



## **LEARNING & TEACHING PAPER #28**

# Ensuring the quality and impact of staff development in teaching

## Thematic Peer Group Report

Chair: Mary Fitzpatrick  
University of Limerick, Ireland  
EUA Coordinator: Thérèse Zhang

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### **European University Association asbl**

Avenue de l'Yser 24

Rue du Rhône 114

1040 Brussels

Case postale 3174

Belgium

1211 Geneva 3, Switzerland

+32 (0) 2 230 55 44

+41 22 552 02 96

[www.eua.eu](http://www.eua.eu) · [info@eua.eu](mailto:info@eua.eu)

# The “quality” and “impact” of staff development: ideal vs. reality in universities

Provision of staff development<sup>1</sup> and support for exchanges and collaboration between teachers is common among higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe, as confirmed by EUA's Trends 2024 report.<sup>2</sup> Also, in recent years, the crucial role played by teaching staff in higher education has gained recognition among European and national policy makers. In 2024, for example, the ministers responsible for higher education in the Bologna Process acknowledged the role of teaching staff “in supporting high-quality, learner-centred and innovative learning and teaching”.<sup>3</sup> In this context, professional development for teaching staff has been identified as one of the drivers for further enhancing learning and teaching.<sup>4</sup>

To further support staff development and advocate for its integration in HEIs' learning and teaching strategies, the Thematic Peer Group “Ensuring the quality and impact of staff development in teaching” (hereafter “the group”)<sup>5</sup> explored and analysed the links between staff development and overall quality of learning and teaching, as well as the real vs. the desired impact of staff development. In doing so, the group examined how staff development can and should impact the institutional culture of teaching and provided recommendations and examples of best practice to strengthen and amplify this impact.

This report is based on a combination of (1) institutional practices shared by participating universities; (2) qualitative student consultations (see Appendix 2); and (3) discussions in the Thematic Peer Group. The evidence presented is primarily qualitative and illustrative; it does not aim at statistical representativeness.

## “QUALITY”

The group first explored the meaning of the terms “quality” and “impact” in the context of staff development, considering both its purpose and the conditions for its successful implementation.

Quality, as a generic term used in higher education, refers here to enhancement, rather than quality assurance (QA) processes. The group agreed that the quality of staff development is deeply connected to the quality of learning and the student experience: it is not simply about conducting teaching

1 “Staff development” is understood in this report as defined in the [STAFF-DEV project](#): opportunities for HEIs' personnel involved in student learning to grow their professional competences and reflect on their role, conceptions and needs. See Zhang, T., 2025, *Staff development in learning and teaching at European universities. Results from the STAFF-DEV survey* (Brussels, European University Association). <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/staff-development-in-learning-and-teaching-at-european-universities.html> (accessed 03/12/2025).

2 Gaebel, M. and Zhang, T., *Trends 2024. European higher education institutions in times of transition* (Brussels, European University Association). <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/trends-2024.html> (accessed 03/12/2025).

3 European Higher Education Area (EHEA), *Tirana Ministerial Communiqué*, 30 May 2024. <https://ehea.info/Immagini/Tirana-Communique1.pdf> (accessed 03/12/2025).

4 EHEA, 2020, *Annex III to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué. Recommendations to national authorities for the enhancement of higher education learning and teaching in the EHEA*, 19 November 2020. [https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique\\_Annex\\_III.pdf](https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_III.pdf) (accessed 03/12/2025).

5 The list of group members can be found in Appendix 1.

evaluations to assess student satisfaction, nor is it about QA mechanisms still negatively perceived as “control” by some teachers. Overall, staff development boosts the quality of student learning by challenging and changing the learning and teaching cultures in HEIs. It is about supporting teaching staff to instil a future-ready learning and teaching culture that embraces innovation and adaptability.

However, while QA and quality enhancement in institutions *should* systematically include, or at least connect with, staff development activities, the group agreed that this is currently not the case. Ideally, for staff development to connect with quality teaching in institutions, staff development opportunities should be aligned with the institution’s strategic goals, and more fundamentally address what the institution aims to achieve for its education provision. A holistic approach to staff development would include a system of regular monitoring aligned with annual staff appraisals, academic performance evaluations, and personal and competence development plans. Finally, for staff development to play a role in innovative teaching, institutions need to recognise and promote pedagogical innovation – with a variety of incentives, ranging from awards or prizes for good teaching, to frameworks and/or permanent structures to support pedagogical innovation by providing both resources and expertise.

The reality check within group members’ institutions shows that:

- Greater commitment to improving teaching often leads to an increased workload for academics, which has become a significant factor affecting their wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>
- Staff development and incentives for good teaching attract the attention of only those staff members who are already committed to improving their teaching. The question for many institutions is how to reach the remaining and sometimes considerable share of staff, especially those who need to enhance their teaching but do not engage with professional development activities.
- Teaching evaluation processes still need to be improved: first, they should not only consist of student feedback evaluations (which are used by a vast majority of HEIs); second, depending on academics’ contract status, it can be complex to tackle “bad teaching” and teaching that negatively impacts student learning. Moreover, student feedback evaluations as part of formal (QA) processes typically fail to capture human-driven aspects that make a difference to student learning (such as the teacher’s personality, sense of humour, or empathy) but are not accounted for. Overall, in order to be better recognised through career progression, teaching needs to be evaluated following clear and sound methodologies, and institutions still struggle to find the right approaches to evaluating teaching.
- Universities are typically process-heavy, but staff development has yet to find its place and role within institutional processes. Moreover, it needs to be embedded in an ecosystem where improving learning and teaching is valued. However, national regulations (for career progression, qualifications required upon entry, etc.) can be somewhat prescriptive in terms of what counts for academic assessment and career advancement.

## “IMPACT”

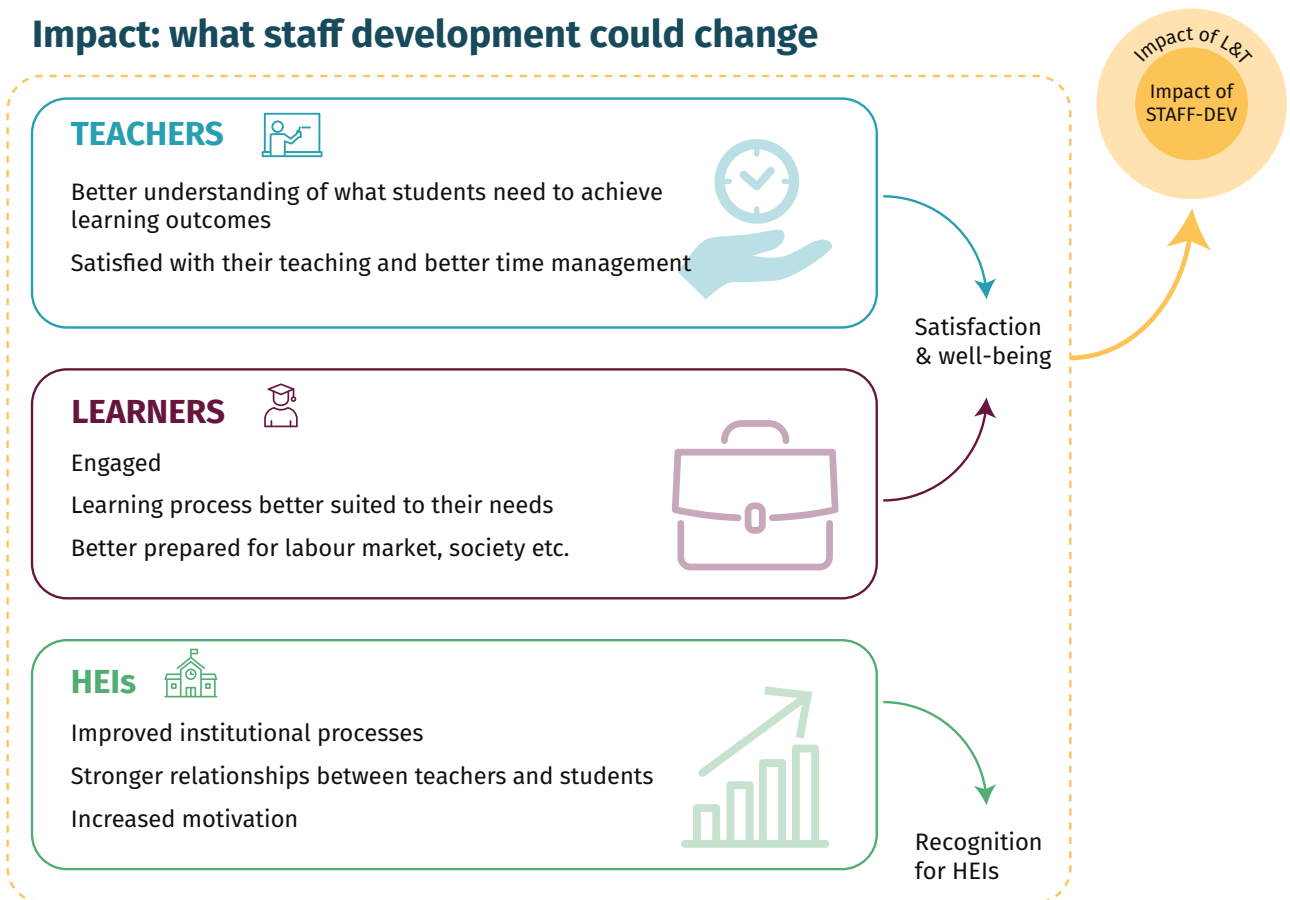
The impact of staff development should be assessed in terms of its effectiveness for teachers (career progression, professional development), students (impact on their learning), and institutions (enhancing the learning and teaching culture, the quality of education provision and relevance of study programmes). Conceptually, the impact of staff development intertwines with, but is not equivalent to, the impact of learning and teaching on students generally. However, it is difficult to assess or evaluate the direct correlation as so many other factors also play a role.

<sup>6</sup> As also shown by the [STAFF-DEV survey data](#), time to invest in improving teaching is the number one challenge to organising and offering staff development in European higher education institutions.

The impact of staff development is not only about the results, but also about the process: building resilience in teachers, supporting them as their confidence grows in using innovative teaching methods, and managing their time and workload more efficiently. This means that the impact evaluation should not only take place immediately after the development initiative, but also after a year or during the next course cycle, when teachers can start implementing what they have learnt.<sup>7</sup>

It is challenging to align quantifiable metrics with the impact of staff development, given the multiplicity of factors involved in the learning experience.

**Impact: what staff development could change**



The student perspective is key to understanding the impact of staff development, and students were consulted in each of the group members' institutions (see Appendix II for outcomes). Students highlighted several areas where targeted staff development could significantly enhance their learning experience. First, they see a need to shift from a transmission-based, teacher-centric model to a more student-centred, dialogue-based model nurtured by up-to-date pedagogical approaches. Second, students are also keen to move from a system where they provide feedback with no knowledge of the results, to a system where they know that their feedback is valued by the institution and by individual teachers who engage with and act upon it. In summary, students are calling for a staff development system that gives priority to practical, regularly updated pedagogical skills, robust assessment and feedback techniques, and a culture of transparency where staff are empowered to act on student contribution and feedback.

<sup>7</sup> Kirkpatrick, D. L., 1959, "Techniques for evaluation training programs" in *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, 13, pp. 21-26. While the Kirkpatrick model remains influential, its limitations in capturing complex and long-term impact in higher education contexts are also acknowledged.

# Challenges

As explained earlier, there is a difference between what the group unanimously defined as “quality” and “impact” of staff development, and the actual reality within their own institutions. The group identified a series of challenges at the individual, institutional, macro-learning and teaching levels.

## 1. Challenges to individuals

- A heavy workload is reported to be a major challenge for teachers. Time invested in staff development is additional to their key roles (teaching, research, administration, etc.), meaning that time constraints and work overload can prevent them from prioritising their professional development.
- The recognition/reward/promotion loop does not work (yet) in all institutions. It is difficult to incentivise staff if the time and effort they invest in improving their teaching is not recognised through career promotion and progression.
- Innovations that have an impact on learning and teaching, such as digital tools and artificial intelligence, are evolving rapidly. This puts pressure on teachers who constantly need to adapt their educational resources. While staff development can support them in this, the rapid pace of change can cause exhaustion and “teaching fatigue”.
- Teachers may still show resistance or scepticism towards the usefulness and added value of teaching evaluation and staff development, which they may see as a way to control their teaching.
- Many institutions report difficulties in addressing quality and skills gaps among teachers, as not everyone has the same needs. There is still no consensus on whether staff development should be mandatory or not, and, if so, for which categories of staff. Typically, in countries where training in pedagogy is mandatory, it is so at entry level for teaching staff. Although more established staff members might also greatly benefit from training, there is no requirement for them to engage. Institutions do not always have the resources to handle staff development in an individualised way that fits each teacher’s needs.
- HEIs still have difficulty reflecting on the professional identity shift occurring among those responsible for teaching: what is a teacher nowadays? What is their role in a world where knowledge is everywhere? How do they add value to higher education? What is the right balance between a monopoly of knowledge and openness to change? Core questions such as these may be uncomfortable for individuals and challenging for institutions.

## 2. Challenges to the institution's organisation

- Institutions still struggle to reach a common understanding of what the “quality of learning and teaching” should be, and what they want to achieve through their vision of education. It is not only a matter of communication across the institutions and faculties; it is also an issue of ownership. Engaging with everyone, from staff to students, is very challenging in universities with diverse power and decision-making structures and processes, and distributed leadership.
- Institutions struggle to establish a more holistic vision of change in learning and teaching, where staff development has a key role and its impact is monitored. The impact and purpose of staff development on the institution's learning and teaching culture may not be immediately evident to teachers.
- Staff development initiatives within the same institution may be fragmented and, at times, even competitive, reflecting the lack of a coherent staff development plan.
- The assumption that academics are automatically competent teachers needs to be challenged, as it perpetuates both good and bad experiences. In higher education, the development of a professional teaching identity still lacks clear reference points based on actual competences that go beyond the classroom experience.
- Some institutions have limited capacity to organise and offer staff development.

## 3. Challenges to learning and teaching generally

- Early-career academics may tend to model their teaching style on that of their own former teachers, meaning that both effective/beneficial and ineffective/detrimental patterns, methods and attitudes may be repeated.
- Teaching evaluation can still be improved in most institutions. There is also a lack of transparency in metrics/measures used for professional progress. Institutions are unsure how to create the right conditions to strike a balance between support and effectiveness.
- The disparity of esteem granted to teaching tasks compared to research tasks makes it difficult to make time, or prioritise time dedicated to improving teaching.
- The culture of learning from each other (peer learning, peer mentoring, etc.) and forming learning communities is not part of all academic cultures.
- A culture of pedagogical innovation may still be lacking at national/higher education level, with low awareness of the need for an evidence base and research to support innovative teaching.

# Recommendations to universities and examples of practice

Throughout their exploration of the theme, the group repeatedly emphasised the intrinsic link between the quality and impact of staff development and general change management processes in universities. Staff development, with its supportive role for individuals and its strategic role for institutions, can serve to advocate for change and to question, redefine, and enhance the future of university education.

The group proposes the following recommendations to address the challenges identified. These recommendations are not exhaustive and are presented in order of strategic importance, while acknowledging institutional and national diversity.

## Recommendation #1

### Build staff development as an intrinsic part of the university's commitment to quality learning and teaching

1. For staff development to render impact and connect with the quality of student learning, institutions need to design and organise it so that it aligns with the institution's strategy and vision for learning and teaching, and supports their implementation. Staff development activities should be given greater visibility and be seen as a means of reaching the institution's goals in learning and teaching. To do this, institutions may consider:
  - Aligning staff development in teaching with the institution's strategic goals;
  - Adopting a holistic approach to identifying and prioritising areas of institutional improvement, combining teaching innovation, resources management, technological solutions and infrastructure;
  - Engaging with both internal stakeholders (staff and students) and external partners (employers, local communities, industry actors) to support teachers' continuing professional practice);
  - Establishing and building capacity of support and organisational structures, such as learning and teaching centres, to assist teachers in planning and organising their professional development in collaboration with other units/centres, such as faculty-based centres, peer groups, advisory boards, etc.

#### ➔ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

##### Developing a university learning, teaching and assessment strategy

When developing their [Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy](#), the **University of Limerick** (Ireland) engaged in a campus-wide consultation to identify key priorities in learning, teaching and assessment. The resulting strategy comprises three key pillars, with one dedicated to "transforming teaching", which clearly outlines the aims, actions, and expected outcomes related to the role of staff development. The broad consultation process generated high engagement and a clear focus on implementing the strategy across the campus.

#### ◉ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

##### A charter on university pedagogy

Since 2012, the **Université libre de Bruxelles** (Belgium) has adopted a [charter on pedagogy](#), which describes the university's vision of education. The charter sets out the institution's expectations of both students and teachers, and what the university does to support them to better learn and teach.

#### ◉ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

##### One centre for innovation and academic development

**SWPS University** (Poland) is composed of 12 faculties and six campuses, spread across six cities. Their [Center for Academic Competence Development](#) helps to address fragmentation in staff development offerings, by combining a variety of formats under the aegis of the same centre, and bringing staff from different parts of the university together. With the aim of focusing on staff's skill gaps (notably with AI), the centre provides training for all teaching staff, with significant hybrid and online opportunities. Under their teaching advisers programme, experienced teachers provide support through peer observations and advice. The centre also tries to stay connected with the university's research mission, with a view to promoting holistic career paths.

2. Institutions need to increase or improve monitoring, evaluation, evidence and research-informed processes to document the quality and impact OF staff development. The outcomes of these processes should inform decision-making and planning, and show how useful and efficient staff development could be. To this end:
  - Existing internal QA and management processes in institutions should be used as they already contain a wealth of data and evidence.
  - Internal QA processes should be able to monitor teachers' competences and performance so as to inform their professional development. This entails not limiting teaching evaluation to student surveys, but triangulating with other methods such as conducting peer-to-peer observations, giving value to self-reflection (e.g. using a teaching portfolio), etc.
  - Institutions need to consider mapping and tracking teachers' workload, not only in terms of teaching, but also other responsibilities and tasks that add further pressure (research, university administration, or service to society).

#### ◉ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

##### Redesigning teaching evaluations

At the **University of Geneva** (Switzerland), teaching evaluations previously consisted of broad surveys, which resulted in data and administrative overload and limited added value. The institution decided to pause teaching evaluations in 2025-2026 in order to reflect on alternative evaluation methods. Some deans opposed this decision, as teaching evaluation results were also used to determine teachers' career progression. The university plans to relaunch teaching evaluations in 2026-2027 and is also considering other, complementary methods such as peer observations, classroom assessment techniques, and student-led focus groups.

## Recommendation #2

Organise, structure, and promote staff development opportunities to encourage an institutional shift towards better recognition of learning and teaching.

To this end, institutions need to design and organise staff development so that it provides continuous, sustained interventions and is communicated appropriately:

1. Staff development offerings should be designed to target different categories/groups of staff: not only those responsible for teaching, but also teaching support staff, administrative staff, and all those involved in student learning and in organising learning and teaching in the institution.
2. Diverse offerings and types of support (different times, formats) facilitates organisation and boosts motivation and participation among staff by helping them overcome psychological barriers.
  - Specific offerings should target onboarding of new or entry-level teaching staff.
  - Institutions would benefit from supporting and increasing the visibility of opportunities for peer learning and communities of practice.
  - While teachers need stable structures to rely on, they also need the freedom to adapt and develop their teaching. Staff development should be designed in such a way that leaves enough space to approach and help teachers individually, including in their specific disciplinary context, while outlining possible development routes.

### ➔ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

#### Investing in a long(er) format training

To help teachers transfer what they have learnt in training courses into their teaching, the **University of Applied Sciences RheinMain** (Germany) offers "[Focus Teaching](#)", a one-year teacher development programme, with three seminars lasting three days each, and during which participants are expected to complete two teaching projects. Teachers are accompanied by a support group analysing their teaching practices. Teachers who have taken part in the programme reported significant benefits, with the support of educational developers helping to increase their engagement.

3. Staff development opportunities, whether formal or informal, structured or unstructured, should provide space to openly reflect and exchange on the changing role of teachers, and on building resilience and self-confidence among teachers.

### ➔ EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

#### Investing in teaching

**Vilnius University** (Lithuania) is investing in teacher development through a [range of measures](#), including recognition of staff development in promotion processes and quality enhancement (monetary) bonuses, teaching awards, innovation days, and an innovation fund. Overall, these mechanisms generate more diverse and interesting innovations in teaching, and raise interest in quality enhancement and continuous professional development activities. It also creates a core set of teaching competences that contributes to the changing role of teachers: teaching, assessing and supervising students, developing students' research and analytical skills as part of their graduate attributes, contributing to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals through study processes, developing interdisciplinarity in collaboration with other teachers, etc.

### Recommendation #3

Increase recognition of learning and teaching: for staff development to have an impact, it needs to take place in a context where learning and teaching is valued, where teachers are empowered, and where teaching competences are clearly defined as scholarly and professional competences.

1. Institutions should recognise learning and teaching as a core mission that encompasses concrete actions:
  - A career progression and professional development path that is clear, explicit and visible to individual teachers and to the whole university community.
  - A more robust approach to evaluating teaching competence, aiming to define promotion criteria for academic staff based on sound methodologies that can be widely accepted in the academic community. One potential example is an academic teaching competence framework that is specific to the institution, where teaching is visible and attractive, and equally valued alongside research.
  - Mechanisms to encourage self-reflection among teachers (self-evaluation tools).
  - Individualised approaches to staff development through institutional HR processes.
2. Institutions should embed and support all types of initiatives that recognise and encourage innovation in teaching, notably:
  - Grants to support teaching innovation initiatives.
  - Participation in conferences and seminars on teaching, including internationally and across institutions.
  - A reduced teaching load to enable teaching innovation projects.
  - Administrative support for projects aiming to improve and innovate teaching.
  - A remuneration/reward system for teaching excellence, focusing on specific projects, practices and methods (not just “being a good teacher”).
  - Learning communities and communities of practice.
  - Ensuring that successful initiatives are not short-lived and limited by a project lifetime, but can become sustainable and mainstreamed.

#### 🔗 EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

##### Teaching awards by students

At **Riga Technical University** (Latvia), students annually select a teacher for a teaching award in each faculty, as well as at institutional level (awarded by the university’s student parliament). The awards promote teaching that explores new methods. They increase student engagement in a feedback culture where students can express their concerns and suggestions. Recipient teachers often build a stronger relationship with other teachers, and are seen as leaders in pedagogy. In the future, the university aims to improve the consistency and objectivity of student feedback, as well as increasing the number of students actively providing feedback on teaching.

### 🔗 EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

#### Developing faculty-based professional learning communities

**Masaryk University** (Czechia) provides support and recognition for staff in their teaching roles, notably by creating the conditions required to develop professional learning communities, which are based in faculties but encourage multidisciplinary collaboration among staff. This new initiative started in September 2024; it complements other support measures related to innovation in teaching, such as grants. These require a teaching portfolio and participation in peer reflection meetings, and teachers who receive an award serve as ambassadors of practice, helping to shape a shared vision of teaching quality. Over the last three years, 100 grants were awarded to over 100 staff members.

3. Recognition for good teaching and evaluation of teaching performance should be based on teachers' expected attributes, beyond their classroom teaching, such as innovation in teaching, student involvement in research, student supervision, mentoring practices, student engagement, and feedback literacy.

### 🔗 EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

#### Mapping needs training needs for teaching staff

**The University of Coimbra** (Portugal) takes part in a national mapping exercise that provides a diagnosis on staff training for pedagogical innovation in higher education. This mapping is part of the work conducted under the aegis of the Portuguese [National Council for Pedagogical Innovation in Higher Education](#), established in autumn 2024. Portuguese universities struggle with a lack of structure for continuous training for higher education teachers; this diagnosis will help to identify training needs, based on input from the academic community across the country.

For all these recommendations, group members highlighted the need to allocate sufficient time for implementation and for measures that create a meaningful impact. However, while the contribution of staff development to innovation in teaching should be acknowledged, today's rapid pace of change should also be taken into account: the lifespan of an "innovation" in the digital age is much shorter than in the era of classroom blackboards. In this sense, the quality and impact of staff development are defined by the balance between keeping pace with innovation and student needs, and ensuring the longer-term sustainability of teaching through continuous innovation. The group members hope that their recommendations will guide universities in effectively managing this balance.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1: EUA LEARNING & TEACHING THEMATIC PEER GROUPS

As part of its work on learning and teaching, EUA carries out activities with the aim of engaging with university communities responsible for learning and teaching. One of these activities is coordinating the work of a set of Thematic Peer Groups. The groups consist of universities selected through a call for participation to:

- discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching in European universities;
- contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching by identifying key considerations or recommendations on the selected theme.

The 2025 Thematic Peer Groups, active from March 2025 to February 2026, invited participating universities to engage in peer learning and exchange of experience; at the same time, they contributed to EUA's policy work as the voice of European universities in policy debates, such as the Bologna Process. They were organised in the context of the Erasmus+ co-funded [STAFF-DEV project](#) (Staff development for learning and teaching at European universities).

Each group was chaired by one university and supported by a coordinator from the EUA secretariat. Each group had three base meetings, either online or at a member university, to discuss 1) key challenges related to the theme; 2) ways to address these challenges through innovative practices and approaches; and 3) the institutional policies and processes that might support improvements in learning and teaching. Outside the three meetings, the groups were free to meet online for shorter meetings or organise their work independently. Members of the groups also attended a final workshop, where they had the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of other groups and address synergies. The workshop was hosted by Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon on 11 February 2026, and was followed by the 2026 European Learning & Teaching Forum from 12-13 February, where focus groups based on the work of the Thematic Peer Groups were organised to obtain feedback on their results.

### **Composition of the Thematic Peer Group 'Ensuring the quality and impact of staff development in teaching'**

(starting with the group chair and by alphabetical order of the country name):

- **University of Limerick, Ireland (chair)**
  - Mary Fitzpatrick, Head of the Centre for Transformative Learning
- **Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium**
  - Philippe Emplit, Professor, former Vice-Rector for Learning and Teaching
  - Séverine Gossiaux, Educational developer

- **Masaryk University, Czechia**
  - Michal Bulant, Vice-Rector for Studies and Quality
  - Katerina Oleksikova, Head of the Quality Office (1<sup>st</sup> meeting)
  - Dana Sklenářová, Learning and Development Specialist (2<sup>nd</sup> meeting)
  - Jana Miller, Manager of Learning and Development, Centre for the Development of Pedagogical Competences
  - Lívía Čellárová, Student
- **University of Applied Sciences RheinMain, Germany**
  - Petra Kreis-Hoyer, Head of the Department of Studies and Teaching
  - Imke Kimpel, Head of the Teaching and Learning Centre
- **University of Bologna, Italy**
  - Susi Poli, Head of the Training and Special Projects Unit (1<sup>st</sup> meeting)
- **Riga Technical University, Latvia**
  - Elina Gaile-Sarkane, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs
  - Inga Lapina, Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs
- **Vilnius University, Lithuania**
  - Valdas Jaskūnas, Pro-Rector of Studies
  - Inga Milišiūnaitė, Head of the Centre of Teaching Competences Development
  - Andrius Uždanavičius, Head of the Centre of Study Quality and Development
  - Povilas Virbašius, Student
- **SWPS University, Poland**
  - Kamila Jankowiak-Siuda, Vice-Rector for Education
  - Paweł Pyrka, Coordinator for Innovation, Centre for Teaching Excellence
- **University of Coimbra, Portugal**
  - Cristina Albuquerque, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs
  - Paulo Peixoto, Pro-Rector
- **University of Geneva, Switzerland**
  - Mallory Schaub, Director of the Centre for teaching and learning support
  - Philippe Haeberli, Pedagogical adviser, Lead for Teaching Skills and Quality of Teaching
- **Group coordinator: Thérèse Zhang, Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy, EUA**

## APPENDIX 2: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

*Between July and November 2025, the group members gathered students' views on the topic of quality and impact of staff development, consulting students in their home institutions, through surveys, focus groups or other discussion formats. In addition, during the last TPG meeting, hosted at the University of Limerick on 4 November, group members were able to discuss their findings with a panel bringing together eight students from the host university.*

*Group members agreed to use a common set of questions for their respective consultations with students:*

- 1. How would you describe the kind of learning experience that you would like to have at university? What would teachers (current or ideal) need to do to achieve that?*
- 2. Based on your current experience, what would you suggest that your teachers improve in order to reach your ideal learning experience?*
- 3. What means are available to you for providing feedback to your teachers about your experience of their teaching methods? Can this feedback have an impact on a course during the semester, or is it only intended to improve future sessions of the course?*
- 4. Do you find your feedback on teaching sufficiently and adequately taken into account? If so, how do you know that things are improving based on your feedback? If not, what should be changed?*

*This Appendix compiles takeaways from consultations led at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Masaryk University, University of Applied Sciences RheinMain, Riga Technical University, SWPS University, and Vilnius University –in addition to the panel discussion with students at the University of Limerick.*

*The student consultations were of qualitative and exploratory nature. The number of participants and formats varied across institutions. Findings should therefore be interpreted as illustrative rather than representative.*

### Learning at its finest... and at its worst

- Students immediately pointed to more active learning experiences: those that engage students through interactions ([Menti.com](https://www.menti.com), [Wooclap](https://www.wooclap.com). etc.), authentic learning (connected with real life experiences and demands, field trips, etc.), opportunities to engage in academic or scientific work from an early stage (e.g. working on papers), discussions over controversial topics that prompt reflection, engaging, practical (over theoretical) and useful learning experiences (e.g. challenge-based learning, group projects), and gamification of learning. At one university, students noted that, as they had already experienced more adaptive and active learning at school, they were somehow feeling a disconnect or discrepancy in their learning experience through more traditional teaching at the university.
- They also notice and appreciate teachers' consideration: feeling welcome when walking into the classroom, efforts to invite guest lecturers, and taking students' needs and constraints into account. As one student put it, "the teacher cares for us," for instance by putting lecture records online as a resource to be used asynchronously, instead of just tracking attendance and adopting a punitive attitude. Efforts to provide engaging support material, such as visually appealing slides and/or videos, is greatly appreciated by students. Students also mentioned that they feel more motivated and engaged when teachers show excitement about what they teach.
- Conversely, they also noted that some teachers do not care about who their students are, and how, or even if, they learn: while a linear reading of a textbook is likely not engaging, students identify the real issue as teachers remaining in a purely scholarly or expert role when teaching, and not realising that "we are not all at that level." Students also reported that they are sometimes unable to gain a clear picture of what teachers expect from them, resulting in students feeling insecure and less

able to succeed. Some also noted being discouraged from using real life experiences (dismissed as “not interesting” or “not relevant”), and feeling belittled for their lack of knowledge in some areas. As one student put it, “university is about curiosity, but sometimes we cannot even ask questions.” Students generally prefer interactive lectures over didactic ones, and value up-to-date material and resources rather than material that is recycled year after year.

- Teachers’ lack of availability is also cited as a factor of disengagement: students reported sometimes “feeling like a burden,” when there is no time to address questions, no care put into slides or other presentation material, and teachers seem to care more about delivering their module or class than about their students’ learning.
- Finally, misalignment between what has been taught and learnt in class, and the final exam, i.e. missed constructive alignments. Students also pointed to conflicting instructions across teachers and classes (e.g. one forbids AI, another one encourages students to use it), resulting in a contradictory framing of their overall study experience.

### What students want from teachers and their university

- Smaller classes and adequate room setup and learning spaces would be helpful.
- Students expect a nexus between research and teaching in university education (e.g. they expect their courses to be informed by recent research in the field). They also look for strong links to competences needed in the labour market (as reported in particular by students in a university of applied sciences).
- Students may be frustrated by the pace of change, citing universities’ lack of responsiveness in changing or updating the curriculum to meet evolving demands. Likewise, some students point to a lack of efficiency in institutional decision-making bodies (academic senate, faculty councils, pedagogical evaluation committees, etc.), considering them to be slow to address students’ concerns over pedagogical issues and labour market relevance in a timely manner.
- Students are not always aware of all the support measures and services available to them: they therefore encourage universities to promote existing resources more effectively. Some would also prefer their teachers to point them directly towards the support available.
- Students feel that teachers should be able to (better) explain how their course fits into the “bigger picture” of their study programme, providing students a stronger sense of purpose.
- Students emphasised the importance of mutually understanding what is meant by a partnership in learning, where students are considered as equal partners with their own responsibilities in the learning process.

### Providing feedback and being listened to

- Providing feedback through student evaluation surveys is a widespread practice. However, students across several institutions expressed doubts about the feedback loop: they are not always aware of what happens with their feedback, or how their recommendations may be implemented. They may feel that feedback is widely collected, mostly for administrative purposes, and not always leveraged, though small changes are recognised and appreciated. The reflection taking place in some institutions following student feedback is not interactive enough and does not engage students; in others, however, students take part in study programme boards where feedback is analysed, and find this to be a good platform for discussing teaching quality. Some students also find the feedback mechanisms time-consuming.
- In several universities, students continue to voice concern over potential repercussions if they express negative feedback directly to a teacher. Doubts also arise regarding anonymity in feedback surveys.

- Students have varying experiences of providing feedback, depending on their institution or teachers. They tend to have strategies when providing feedback: some only provide evaluations for either the worst teaching or the best teaching, while others feel it is important to provide feedback for all teaching. Some students understand that it is important to provide feedback in all cases, to serve as evidence in case there are claims.
- Feedback mechanisms are usually set to take place at the end of a course or semester. In some institutions, there is no systematic mechanism to flag “bad teaching” during the course or the semester. In others, feedback is collected twice: once mid-semester and once at the end of the semester. Students also sometimes have the possibility to directly engage with teachers on the matter; however, this requires a pre-established relationship of mutual trust. In one institution, students also called for new formats of exchange between students and teachers when it comes to incorporating feedback and shaping learning journeys.
- Teachers’ “feedback literacy” needs to be improved. They need to effectively address and manage student feedback (interpreting student survey data, communicating improvements to students), as well as developing the ability to explain learning and assessment trajectories to students as part of their study journey. This competence plays a crucial role in the quality loop that all institutions should focus on: it ultimately contributes to building student empowerment and partnership, beyond mere satisfaction.



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EUROPEAN  
UNIVERSITY  
ASSOCIATION

Avenue de l'Yser, 24  
1040 Brussels  
Belgium

T: +32 2 230 55 44  
info@eua.eu  
[www.eua.eu](http://www.eua.eu)

