

UNITA CALL FOR GRANTS ON INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING & MICROCREDENTIALS PROJECTS DESCRIPTION AND RULES

Keeping in line with UNITA's objectives for innovation in teaching and learning, as well as with UNITA's goals for consolidating a sustainable academic community, we are pleased to invite applications to the UNITA Call for Grants on Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The aim of this call is to foster and consolidate cooperation in the area of higher education among the teaching staff of the UNITA European Alliance partner universities.

Scholars across the UNITA European Alliance, from all disciplines, are invited to submit proposals. Each applicant may participate in a maximum of one proposal per line of the call: one under the Innovation in Teaching and Learning strand and one under the Microcredentials strand. Should the number of high-quality applications exceed the available budget, priority may be given to distributing funding as widely as possible across applicants.

Article 1. Background

The UNITA Teaching & Learning (T&L) network is devoted to boosting innovation in teaching and learning among UNITA partners. In particular, the network aims to foster educational design and delivery methods, assessment methods and techniques, learning environments, and/or developing new skills and competencies within a European framework. The UNITA T&L network intends to promote connection and cooperation among teachers and students from each partner University to spread excellent practices and foster intercultural competencies. Adapting educational content and delivery methods to address international classrooms is crucial for a successful international education framework. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and intercultural competence-based teaching are powerful tools for exposing students to the intellectual challenges of traditional mobility. Besides this, as students are at the center of the UNITA educational context, the UNITA T&L network is committed to promoting inclusive and equitable learning while leveraging international perspectives to enrich academic discourse and stimulate student learning.

This call also includes a specific section to develop microcredentials, primarily dedicated to Lifelong Learning but also contributing to developing flexible learning paths for regular students. Indeed, as higher education evolves, universities are expected to offer more flexible, inclusive, and skills-oriented learning opportunities that can complement traditional degree programmes. Microcredentials respond to this need by enabling the design of short, targeted, and certified learning experiences that can support lifelong learning, upskilling, reskilling, and innovation in teaching and learning. Within the UNITA Alliance, the development of joint microcredentials also represents an opportunity to strengthen academic cooperation across institutions, encourage pedagogical innovation, and create shared educational offers with a strong European and territorial dimension. This call for projects is therefore designed to support teachers in co-developing microcredentials together, with the aim of fostering inter-university collaboration and preparing future joint learning opportunities within the Alliance.

By inviting academic teams to work jointly from the proposal stage onward, and by providing a dedicated collaborative workshop in University of Beira Interior (Covilhã-Portugal), the initiative seeks to turn ideas into concrete and well-structured microcredential projects that may subsequently be implemented within UNITA.

Across Europe, higher education institutions are being called upon to provide more flexible, inclusive, and learner-centred opportunities that support upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning. Rapid economic, social, environmental, and technological changes are increasing the need for shorter and more targeted learning formats that can complement traditional degrees and respond more quickly to evolving needs.

Microcredentials have emerged as a strategic response to these challenges. The European Union has encouraged the development of a coherent approach to microcredentials in order to improve their quality, transparency, portability, and recognition across institutions, sectors, and countries. In this perspective, microcredentials are not intended to replace existing qualifications, but to enrich education and training ecosystems by offering certified short learning experiences adapted to a wider range of learners and contexts.

For the UNITA Alliance, microcredentials represent a major opportunity to expand lifelong learning provision, promote multilingual and international learning pathways, and strengthen collaboration with regional stakeholders. They are aligned with the Alliance's ambition to create innovative educational models rooted in European cooperation and territorial relevance.

During the first phase of UNITA (2020-2023), the T&L network organized 9 training sessions that involved around 1000 participants. In the second phase of the project (2023-2027), integrating the new partners and associated ones while continuing to offer training opportunities for the UNITA academic community, UNITA, through the T&L network, calls for proposals covering innovative education in an international context.

Article 2. Goals and objectives

The aim of the current call for projects is to strengthen collaboration among UNITA partners by implementing new projects on innovation in teaching and learning. The objectives of this call from the UNITA T&L network are to:

- support strategic projects to promote innovation in teaching and learning throughout the entire UNITA academic community
- enhance the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of best practices among UNITA partners.
- foster community-based relationships to facilitate future collaborative projects.
- develop an international teaching and learning environment that is aligned with the vision of a European University and the UNITA Alliance's objectives.
- support teachers from the UNITA Alliance in designing joint microcredentials involving at least two partner universities.
- promote the development of innovative and high-quality microcredential proposals.
- support the emergence of joint learning offers with clear added value for learners and partner institutions.
- contribute to the longer-term development of a shared UNITA ecosystem of microcredentials.

In the context of the UNITA CALL for GRANTS ON INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING & MICRO-CREDENTIALS, innovation is understood as the introduction, adaptation, or enhancement of teaching and learning methodologies, strategies, tools, or environments that significantly improve the quality, accessibility, and internationalization of education within the UNITA Alliance.

Article 3. Themes

Any project that aims at promoting innovation and quality of education within UNITA is welcome. However, priority will be given to projects aligned with the declared UNITA pedagogical strategies. Key priority (i.e., non-exhaustive) areas include:

- Innovation in teaching and learning (methods/technologies) (e.g., Competence-Based Learning (CBL), STEAM approaches, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), and student-centered pedagogies) that enhance student outcomes such as motivation, engagement, active learning, and performance, etc.
- Internationalization in the teaching and learning/management of an international class, including effective management of international classrooms.
- Inclusive teaching practices that ensure equitable access to education for all students.
- Assessment strategies tailored for international and intercultural student cohorts.
- Students' agency and student voice, fostering active participation in the learning process
- Methods and teaching strategies that promote lifelong learning, supporting continuous skill development.
- Methods and teaching strategies for microcredentials, enabling flexible and modular learning pathways.

Article 4. Glossary

- UNITA Full Partner (UFP): Academic institutions from EU countries which have the role either of beneficiaries or of coordinating institution in the European project UNITA. The UNITA full partners are funded by the European commission acting as the Granting Authority (Grant agreement Project 101124853 — UNITA, Annex 1 Description of Action part A, p. 4): UBI, IPG, UPNA, UNIZAR, UPPA, USMB, UNITO, UNIBS, UVT, UNITBV.
- UNITA Associated Partner (UAP): Academic institutions from non-EU countries which have the role of “associated partner” in the European project UNITA and do not receive funding from the Granting Authority (Consortium agreement UNITA Universitas Montium – Grant agreement no 101124853, 2024, p. 7): HES-SO, CHNU.
- UNITA Partners (UP): all institutions that are members of the UNITA Alliance (UFP and UAP).
- UNITA Geminae Partners (UGP): Higher Education Institutions located outside the European Union and which are members of the UNITA Geminae network.
- Principal Coordinator (PC): is the coordinator of the project team (must be a permanent member of the teaching staff from one of the UNITA Partners). The PC will be responsible for the coordination and reporting of the project, and will serve as point of contact, representing the entire team.
- Team Leader (TL): is the local coordinator of each UNITA Partner team that composes the project team.
- Team Member (TM): member of the project team, other than PC or TL.
- Beneficiary(ies): project team (or teams) members, whose project has been selected to be financed under this call or any other UNITA grants call.

Article 5. Eligibility

To be eligible, a project must include at least three distinct University partners from the UNITA Alliance. There are two exceptions for which only two university partners are required: the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and Microcredentials projects.

Each project is led by a permanent member of the teaching staff from the UNITA Alliance, who serves as the coordinating partner and is responsible for managing the project (PC).

Each University partner participates with a team composed of at least one member of the permanent teaching staff, who will lead a team that may also include other teaching staff members, administrative staff, and students. Participation of at least one student is a priority criterion, but not mandatory.

Each individual may participate in a maximum of one proposal per line of the call: one under the Innovation in Teaching and Learning strand and one under the Microcredentials strand. Should the number of high-quality applications exceed the available budget, priority may be given to distributing funding as widely as possible across applicants.

Specific eligibility rule for previously funded projects: Teams whose proposals were funded under the 2025–2026 UNITA Innovation in Teaching and Learning Grants Call may submit a new application, provided that:

- the Principal Coordinator (PC) is different from that of the previously funded project;
- the consortium/team composition may otherwise remain unchanged;
- the proposal is submitted exclusively under the Microcredentials category of this call.

Members of UNITA Task 3.2 and Task 3.3 are not eligible to apply for these grants.

Language: all applications and presentations should be conducted in English.

The application's content will be reviewed before the proposals are sent for evaluation, and all the above-mentioned eligibility criteria must be met before evaluation can be considered.

Article 6. Funding and Budgeting

Under the Innovation in Teaching and Learning line, this call finances projects up to a maximum of EUR 15,000 for three partners or more and EUR 10,000 for two partners. These amounts are, in any case, maximum figures, and may be adapted depending on the project. For the selected projects, the project coordinator and the team leaders will receive the budget allocated to her/his unit directly from her/his university.

The funds requested can be used for:

- Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for meetings, events or projects that take place in the countries of the full partner universities in UNITA
- Logistical expenses and costs related to organizing meetings (including expenses for coffee breaks and working lunches) held in the countries of the full partner universities in UNITA
- Other costs related to the implementation of the project – max. 40% of the budget (consumables, software- open access, licenses, etc.). All expenses are also subject to the constraints of the University partner's internal regulations.

The funding for microcredential projects will have a maximum of EUR 2,000 per project. This amount may be increased depending on the number of applications received.

The selected projects will be invited to participate in a working event on microcredentials at UBI, Covilhã, on 24–25 November 2026. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered through a dedicated budget. As this event is a key component of the project development process, in-person attendance for the entire duration of the event is expected. Online participation may be accepted only under extenuating circumstances, upon prior request.

- Activities of selected projects will be implemented during the following period: 5 October 2026 - 4 September 2027.
- The grant funds must be fully spent by 31 July 2027, while the implementation of the project activities may continue until 4 September 2027 at the latest.

Article 7. Application

1. Project proposals should be submitted via the dedicated UNITA Survey application link, which will be provided together with the official launch of the call.

2. Projects should be written in English and must include the following information:

- Identification of a project coordinator with name, surname, affiliation, ORCID ID, CV (max. 3 pages), correspondence address and phone number. For the rest of the team members, the following information should be offered: name, surname, e-mail, affiliation, and ORCID ID.
- Project description: highlighting, among other things, the innovative aspects of the project in comparison to the state of the art, as well as the expected medium- and long-term impact in the UNITA community.
- The role of each UNITA partner in the project.
- Workplan: specify the objectives, activities, timeline and indicators (indicators if applicable)
- Budget. The funding requested should be divided into the main items of costs and keep in line with the project's activities and objectives.
- Involvement of students and/or relevant stakeholders from outside of the alliance.
- University or UNITA academic and administrative structures that will be involved in activities/ technical/ operational management.
- Sustainability and scalability of the project.
- Where relevant, the relation of the project to the themes of the UNITA Hubs.

Before proceeding with the qualitative evaluation of the applications, a content check of the submitted documents will ensure that all required details and documents are submitted, and the application file is complete. A file must be complete to be eligible. Only eligible proposals will advance to the evaluation stage. Prior to the evaluation and selection phase, there will be a verification of compliance with administrative and eligibility requirements performed by a committee composed of one representative from Task 3.2 & 3.3 from each university and, if necessary, UNITA offices representatives in each university, focusing on the following aspects:

- Status of the team members at UNITA universities (permanent contract)
- Budget
- Verification of compliance with the rules regarding participation in multiple applications.

If a non-compliance is identified, the Principal Coordinator will be informed. A five working-days period/deadline, to be counted from the working day after the notification date, will be granted for rectifying non-compliances.

Proposals that do not meet all the requirements set out in this call and are not corrected within the deadline specified in this article will not be evaluated. Only complete and eligible applications will proceed to the evaluation stage.

Article 8. Evaluation and selection

Each project will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The innovative nature of the educational project (e.g. challenge-based methodology, digitalization dimension, etc).
- The methodological rigour of the proposal.
- The medium- and long-term impact of the project on the UNITA community.
- Number of UNITA partner universities involved in the project.
- The degree of involvement of each partner in the development and implementation of the project.
- The degree of involvement of UNITA students and external partners in the project.
- A coherent and clearly formulated work plan (i.e., with attainable objectives, activities and timelines)
- Sustainability (how the project will be financially sustainable once the funding is over).
- Scalability (i.e., the potential for replication or adaptation across UNITA universities or in a broader context).
- For innovation in Teaching and Learning projects only, two additional eligibility criteria apply: (1) The consortium of universities submitting the proposal must be different from the consortium that received funding under the first call (2025), (2) the proposed project must present a new idea and must not constitute a continuation or further development of a project funded under the first call (2025).
- These additional eligibility criteria apply exclusively to innovation in Teaching and Learning projects and do not apply to joint Microcredential projects, as this is their first joint call.
- For joint Microcredential projects: compliance with the UNITA Microcredential criteria, as defined in the document UNITA Phase II: A Guide on How to Create New UNITA Micro-credentials with an Inclusive and Flexible Scope. Applicants are expected to structure their proposals in accordance with these guidelines.

Evaluation Committee(s)

A Committee will evaluate the eligible proposals. The evaluation committee will consist of members of Task 3.3, Task 3.2 (for microcredentials), student representatives from the UNITA Students Assembly, UNITA vice-rectors responsible in the area of Education and experts in academic development across the UNITA alliance. The Evaluation Committee(s) will have a Chair who will coordinate the evaluation process, centralize the scores, and communicate the results.

Evaluation process

The projects that comply with administrative and eligibility requirements will be evaluated and selected in two stages. An application must receive at least 60% of the maximum score to be financed.

Stage 1. Double peer review of the applications (60 points).

Each proposal is evaluated independently by two assessors, using a scoring scale of 0 to 60 points and considering the criteria mentioned above:

- Innovative nature of the educational project
- The level of involvement of UNITA students and stakeholders
- Methodological rigour
- Medium- and long-term impact on the UNITA community
- Number of UNITA universities involved
- Degree of involvement for each partner
- The coherence and clarity of the work plan (objectives, activities, timeline)
- Sustainability
- Scalability

Peer reviewers assess projects according to the established criteria and are required to justify their scores. The reviewers may require additional information. In a moderated session, the two assessors discuss their evaluations with the Chair present to reach a consensus score.

Stage 2. Approval by Vice Rectors (40 points)

Process Overview

Applications reviewed and selected in Stage 1 are forwarded to the Vice Rectors (or equivalent authorities) in charge of academic development or educational portfolios.

Approval decisions will be in line with the objectives of the UNITA Alliance in relation to teaching and learning, with internal partner universities' considerations such as budgetary allowances and strategic alignment of the project with institutional priorities.

Approval Criteria

Alignment with the university's internal priorities and resources:

- The project aligns with the university's internal strategic goals and educational development plans.
- The proposal demonstrates feasibility within the available institutional resources.

Feasibility of implementation within the given budget and timeframe:

- The budget is realistic and appropriately justified.
- The project includes a clear plan for continuation beyond the initial funding phase.

Previous engagement in UNITA activities constitutes an advantage:

- Projects led by applicants with a proven track record of active participation in UNITA initiatives (e.g., previous UNITA-funded projects, COIL programs, faculty exchanges, training activities, curriculum development, or governance roles) will receive additional consideration.
- Long-term contributors to UNITA's teaching and learning network will be prioritized, as their experience strengthens the likelihood of project success and long-term integration within the Alliance.

Scalability and Impact:

- The project has the potential for replication across multiple UNITA universities.
- It demonstrates a clear long-term impact on teaching and learning practices within the UNITA academic community.

Communication of results

Applicants will be informed of their project's status (approved or not approved) after Stage 2. Detailed feedback from both stages will be provided for refinement in future calls.

Following the approval by the Vice Rectors, the final funding decisions cannot be contested. The list of funded projects will be published on the UNITA Alliance website, and applicants will be notified of the final results by e-mail.

Article 9. Obligations of the Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries agree to provide information on UNITA's support for their project. This will take the form of using the UNITA and other appropriate logos in all communication related to the project.

Moreover, the beneficiaries are committed to producing a report and to presenting their work in case a restitution event is organized. The beneficiaries will write up their experiences, outcomes, and assessments in a brief report and disseminate their experiences in one of the Collaborative conversations to share teaching practices with faculty colleagues offered throughout the academic year. All publications resulting from funded research must provide a recognition citation that the work was funded (at least in part) by UNITA – Universitas Montium European Universities Alliance.

Article 10. Intellectual Property and Industrial Property Rights

If new intellectual properties are created during the project's development, an agreement between the partner universities will be established. The use of Creative Commons licenses (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/cclicenses/>) is encouraged.

Article 11. Omissions and Additional Information

1. Any situation not covered by this Regulation will be jointly considered and resolved in first instance by all UNITA Offices. Should they jointly declare themselves non-competent in the issue, they will transfer or escalate it to the co-leaders of T3.3, who, in turn, can resolve it or, should it be the case, further escalate it following UNITA's procedures.
2. For any additional information, participants can contact directly the UNITA Office at the respective university, according to the list of emails below:
 - a. UBI: unita.office@ubi.pt
 - b. IPG: unita@ipg.pt
 - c. UPNA: unita@unavarra.es
 - d. UNIZAR: unitacontact@unizar.es
 - e. UPPA: unita@univ-pau.fr
 - f. USMB: unita.office@univ-smb.fr
 - g. HES-SO: unita@hes-so.ch
 - h. UNITO: unita@unito.it
 - i. UNIBS: unita.office@unibs.it
 - j. UVT: unita@e-uvr.ro
 - k. UNITBV: unita@unitbv.ro
 - l. CHNU: unita@chnu.edu.ua

Or the co-leaders of Tasks 3.2 and 3.3.:

Task 3.2 (Esther Edo Agustín eedoa@unizar.es and Dutoit Laurent laurent.dutoit@hes-so.ch)

Task 3.3 (Theofild Lazar heofild.lazar@e-uvr.ro, Natália Gomes ngomes@ipg.pt and

Velibor Mladenovici velibor.mladenovici@e-uvr.ro)

Article 12. Timeline

Launch of the call	24 th of July 2026
Webinar for presentation of the call	Tuesday 8 th of September 2026, 16.00 CET Link: https://datacloud.univ-unita.eu/index.php/apps/bbb/b/zj5Cmbb6T2ekgzG4
Closure of the call	21 st of September 2026
Assessment period (Evaluation committees will conduct the peer-review process and consensus-building sessions to determine the final scores.)	21 st – 28 th of September 2026
Administrative aspects (Finalize agreements with selected projects, notify successful applicants, and provide detailed instructions for the project commencement phase.)	29 st of September 2026 – 3 rd of October 2026
Event on microcredentials on invitation only for selected projects, at UBI	24 th - 25 th of November 2026

Note: Interested parties should ensure that all application documents are complete and submitted before the deadline. Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

Monitoring and supervision of winning projects

To ensure the success of the projects, a structured monitoring process will be conducted, including:

Pre-Implementation Review:

- 1–2 weeks before implementation begins to confirm readiness and address potential gaps.
- Quarterly Monitoring:
 - o Frequency: Every three months from the start of implementation until project completion.
- Methods:
 - o Short/Simple Templates: Standardized reporting templates to capture updates on objectives, activities, and milestones (mandatory).
 - o Online Meetings: Virtual check-ins to review progress, address challenges, and provide guidance (optional).

Article 13. Treatment of non-rewarded projects

Non-rewarded applicants will receive detailed feedback summarizing the evaluation of their project, including its strengths and areas for improvement based on the established criteria. This feedback is intended to help refine their ideas for future calls. Applicants may also revise their proposals for resubmission in future calls, provided they address the feedback and align with updated requirements. Informal mentoring or guidance may be available to support this process. Additionally, non-rewarded projects might still be included in UNITA's broader teaching and learning innovation network, offering opportunities to collaborate with other initiatives within the Alliance and refine their ideas.

Article 14. Payments/reimbursement of the grants

The grants budget spending will be processed via the UNITA Office of each partner involved in the proposal.

Article 15. Final Dispositions

1. The participation in the call implies full acceptance of these rules.
2. The UNITA Partners, as organizers of this call, do not assume any responsibility for applications that are not in perfect condition or that are lost for reasons beyond the control of the organizers.
3. The UNITA Partners reserve the right to modify this regulation for reasons of force majeure.
4. Duration of projects and final report: Projects may last between 6 and 10 months, depending on their scope and work plan. A final report must be submitted within three months of the completion of the project.