



Newsletter CDA nr. 10



Pedagogical Workshops and Teaching Grants Competition at WUT

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Workshops and Teaching Grants**





To support the implementation of RCL at WUT, the team at the Center for Academic Development (CAD) of WUT has developed specific workshops for each pedagogical concept that underpins the model. These workshops aim to prepare the teaching staff at WUT to effectively implement the RCL model in the teaching, learning, and assessment process.

At the West University of Timișoara (WUT), in order to promote student-centered education and skills development, the Reflective Collaborative Learning (RCL) Model was developed. RCL is an innovative instructional approach that combines modern pedagogical concepts, such as instructional models, curriculum alignment, authentic learning outcomes, collaborative learning, reflective learning, and methods to stimulate students' interest in studying. All of these have been harmonized into a coherent system of instruction and learning that fits into the student-centered education paradigm.

Additionally, each year, CAD organizes a competition for teaching grants that rewards teachers who actively engage in implementing RCL in their teaching activities at WUT.

Last year, over a period of three months (September - October - November 2022), 18 workshops were delivered to the teaching staff at WUT, with three deliveries for each component of the RCL model: RCL - Instructional Model (28 participants), Authenticity of Learning Outcomes (25 participants), Curriculum Alignment (23 participants), Reflective Learning Experiences (23 participants), Collaborative Learning Experiences (31 participants), and Stimulating Student Interest in Studies (35 participants). In this first delivery session (fall 2022), a total of 80 university teaching staff members were enrolled, with each participating in at least one workshop session. This fall of 2023, the second session for delivering RCL workshops is taking place. This time, in addition to the traditional approach of offering workshops to the entire WUT community, a series of workshops has been reorganized and will be delivered exclusively to members of the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship (DME) within the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA) at WUT.

In this issue of the CAD Newsletter, the six workshops and the Teaching Grant Competition are presented. For each workshop, as well as for the Teaching Grant Competition, testimonials from participants are highlighted.

01

CAD Workshops

This fall (September - November 2023), the six workshops are being delivered in a new, adapted form based on the feedback provided by last year's participants. Our goal is to provide more teachers from WUT the opportunity to discover the student-centered teaching approach integrated into the RCL model.

The format of a workshop is a maximum of 3 hours, with the first hour and a half focused on theoretical aspects. After a 10-minute break, in the second part of the workshop, the teaching staff will be encouraged to participate in practical activities to apply the theoretical concepts discussed earlier. The workshop is delivered in the RCL - seminar format and aims to highlight the connection of the central concept of the workshop with the RCL model. In one workshop session, the maximum number of participants is 15.

To complete a workshop, participants must upload the activity project developed in the second half of the workshop to the CAD E-learning platform. Each participant who completes a workshop receives a **CAD certificate of participation** and **2 CAD training points**. These CAD training points can be used for enrollment in the WUT Teaching Grants Competition. Teaching staff members need a **minimum of 10 CDA** training points accumulated through participation in CDA training activities. These points are transferable from one year to another.



RCL - Instructional model

Instructional models are step-by-step procedures that allow us to organize teaching activities into sequences that facilitate the learning process and direct it towards the intended instructional objectives.

Furthermore, they help us clearly structure instruction, drawing on current evidence in pedagogical practice concerning both learning and the learner (in our case, the student). Detailed planning of instructional activities and clear, understandable teaching actions are strongly associated with positive academic outcomes (Schneider & Preckel, 2017).

The workshop consists of two parts: a theoretical part and a practical one. In the first part, the theoretical discussion, we invite you to familiarize yourself with RCL as an instructional model in the university setting, observing its connection to classical instructional models, its theoretical foundations, and the premises upon which its effectiveness is based. In the second part, the practical one, you will use the RCL model to collaboratively design and prepare a detailed teaching activity (lecture/seminar/lab) that you will deliver as part of your current teaching activities in the weeks following the workshop. This collaborative activity involves both fellow participants and facilitators.



Several participant opinions:

- "Useful and relevant information for applying the model. The fact that RCL was used during the workshop was enlightening for me in my future activity design."
- "Good structuring of activities to mirror a teaching activity based on the RCL model. Everything was clearly stated and rigorously monitored. I liked it."
- "The workshop provided relevant information, the bibliography was up-to-date and helpful. I appreciated the professor's ability to explain and facilitate the activities. The workshop's duration was slightly extended, which is challenging on a Friday evening."

03

Authenticity of Learning Outcomes



The aim of the workshop is to facilitate collaborative reflection on the importance of formulating authentic learning outcomes for university-level subjects. We will discuss the three pillars necessary for experiential learning and connect the concept of authenticity with that of reflection and collaboration.

The workshop consists of a theoretical and an applied part. In the first part of the workshop, starting from various reflection scenarios, we will familiarize you with the concepts of authenticity, authentic learning outcomes, outcome indicators, their role in the course syllabus, and their significance in the educational process. Additionally, in the second part, the workshop offers practical activities in which, starting from a specific context, you will formulate both authentic learning outcomes and the corresponding outcome indicators for a discipline you teach. Subsequently, using a provided grid, you will evaluate the work done by two fellow workshop participants, providing peer feedback in addition to that offered by the facilitators. After completing the “Authenticity of Learning Outcomes” workshop, you will know how to integrate authentic learning outcomes and their associated outcome indicators into the assessment process described in the course syllabus.



Several participant opinions:

- “Thank you for creating a friendly atmosphere and for the positively shared ‘knowledge’! Under the influence of the ‘pragmatic’ student – concerning the increased clarity with which we will be able to communicate the evaluation method and its content to students from now on.”
- “It would be good if workshops were organized for teaching staff who teach in a specialization for curriculum alignment. This way, the taught subjects would be better correlated and more compact for students.”
- “A very cool team and a great atmosphere! Even though we didn’t quite fit, I believe there was time and space for more discussions from the participants’ experiences. The part about implementing these outcomes/indicators requires quite a bit of time, and not all subjects can be ‘translated’ into such concrete and pragmatic indicators. However, overall, the effort would be useful for clarifying the subject, both for the professor and the student.”

04

Curriculum alignment

One of the greatest challenges for teaching staff is to make the educational discipline visible to students in terms of its utility, relevance, learning pathway, and assessment methods. Our workshop revolves around the central concept of Constructivist Curriculum Alignment developed by John B. Biggs (1996) and offers a context of collaborative and reflective learning where we will collectively address the following questions: "What is curriculum alignment?", "Why is curriculum alignment important?", "How do we achieve curriculum alignment within the disciplines we teach?"

The workshop is structured into two parts, with each part allotted one and a half hours. In the first part, we will discuss the theoretical concepts necessary to answer the previously mentioned questions. In the second part of the workshop, we will focus on the practical application of the theoretical concepts presented earlier, at which point each of you will carry out curriculum alignment for a discipline you teach by correlating learning outcomes with assessment tasks and teaching-learning activities.



Several participant opinions:

- "It was a well-structured workshop with engaging materials (videos) and thought-provoking moments of reflection. I liked the approach the most – realistic (blunt, non-idealizing), addressing usually evaded issues with concrete examples. Objective discussions, clear tasks, and precise explanations."
- "Congratulations to the facilitators; they were approachable, encouraged us, and helped us understand the content presented."
- "The atmosphere created by the facilitators and their willingness to answer all questions is highly appreciated."
- "I would love to see these workshops continue."

05

Reflective Learning Experiences

Reflective learning enhances students' performance (Radovic et al., 2021), facilitates deep learning (Tsingos et al., 2015), helps them gain a better understanding of concepts, and achieve authentic learning outcomes.

Our workshop titled "Reflective Learning Experiences" provides a conceptual framework aimed at facilitating the design, implementation, and assessment of reflective experiences in higher education. It brings to the forefront methods, tools, and practical activities that can be resolved and discussed in the classroom.

The workshop is divided into two parts: an hour and a half focused on theoretical aspects, followed by an hour and a half

of practical activities. In the first part, we aim to collectively address the following questions: "What does reflexivity mean in the university teaching process, and how can we practice it successfully?", "What are the benefits of reflexivity for both teachers and students?". In the second part, you will have the opportunity to design teaching activities that stimulate student reflexivity within a discipline you teach, using the tools provided earlier by the facilitators. These activities follow the RCL model, encouraging peer feedback in addition to feedback provided by the facilitators. The completion of the proposed activity and the uploading of related materials to the CAD E-learning platform represent the final assessment in this workshop.



Several participant opinions:

- "The workshop was excellent both in terms of theory and practice, and those who organized it tried to show us practical application for all our teaching areas, which I greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, the application of reflective thinking also depends a lot on the willingness of the students."
- "I hope as many people as possible have access to this information and are open to assimilating/applying it. It was really great!"

06

Collaborative Learning Experiences

A skill essential for any graduate in the 21st century, collaboration plays a significant role, both in terms of academic outcomes and future employment prospects. Although collaborative learning is often used in higher education, the expected results are not always achieved in practice. If you are interested in efficiently implementing collaborative activities, we invite you to this two-part workshop (one theoretical and one practical).

In the first part, we will explore hands-on, for various learning environments, the most important aspects of collaborative learning: the types of collaborative learning

activities, their structuring and evaluation methods, as well as the inherent challenges. In the second part of the workshop, you will structure a collaborative learning activity for your own discipline, in correlation with one of the learning outcomes in the course syllabus, while also developing the corresponding assessment method. Through individual and group reflection, you will be able to identify the key elements of a collaborative sequence and ways to enhance its efficiency.



Several participant opinions:

- "I appreciated the facilitators' openness to new perspectives of thinking and their interaction with us."
- "For me, as I'm not very knowledgeable about online teaching methods and came without a laptop, it was a bit challenging to actively participate in this workshop. [...] In the future, I would like a workshop that introduces on-line teaching methods."
- "The team of facilitators is very well-prepared."

Stimulating Students' Interest in Learning

Often, we hear the following statement in the academic environment: "My students are not interested in anything and do not engage in the interactive activities I propose." However, the specialized literature suggests that interest can be triggered at any age and in all phases of interest, and it is predictive of both students' motivation to study and their involvement in academic activities (Renninger and Hidi, 2022). In this workshop, we aim to answer the following questions: "What does interest in studying mean, and how can it be stimulated?"; "Is it within the reach of the university professor?"; "What aspects should be considered in designing an interesting activity?"

The workshop format is interactive, based on the RCL model, and is divided into two parts: one theoretical and one practical. In the first part, we will discuss the classification of interest and the stages of its development, interest triggers, the conditions and environment in which it arises. You will create a conceptual map with concrete ways to stimulate interest. In the second part, we will conduct a case study, stimulating creativity in finding solutions to stimulate students' interest, using the tools provided and the theory discussed earlier. In the end, you will design a draft of an activity intended to stimulate the interest of your students in a future course/seminar/laboratory.



Several participant opinions:

- "I appreciated the facilitators' effort to deliver ideas they had analyzed and understood beforehand and to motivate group discussions. [...] Overall, I enjoyed participating in this workshop, from the content to the interpersonal relationships and group dynamics. Furthermore, I believe the information is very useful and can be applied in my current teaching activities. Thank you!"
- "I believe that the workshop's theme is current and of real interest, and I think it will help me in the teaching process. Congratulations to the team!"
- "More focus on practical applications, immediately correlated with key elements (a shorter theoretical presentation)."

08

Teaching Grants Competition

Starting in 2020, WUT annually organizes the Teaching Grants Competition. The goal of this competition is to stimulate the implementation of the Reflexive-Collaborative Learning (RCL) model in teaching activities offered by WUT. Each year, a minimum of 12 teaching grants are proposed, each worth 5,000 RON.

Winning a teaching grant involves participating in activities to exchange best teaching practices and implementing RCL in teaching activities for a discipline chosen by each grant winner. The implementation format of the teaching grants has changed from year to year based on participant feedback. In the 2022 edition, grant winners were grouped into mentoring teams based on the winner's specialization. Each team included between one and three grant winners, one or two senior CAD experts, and one CAD training assistant. Throughout the semester, grant winners conducted teaching projects using the RCL model, attended activities of their fellow grant winners, and received feedback from the CAD team. After each observed teaching activity by the entire mentoring team, there were sessions for analysis and peer feedback. At the end of the semester,

grant winners had to create a portfolio of their teaching activities.

To assess the impact of the Teaching Grants Competition, annual evaluative research studies were conducted. Based on the results of these studies, decisions were made to improve the format of teaching grant implementation. To date, these studies have resulted in the following: an article published in the *Pedagogy Journal* (Balan et al., 2023), three presentations at the National Conference on Education Research (CERED, Bucharest 2022 and Cluj-Napoca 2023), and a presentation at the prestigious international conference organized by The European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction, EARLI 2023, Thessaloniki, Greece. In the following paragraphs, a brief summary of the main results highlighted by these studies at the end of the teaching grants implementation is presented.

Edition I (2020-2021)

- The beneficiaries of these teaching grants reported a better understanding of the concept of **“active learning”** compared to their peers in the control group.
- Students (whose teachers participated in the Teaching Grants Competition) evaluated their teachers’ behavior in the classroom as **more likely to stimulate active learning** compared to students of teachers in the control group who did not benefit from teaching grants.
- Students (whose teachers participated in the Teaching Grants Competition) also believed that their teachers were **more inclined to use student-centered assessment** methods compared to students of teachers in the control group who did not receive teaching grants.

Second edition (2021-2022)

- Teaching grant beneficiaries demonstrated a significantly **more reflective pedagogical approach** compared to their peers in the control group (who did not participate in the Teaching Grants Competition), an approach associated with a **student-centered teaching style**.
- Students whose teachers benefited from teaching grants perceived their teachers’ teaching behavior as more **stimulating**, oriented toward the **practical application of knowledge through various exercises**, and **encouraging discussions** compared to students of teachers in the control group who did not receive teaching grants.

Third edition (2022-2023)

- Teaching grant beneficiaries reported a **significant increase in student-centered teaching behavior**, especially in stimulating students’ reasoning for conceptual changes.
- Qualitative data analyzed indicated changes even at the level of beliefs about teaching, namely, at the end of the semester, teaching grant recipients reported that they saw their teaching as being **more focused on the needs, collaboration, and development of students’ reflective thinking**.

The main results of the evaluations of the effect of implementing Teaching Grants emphasize that the participants of the teaching grants have managed to introduce student-centered teaching strategies to a greater extent compared to the period before the implementation of the grants.

The assessments made by students regarding the teaching behavior of the professors who benefited from the teaching grants show an increase in the use of methods that encourage active learning. In conclusion, the use of elements from the RCL model has enabled the teaching grant recipients to implement instructional activities perceived by both themselves and their students as having a significantly higher degree of stimulating active student learning, compared to the period before the implementation of the teaching grants and even more so compared to the group of colleagues who did not benefit from the WUT grants.

The schedule of Workshops and the 2023 Teaching Grant Competition

In Table 1, you can check the schedule of the workshops that will be held in the fall of 2023. Participation in the workshops is done by completing an online form through this link ([click here](#)). Additionally, faculty members interested in participating in the 2023-2024 Teaching Grant Competition can submit the required documents online until November 20, 2023, at 23:59 ([click here](#)).

Table 1: Workshop Schedules 2023

Workshop name	Date taking place	Workshop delivery	To whom it will be delivered
Introductory workshop – only for DME-FEBA	Wednesday, 06.09.2023 11:20 - 12:50	f2f	DME-FEBA¹
RCL as a semi-algorithmic instructional model	Wednesday, 13.09.2023 09:40 - 12:50	f2f	DME-FEBA¹
	Friday, 13.10.2023 09:40 - 12:50	f2f	WUT
	Friday, 24.11.2023 09:40 - 12:50	f2f	WUT
Authenticity of Learning Outcomes	Friday, 20.10.2023 13:00 - 16:10	f2f	DME-FEBA¹
	Friday, 27.10.2023 13:00 - 16:10	f2f	WUT
	Friday, 10.11.2023 14:30 - 17:50	online	WUT

Curriculum alignment	Thursday, 21.09.2023 09:40-12:50	f2f	DME-FEBA¹
	Friday, 27.10.2023 16:20 - 19:30	f2f	WUT
	Friday, 24.11.2023 16:20 - 19:30	f2f	WUT
Reflective Learning Experiences	Friday, 22.09.2023 11:20 - 14:30	f2f	WUT
	Friday, 06.10.2023 16:20 - 19:30	online	DME-FEBA¹
	Friday, 24.11.2023 13:00 – 16:10	f2f	WUT
Collaborative Learning Experiences	Tuesday, 12.09.2023 15:00 - 18:10	f2f	WUT
	Tuesday, 17.10.2023 16:20 -19:30	f2f	WUT
	Friday, 27.10.2023 16:20 - 19:30	online	DME-FEBA¹
Stimulating Students' Interest in Learning	Thursday, 28.09.2023 14:40 - 18:00	f2f	DME-FEBA¹
	Tuesday, 10.10.2023 16:20 - 19:30	f2f	WUT
	Wednesday, 25.10.2023 16:20 - 19:30	f2f	WUT

Note: DME-FEBA = Department of Management and Entrepreneurship (DME) within the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA) at WUT





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