

Call for participation in the 2022 Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups

Deadline for application: **28 January 2022**

1. Introduction

EUA's [Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups](#) offer EUA member institutions an opportunity for peer-learning and exchange of experience. Resulting institutional practices and recommendations are published and presented at the annual European Learning & Teaching Forum. The work of the groups also feeds into EUA's policy work in the context of the Bologna Process and the European Education Area.

The current call for the 2022 Thematic Peer Groups addresses issues that emerged as particularly pertinent during the first year of the Covid-19 crisis. All topics have a digital dimension, but are not limited to it. The groups are invited to share and discuss the diverse combinations of physical and virtual provision that are currently under exploration at European higher education institutions.

The call is open for [EUA member institutions](#). Participating representatives should be senior leadership and staff with strategic and institutional-level responsibility for learning and teaching, usually vice-rectors or deputy vice-chancellors, directors for academic affairs, directors of institution-level learning and teaching centres, etc. Other members of the institution can be involved, under certain conditions (see below).

There is no participation fee. All meetings will be held virtually and would not require any travel. There might be a chance to hold the group's final workshop in person, which would take place on a self-funded basis. EUA will cover catering costs.

The deadline for applications is 28 January 2022. The results of the call will be announced by mid-February 2022. For further information on the initiative and the application modalities, please read on.

As for the previous, the present round of Thematic Peer Groups is co-organised with the [DIGI-HE](#), a three-year Erasmus+ co-funded project, led by EUA in partnership with Dublin City University (Ireland), Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (Germany), Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and University of Jyväskylä (Finland). The aim of this project is to support higher education institutions in enhancing their institutional approaches to digitalisation.

2. Goals and outcomes

The overall goal is to strengthen and enhance the university's education mission, through peer exchange and learning among the participants, sharing good practice, and provision of recommendations, which may benefit institutions beyond those participating.

All groups will reflect on:

- key opportunities and challenges related to the theme;
- how to address them through strategies and policies, through collaborative processes within and beyond the institution;
- how to develop and use opportunities for external support and collaboration, through partner universities and networks, as well as national and European initiatives.

Based on the exchange of knowledge, experiences and practices, each group is expected to summarise the conclusions in the form of a **short report** that will be published as part of [EUA's Learning & Teaching](#) paper series, and be considered in a reflection paper as part of the final DIGI-HE project report. Each group will be offered the opportunity to present at the 2023 European Learning & Teaching Forum in February.

3. Themes

Digitally competent teachers in designing quality learning environments

The use of digitally enhanced learning and teaching during the Covid-19 crisis brought with it quite a few challenges regarding learning design, provision modes and their organisation (interaction, synchronous and asynchronous, cognitive overload etc.), assessment, student engagement and competences. The European Framework for Digital Competences of Educators ([DigCompEdu](#)) suggests all the mentioned areas as knowledge, skills and attitudes are to be mastered as a part of digital competences that teachers and students require. The group will explore how to enable digitally competent teachers to design and implement quality digital learning, and how this can be supported in institutional and inter-institutional collaboration.

Examples of questions to be discussed:

- How can institutions support teachers and students in developing digital competences? How is this embedded in curricula and courses?
- How can they support teachers in developing quality digital learning design and learning-oriented assessment that engages students and enables them to achieve their learning outcomes?
- How can institutions foster a mindset and culture for digitally enhanced teaching and learning?
- What are the main challenges resulting from digitally enhanced learning and teaching, such as quality, costs, ethical and legal issues, etc.

Collaborative teaching practice

The benefits of peer learning and collaboration in learning and teaching, including the co-design of learning resources, are widely acknowledged in view of the learning opportunities for individuals and teams, quality enhancement, and better use of resources. This becomes even more obvious and pertinent in digitally enhanced learning and teaching. But how common and systematic is this in practice, and how do institutions organise and support it?

Examples of questions to be discussed:

- What are the current practices of peer learning and peer collaboration within and across institutions?
- Do institutions establish systematic and organised processes for co-designing learning and teaching materials? How are staff with different profiles, and students involved?
- What are the results and benefits for staff and students, and the institution?
- How to raise awareness and promote such collaboration?
- What is applicable in inter-university collaboration, within the country, and internationally?
- What are the reservations, obstacles and limitations within institutions, but also at national/system's level?

Needs and wellbeing of student and staff

Needs and wellbeing of student and staff became a key challenge during the Covid-19 crisis in remote, blended and hybrid provision settings. This concerned access to quality learning resources, support and infrastructure, lack of skills in absence of suitable training offers, but also their social situation, well-being, and mental health. While the digitally enhanced learning provision during the pandemic made these challenges graver and more visible, they are also an issue in regular on-campus provision, though probably in different ways.

The group will discuss how institutions can be more attentive and better organised in providing development opportunities, and resources to their members, and enhance wellbeing in physical and virtual settings through pedagogics and services. In the event of sufficient interest, there may be two groups on this topic, one focusing more on the student perspective, the other - on the staff perspective. Please indicate your preference in the application.

Examples of questions to be discussed:

- What technical, pedagogical and other skills students and staff need in digital and physical environments? How to ensure that all students have the necessary skills to learn autonomously? How to boost staff's skills and confidence in terms of learning design, development of materials and teaching in a digital environment? How to support students and staff in managing their digital identities in a responsible and safe way, and are there guidelines for this?
- How to ensure sustainable institutional approaches for wellbeing through an interplay of physical and digitally enhanced learning provision? How to empower actual and potential students and staff through inclusive, accessible and intuitive student-centred support services, off- and online?
- How to enable a more active role of students, as contributors and co-creators, who have responsibilities within the university? How to work with student associations and networks on these issues?
- How to use peer-to-peer or other approaches in physical and digital environments so that students and staff gain a sense of belonging and community, rather than being isolated?
- How to assess impacts and benefits, and balance them against efforts and costs?

4. Timeline and activities

- The results of the call will be announced by **mid-February**.
- On **15 March 2022, from 14.00 to 16.30**, a virtual kick-off event will be held for all members of the groups. All applicants are advised to book this in their agenda.
- In the **period of March to December**, each group will set its own schedule, depending on how it wants to work:
 - Experience from previous rounds suggests that the work needs at least around 20-30 hours of face time, and depending on the engagement and interest, probably the same amount for asynchronous work. This would correspond to 5-6 hours per month.
 - Before the Covid-19 crisis, each group met in person three times for 1 to 1.5 days. Since meetings take place online, most groups organise their work in a combination of longer (2.5-4 h) and shorter meetings (1-1.5h).
 - In order to achieve its goals, each group is free to plan meetings and asynchronous activities, to organise itself in subsets with dedicated tasks, arrange asynchronous exchanges via email and other means.
- In early autumn 2022, a 2 hour mid-term event will offer an opportunity to all groups to meet and exchange.
- A final workshop in early 2023 will facilitate exchange and discussion among all groups. This is usually organised back-to-back with the European Learning & Teaching Forum, which will provide an occasion to present the groups' outcomes to a wider audience. It is hoped this will be a face-to-face event, depending on the public health situation.

Some months after their conclusion, the groups will be invited for a short virtual follow-up event where they can update each other on progress made since their involvement in the Thematic Peer Group meetings. The organisers may offer additional optional opportunities for groups' members to meet and exchange with the other groups.

5. Eligibility and participation

- The call is open to all EUA individual members and DIGI-HE consortium members. The applicant should be represented by a vice-rector, deputy vice-chancellor or another person in a senior position with responsibilities in strategy or learning and teaching at the university. S/he may bring along a second representative to the group meetings.
- Participating universities are encouraged to ensure that student perspectives are included in the groups' work. They are invited to involve a student representative to the meetings (beyond the quota of two representatives per institution).

6. Group composition and management

- Each group will gather eight to ten universities. Every participant is expected to contribute proactively to the discussions.
- One of the group members will chair the group. The chair's responsibilities include the planning of the group's work, facilitation and steering of the discussion during meetings and ensuring focus and goal-orientation. Group chairs will receive a fee-waiver (one per group) for the 2023 European Learning & Teaching Forum. If you are interested in taking up this role, please express your interest in the application. Chairs should be senior institutional leaders with a sound experience in the group's theme.
- The groups and their chairs will be supported by coordinators provided by EUA and the DIGI-HE consortium partners. They will help to organise the work, suggest literature for the groups and support the drafting of the group's report.

7. Selection criteria

The selection of group members will be done on the basis of the motivation of the university and its engagement with the theme, which could be at different levels of experience, as demonstrated in the application. In addition, the following aspects will be considered:

- geographical diversity
- balance of institutional profiles (e.g. multi-faculty, specialised)
- gender balance
- engaging student representative(s) in the work of groups.

If the number of qualified applications exceeds of places, preference will be given to institutions that have not been part of a Thematic Peer Group before.

Each university can submit only one application and participate in only one of the groups. In the application, you are invited to indicate your preferred theme(s) in order of priority.

8. Terms and conditions for participation

Universities interested in participating in the thematic peer groups are invited to fill in the online application, available [here](#), by **28 January 2022**. A pdf version of the application form can also be downloaded [here](#). For further questions please contact digihe@eua.eu.

About EUA

The European University Association (EUA) represents more than 800 universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Through continuous interaction with a range of other

European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard.

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To learn more about the DIGI-HE project, click [here](#).

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