Exploratory Teaching Space

ETS Teaching and Learning Innovation Grants

Background

The Exploratory Teaching Space, ETS, was established as part of the Institutional Strategy for Teaching – building on positive experiences in research – in 2009 at RWTH Aachen. ETS’ aim is to create a platform for creative idea generation in teaching at RWTH. There is a particular focus is on the core areas of didactic innovations such as e-learning / blended learning and independent student learning.

General conditions

The projects should aim to support students in their autonomous learning process and address a large group of students. We explicitly welcome innovative and creative ideas, even if they contain risk elements (e.g. that the approach is not yet very well researched in the respective discipline or at RWTH Aachen University). Also welcome are applications that have already been successfully implemented at other universities or at RWTH, but are still new to a particular discipline. Projects that are already being carried out within the framework of a national or international funding program are not eligible.

The call is open to all staff at RWTH Aachen University (RWTH professors, research assistants or research groups) who are interested in the further development of teaching and learning concepts.

The application process

The application may be written in German or English and must contain:

1. A description of the project’s objectives and impact: what new opportunities are there for teachers and students? Which gap in the existing teaching offer will be closed by the project?
2. Explanation of previous experiences in teaching, e.g. analysis of weak points and possibilities for improvement or applicability of existing teaching concepts
3. A description of how the project will improve the autonomous learning of the students
4. Work schedule and financial plan (for personnel costs see pay scale TV-L)
5. Expected outcomes
6. Information on whether the teaching concept is sustainable and transferable to other subject areas
7. Proof of coordination with service institutions of the RWTH, if they are to be involved in the project.

Please note: Applications that do not comply with the formal requirements cannot be considered.
Evaluation criteria

The evaluation by the ETS review panel is based on the following points:

- Didactical innovation of the teaching/learning concept for RWTH (or your specific faculty/discipline).
- If applicable: Convincing presentation of experiences with this teaching concept at other locations.
- Promotion of autonomous learning: The concept should support the independent learning of students and ideally address a broad target group.
- Transferability of the teaching concept to other subject areas.
- Coherent concept of teaching and testing according to Constructive Alignment.
- Financial independency: The concept should be designed in such a way that it is self-sustaining after start-up financing.
- Integration of the RWTH service facilities in the area of teaching. (Coordination with the relevant service entity prior to submission.)

We recommend to consider the Teaching and Learning Mission Statement.

The review panel consists of the ETS steering committee, two representatives of the academic staff, the ASTA chairperson, two additional student representatives (to be determined by the student group representative in the Senate), faculty representatives, and the CLS management.

Timing and process
Selection procedure

Code of Conduct

- **Impartiality**: all applications are treated equally.
- **Transparency**: funding recommendations are made according to established rules and procedures. Applicants receive feedback on the evaluation results.
- **Quality**: the review process is uniform and meets high quality standards as in other national and international procedures.
- **Confidentiality**: all applications and related data, knowledge and documents are treated confidentially.
- **Ethics and integrity**: applications that do not comply with fundamental ethical requirements or rules of decency are excluded.

Evaluation process

The project applications received on time are checked for formal criteria. All project applications that meet the formal criteria are evaluated by three members of the review panel. For this purpose, they are guided by the points listed under "Evaluation Criteria" and assign an overall score, which is graded between 5 (definitely promote) and 1 (do not promote) and which is explained with a written justification. The scores are collected by the management team and anonymized in an overview of all applications. The selection committee, consisting of the ETS Steering Committee, one representative each of the students and the scientific staff, and the CLS management, decides on the funding recommendation on the basis of the evaluations and submits it to the Rectorate. The rectorate makes the final approval and informs the steering committee of the decision.

Funding recommendation and approval by the rectorate

In a selection meeting, the selection committee discusses all project applications on the basis of the anonymized evaluations. In case of strong deviations in the evaluations for a project or ambiguities, it consults with the respective reviewers. The applications are divided into three categories on the basis of the evaluations and the feedback: funding recommendation with high priority (dark green), funding recommendation (light green), do not fund (red). It is the endeavor of the selection committee to be able to fund all "dark green" projects within the given budget - if necessary also through justifiable cuts in funding for these projects. The rectorate receives the classification of the applications and the funding recommendations. It makes the final decision on funding.

Notifications (rejections/acceptances)

Applicants will be notified of the funding decision by e-mail as soon as possible. In the case of an acceptance, the e-mail contains information about the grant amount, the duration, possible conditions or prerequisites for the grant, as well as information about the account setup and publication of the project funding on the website.
In case of a rejection, the most important reasons for the rejection and, if applicable, a recommendation of the selection committee are given to the applicants. The entire procedure, from the submission deadline to the presentation to the rectorate, is completed in a maximum of eight weeks.

Publication of the funded projects

Lists of funded ETS projects with project titles and names of project leaders are published on the ETS website.

Budget planning, allocation of funds and account setup

The ETS team initiates the account set-up via Dept. 7.1 - Budget. Dept. 7.1 passes on the data for the performance-based allocation of funds (LOM) for the individual professors internally.

Project support

During the project, the ETS management team is available to answer questions and solve problems.

Reports and evaluation

In the case of QVM funding, project managers are asked to document the outflow of funds in a corresponding online form by June of each year. Access authorization and further information will be provided by Anne Dohmen or Stefan Markert, Dept. 6.1, anne.dohmen@zhv.rwth-aachen.de; stefan.markert@zhv.rwth-aachen.de

If funded by the Federal-State Program, interim evidence, project reports, and voucher lists must be documented once a year as requested by Dept. 6.1.

Conveyor volume

A maximum of €30,000 can be applied for each project. Allowable expenses are: Personnel and material costs. If there is anything to be considered in the use of funds, this information will be provided in the call or in the grant mail. Basic equipment and travel expenses cannot be covered. Activities provided free of charge by internal service facilities such as the IT Center or the Center for Teaching and Learning Services (CLS) will not be funded.

Project end

At the end of the project period, a final report in the form of a fact sheet is requested, which is made available online via the ETS website. The ETS Grant certificate is then issued.