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"CHANGE IN CLASSROOM: PROMOTING INNOVATIVE TEACHING & LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES", PRINTeL

# Guidance Document for Designing an Operational Plan for a Teaching Staff Development Center at HEI

## About this document

This is a template for a plan of operations foreseen in a Teaching Staff Development Center (TSDC) in higher education. These centers can have different positions within the organization of a higher education institution, and thus the overall mission can include several other assignments. This template focuses only on activities directly related to the development of teaching staff.

If the center already has a plan of operations, this template can be used as a benchmark or as a suggestion for areas to improve. If the center does not have a plan of operations, this template can be used to create a new plan. In both cases, it is important to adapt the plan to your organization and the local conditions.

# The plan of operations in context

The plan of operations is probably not the only document concerning the activities at the Teaching Staff Development Center. The center should have a *mission statement*, a decision by the rector, the board or other suitable function in the upper management. This mission statement should describe the role of the center, the main areas of activities, forms of management of the center and its place in the organization of the university. The mission statement should be in sync with, and might even refer to, the overall strategy of the university and the processes of quality assurance.

It might also be helpful for the center to formulate a *vision statement*, explaining how the support for teachers will develop during the coming years. The vision should be clear and succinct, but also SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound).

Using the mission statement and the vision as starting points, an annual *plan of operations* is drafted for a calendar year or an academic year. Suitable headers can be found in the following sections, along with short descriptions on what to write. The next step will be to form a *budget* and a *staffing plan*. At the end of the year, the plan of operations should be followed by an *annual report* where the results are described, along with an evaluation of the performed activities.

# 1. General analysis

The introduction to the plan of operations should start with a short summary of the annual report for the previous year. It should also include a brief analysis of the challenges that the university faces. This analysis should be grounded in the plan of operations for the whole university, if it exists. Finally, a list of prioritized areas to work with in the coming year should be presented, and these should be referred to in the coming sections.

# 2. Activities

The main part of the plan of operations is a list of planned activities. This can be organized in several ways, e.g. divided into permanent activities and projects. Some parts may be the same every year, while others are updated. The headers and content will vary

depending on the centers assignments, but the following are some suggestions. Please add more headers if necessary to capture the whole width of the center's activities. Some issues are covered under several headers below, and this is an indication that exact place in the document is optional.

It is important to find the right level of detail for the plan of operations. If the plan has too much details, it will constrict the work during the year, and a development center sometimes needs to be flexible in order to meet the current needs of the teaching staff. Too much details will also make the plan difficult to overlook. On the other hand, if important activities are left out they will be harder to follow up systematically.

## 2.1. Courses

Describe the courses that the center will organize for the development of teaching staff. Include at least the following information for each course:

- Name of the course

- Course goals

- Summary of learning outcomes and contents

- Target audience and/or prerequisites

- Extent of the course in ECTS credits and/or hours of study

- Texts and supplemental instructional materials

- Number of times the course will be given and maximum number of participants

In order to keep the plan of operations readable, include the syllabuses as an appendix or refer to other documents where the syllabuses can be found, rather than pasting them as a whole into the plan of operations.

Present a rationale for offering these particular courses. What are the connections to the employment or tenure procedures? Are there local or national recommendations or regulations that motivates certain learning outcomes? Have certain courses been requested by some part of the organization?

Also include a description of the general administration of the courses. What are the routines for application and acceptance? Are the courses free of charge or are there fees? Will the courses result in academic credits or a certificate?

## 2.2. Pedagogical consulting activities

Describe the planned consulting activities, i.e. different offerings of coaching or workshops for individuals or groups. Start with a list of areas of competence where the center can offer pedagogical consulting, e.g. formulating learning outcomes, active learning, problem-based learning. Continue with describing the process for requesting pedagogical consulting. Are the offerings directed towards individuals or groups? Are they free of charge or are there fees? Can the center's staff be requested to participate in department development projects? Also try to give at least an overall estimate of the planned capacity for pedagogical consulting, e.g. expressed in number of hours.

## 2.3. Seminars, workshops and conferences

Describe the planned seminars, workshops and internal conferences that will be organized.

If dates and titles are already known, make a timeline of the planned activities. Give a short summary of the content and intended audience. For activities that will be announced later on, at least describe the intended area and number of activities.

## 2.4. Networking

Describe how the center will work with support for university wide networks of teachers.

One way of developing teaching staff can be to support informal networks of teachers. Depending on interest these can be formed per subject area or around the interest for a specific pedagogical method. Most of the activities in the networks, e.g. seminars, informal lunch meetings, will be organized by the teachers themselves on a voluntary basis. However, for long-term survival av informal networks it is important with a minimum level of organizational support. For this, the center can play a vital role, e.g. by coordinating activities, recruiting new members or simply by supplying an environment for online collaboration.

## 2.5. Development projects

Describe the planned development projects, initiated by the center or by other parts of the university where the center is involved. For each project include at least the following information:

- Who initiated the project?

- What is the goal of the project?

- How will the project contribute to the development of teaching staff?

- When will the project be completed and how will results be disseminated?

- What resources will the center contribute to the project?

Refer to project plans or other documents and try not to include to much details in the plan of operations document.

## 2.6. Publications and production of learning materials

Describe the planned work with production of learning materials for teachers as well as planned publications. For production of learning materials, the following questions can be helpful:

- Will the learning material be presented online and/or in printed form?

- Is the learning material connected to specific courses at the center, to specific subject areas or specific pedagogical methods and/or ICT tools?

- What needs of the teaching staff will be satisfied with the learning material?

- Is there a plan for future evaluation and/or revision of the material?

For publications, the following questions can be helpful:

- Does the center have regular publications series?

- What reports, from projects and other activities, are expected to be ready for dissemination during the year?

## 2.7. Internationalization

If internationalization is on the agenda for the center, describe the planned work with the realization of internationalization. Will the center actively look for relations or networks in order to be able to apply for funding from international sources as the European Commission and the like? What project will take place the coming years? Are there international associations, councils or organizations in which a membership or affiliation would benefit the international dimension of the center's operation and development? How are international issues incorporated into the courses and other activities that the center offers?

## 2.8. System administration and support

If the development center is responsible for administration and/or support of ICT solutions for teaching, describe the activities and processes related to this.

# 3. Internal activities

Internal activities are not immediately beneficial for teaching staff but are necessary for the development center's operation.

## 3.1. Management

Describe briefly the management roles and procedures. This will depend on how the center is organized, but some topics that might be included are:

- The executive and administrative functions at the center

- The position of the center within the university's organization, i.e. the chain of command

- If the center has its own board, what is the role of the board and number of planned board meetings

- The role and frequency of staff meetings

- Other sub groups (if any) and how they are managed

If the center has a mission statement, or other similar steering document, refer to this.

## 3.2. Communication

Describe the planned activities for communicating with the rest of the university, both in terms of advertising courses and other activities, and in terms of getting input from teaching staff. Some examples of what to include are:

- Activities for keeping the web site updated and interesting, e.g. news, blogs, and for informing teaching staff using e-mail

- Activities for including news about the center in the internal calendar and/or newsfeed at the university

- Activities for producing and distributing printed information, e.g. leaflets

- Invited presentations of the center's activities

- Procedures for requesting pedagogical consulting, i.e. whom to contact and what questions to answer (also see section 2.2)

- Channels for general input from teaching staff, e.g. board meetings, department liaisons, staff surveys

## 3.3. Quality assurance

Describe the principles and procedures for quality assurance of the center's performance, e.g. how given courses and other training activities are evaluated.

One of the most important issues is the evaluation of regular activities like given courses and training events. There should be a standard evaluation used for all courses and events. The template for this can be included in an appendix to the plan of operations or referred to if it can be found elsewhere. There should also be standard evaluations for consulting activities, seminars, workshops, etc. Describe the process for collecting and analyzing the result of these evaluations, and how the conclusions will be used to improve the activities.

Also describe how the relevance of the center's activities in general is evaluated, i.e. how they correspond to the needs of the teaching staff and how they accommodate the continuing changes and development of the learning environments. If e.g. staff surveys are conducted, refer to these.

## 3.4. Capacity building

Describe the planned activities for developing the competence of the staff working at the development center. Networking with other centers can be included here. Some questions to be answered can include:

- What areas for capacity building will be prioritized this year?

- What activities are planned for capacity building? This can include courses, conferences, research projects, development projects – internal, domestic as well as international, etc.

- How will the planned capacity building activities improve the center's possibility to satisfy the needs of the teaching staff in general and the development of the learning environment?

- How will the center cooperate with centers at other universities, inside as well as outside the country, in order to strengthen its performing capacity?

# 4. Role descriptions

As the center grows, different activities become permanent and certain roles are formed. Staff at the center can have different areas of responsibility, e.g. course leader, seminar leader, conference organizer, teacher coach. It can be a good idea to clearly describe these roles, either in the plan of operations or in a separate document. This will facilitate the introduction of new staff at the center and also make the boundaries of responsibility clearer.

As an example, the responsibility of a course leader for a course or a training event at the center could include:

- Plan and execute the decided course or event with the given resources

- Create or revise the curriculum and the study guide

- Hire, if necessary, external lecturers or ICT resources

- Plan and coordinate meetings with the course team

- Communicate continuously with the course participants

- Perform examinations or other assignments

- Perform course evaluations according to current standards

- Continuously update of the information in the learning platform

- Keep the gradebook updated throughout the course

- Contribute to or initiate a development of course contents and the teaching and learning activities as well as the revision of course assignments