expenses (sustainable modes of travel preferred, Erasmus+ mobility schemes should be used wherever possible)
  - Travel costs must be covered (and applied for) by the universities <u>sending</u> students/staff to another university. The host university <u>cannot</u> pay travel costs of visiting students and staff.

- Other costs that can be funded include material resources, consumables, on-site/blended workshops, external service providers (e.g., moderators, language services).
  - The purchase of equipment <u>cannot</u> be funded.
  - The Seed Fund can cover the costs for transferring course materials to the Metacampus (see below and contact metacampus@unite-university.eu for any questions)
- In general, overhead costs <u>cannot</u> be included in the budget plan. In case this poses problems as to the internal regulations of your institution, please contact your Unite! Key Laison Officer (KLO) as well as the Unite! Seed Fund management at seedfund@unite-university.eu.
- <u>The proposal must clearly state in what way the funded activities are additional to ongoing activities.</u> The Seed Fund cannot be used to fund ongoing activities.

## Requirements and Deliverables

- Applications must include academic staff or teachers or teaching units from **at least three Unite! member universities.** Partners beyond Unite! can be included, but not as beneficiaries.
- Funds are expected to be managed through local coordinators within the project.
- When planning a joint teaching offer, **please follow the guidelines in the Online Toolkit and the Catalogue for Students provided by Unite!.** For further questions, please contact melina.nummi@aalto.fi (for collaborative courses) and eija.kujanpaa@aalto.fi as well as kkntssn@kth.se (for Joint Programmes), with Anshika Suri (Unite! Policy & Education Coordinator) in cc.
- **If the usage of a learning management system is planned in the project, we expect Metacampus to be used** and its intended use to be specified in the proposal. Metacampus (as part of the Unite! digital campus) is the central learning management platform for all Unite! members and can be used e.g. for trainings, workshops, teaching, and lectures. For any questions, please contact the Metacampus support team (metacampus@unite-university.eu).
- A written report to the Unite! Secretariat on the progress and results of the project must be submitted two months after the project ends (28 February 2028 at the latest).
- **Only a max. of 50% of the funding can be allocated to one partner in the project**.

## Finding Partners for Seed Fund Proposals

- A **virtual matchmaking event** will be organised with the aim of bringing into contact potential collaboration partners from the Unite! universities. Participation is recommended but not mandatory.

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| Date and time: | **Thursday, 5 February 2026, 12:00-14:00 CET** |
| Registration: | https://eveeno.com/uniteseedfundteaching2026 |
| Deadline for registration: | **Monday, 2 February 2026** (end of day) |
| Explication | It is possible to register either as a 'coordinator' (with a project idea) or as a 'partner' (who is looking for a coordinator). During the virtual meeting, there will be one breakout room per project idea, with the coordinator leading/moderating the discussion. The full list of project ideas will be shared with all registered participants after 2 February 2026. |

**Evaluation Criteria**

1) The **overall quality** of the application, including:

   o Adequate inclusion of relevant academic expertise of the Unite! alliance

   o Realistic work plan and clear deliverables

   o Adequacy of the funding requested

2) The **sustainability and long-term perspective** of the proposal, including:

   o Likelihood of the exchange module to exist as a long-term offer

   o Likelihood that the Seed Fund project can and will be scaled up into a Joint Programme

3) The potential **impact** of the proposal, including:

   o The expected added value for teaching and learning in Unite!

   o Clear benefits for a significant number of students

**Application Procedure**

- Applications can be submitted **until 20 March 2026** via email to seedfund@unite-university.eu

- It is strongly recommended to contact your university's Key Liaison Officer for application guidance.

   o In case you are affiliated with ULisboa, contacting your Key Liaison Officer is mandatory.

   o Inquiries regarding PoliTO should be addressed to unite.pm@polito.it

   o If you are affiliated with Wroclaw Tech, you must follow its internal rules on the preparation and implementation of projects (Link).

   o General inquiries can also be emailed to: seedfund@unite-university.eu

- **Teachers (Professors, academic staff) and teaching and learning units** are eligible to apply.

   o For projects aiming at developing Joint Programmes or other long-term educational offers, **it is mandatory** to **involve at least one full professor per university**. Early Career Researchers are allowed to be local coordinators, but they cannot be the sole representatives of their universities.

- The evaluation of applications will be made by the Unite! Academic Forum (UAF), and selection decisions will be confirmed by the Unite! Steering Committee. Results are **expected by early June 2026.**

- **The complete application packet includes four documents:**

   1) **Project outline** (no more than 1000 words, signatures can be on additional sheet) to be submitted as PDF, which shows how the proposed objectives and funding criteria will be achieved.

      ▪ Please note that there are two different application forms: one for "Exploring" proposals and one for "Developing" proposals

   2) **Budget allocation sheet** (Excel sheet)

   3) **Eligibility checklist** (Excel sheet)

   4) **Letter of commitment** issued by the dean of studies and/or the chair of the participating departments of the universities. If you are affiliated with ULisboa, it is mandatory for you to contact your Key Liaison Officer for guidance as to the letter of support. Wherever relevant, this letter must explicitly:

      ▪ Confirm that the universities involved will recognise the exchange module being offered to the students.

      ▪ Confirm that joint courses, Joint Programmes or other collaborative educational offers developed in the context of the project are devised as long-term offers that will be fully integrated in local curricula.