



Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS)

Proposal Guidance & Information

Fundamentals

The Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS) provides funding to support learning and teaching enhancement through pedagogical innovation and research. **We welcome funding proposals that focus on teaching innovation, educational research, and/or a combination of both.**

Small & regular grants

There are two grants of differing amount of funding: **small** (monies up to a maximum of £2,500) and **regular** (monies between £2,501 and £18,000). The scope and scale of these projects is roughly proportional to the amount of funding provided. Please complete the correct proposal form and refer to past awards for examples of the types of projects appropriate to each level of funding.

Who is eligible to apply?

- ☐ All University of Edinburgh staff with learning, teaching, research, or student support roles. You don't need any special expertise in educational projects and the Academic Development (AD) team can provide advice and support on your bid.
- ☐ EUSA staff with learning, teaching, research, or student support roles,
- ☐ Doctoral students may be Principal Applicants or included as co-investigators, but they must be employed by the university in existing employment contracts.
- ☐ Current students, (UG, PGT and PGR) can be included as co-investigators, but if not already on existing employment contracts that permit research work, then the full cost of their employment needs to be included in the project budget.
- ☐ Principal Applicants and all members of the PTAS project teams must hold an employment contract that covers the entire period of the award (proposed start date to end date).
- ☐ Principal Applicants may only be leading on one PTAS project at any single point in time and may not apply to lead or co-investigate on any further PTAS projects until they have completed their existing grant.
- ☐ Principal Applicants may only hold a **small** PTAS grant once

Where does the funding come from?

The Principal's Teaching Award Scheme is fully funded by donors to the University of Edinburgh Development Trust. Without this ongoing support from alumni and friends of the university, we would not be able to fund these projects which do so much for the quality of the student learning experience at the University of Edinburgh. We would like to thank all of the donors who support the University of Edinburgh Development Trust. In addition, funding for projects related to special calls has been provided in the past by Information Services, the Careers Service and the Widening Participation Strategy Group.

Background Information

What kind of projects do we fund?

We are interested in receiving proposals for **new** higher education projects. Generally, applications tend to be focused on educational research, learning and teaching innovations, or a combination of both. Examples of learning and teaching innovations include the use and development of new

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pedagogies and technologies, or the development of engaging class activities, experiences, and assessment practices, etc. Examples of educational research include inquiry into teaching in your discipline, across programmes, or on a specific assessment or pedagogical approach or technique. You might also consider how students learn in specific educational cultures, settings, environments, and modalities (i.e., online, blended). We also welcome projects that concentrate on student support, educational development, and institutional change that widely benefits student learning. The projects we fund should be stand-alone and not require a follow-on project to get the full benefit of the original project.

What does 'new' projects mean?

'New' holds multiple meanings in the context of a PTAS project. When we say 'new', we mean:

- ☐ New innovations, ideas, pedagogies, approaches, and technologies that have not yet been implemented in your school or service area
- ☐ New research projects that have not yet started. Specifically, we mean projects that have no data collected or analysed. An existing research project that is already underway will not be funded.

It's important to do your homework on your project idea before submitting your application. Are others in your school doing this work already? Ask around and check with L&T leaders and innovators in your space. For research with multiple phases, it may be appropriate to apply for funding for a new phase. A new and distinct phase of research should make a significant contribution towards enhancing and making a positive impact on student learning. Please note that we do not fund retrospectively: activities or events that have already occurred prior to when award funding is disbursed.

Themes and topics

We welcome proposals focused on all areas of learning and teaching. We particularly welcome bids which focus on the following themes:

- ☐ curriculum innovation, curriculum review, curriculum enhancements, and decolonising the curriculum
- ☐ equity, diversity, and inclusion
- ☐ assessment and feedback innovations
- ☐ sustainability, sustainable development goals
- ☐ digital, hybrid, and blended learning
- ☐ transitions (e.g., school to university, year to year, university to work)

Evaluation and research methodologies

All the proposed PTAS projects should include a clearly defined and feasible evaluation or methodology that asks whether the research or innovation has met its intended outcomes. All qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology approaches are welcomed and should fit with the research goal and context. Sound evaluation methods should also be used to assess participant or user feedback with any innovation implemented. If you need assistance with developing an evaluation or methodology of a learning project, please be in touch with the PTAS academic convenor (Celeste McLaughlin), prior to submitting, for specific advice.

Targeted at teams rather than individuals

Proposed projects should usually involve teams of staff and students as there is research evidence that collaborative teams have a greater likelihood of the innovation being successfully implemented. There could be special circumstances when individual staff would be eligible to apply, which should be explained in your proposal. Interdisciplinary and cross-school proposals are also particularly welcomed, as impact across university areas is favourable. Cross-institutional collaborations are also welcomed, but we typically do not fund travel, buy-out, or conference fees for external collaborators.



Working with students

We are also keen to encourage bids which demonstrate meaningful student involvement, student-staff collaboration, research assistance, and co-creation in the PTAS project. This could be, for example, where undergraduate and/or PGT/PGR students are active co-investigators in PTAS teams or will be involved later in developing and shaping the project. Student involvement should go beyond simply collecting data from students, ideally, they should have a say in how the project progresses where possible. Students' involvement in PTAS projects provides them with an opportunity to develop valuable expertise in teaching, learning and assessment in their subject area while pursuing their studies. We strongly recommend compensating students through paid employment in research assistant roles or vouchers for short-term involvement as research participants.

Key Guidance

Length of award

The award is usually offered over one or two academic years, but please ensure you check the budget guidance as there are implications for financial arrangements in your School or Service area. Applicants are asked to clearly indicate on the application form whether they wish the award to extend over more than one financial year.

Level of funding

Small grants are funded up to **£2,500**.

Regular grants are funded between **£2,501 to £18,000**.

How funds may be used:

Budgets will be assessed for **proportionate** and **reasonable** expenditure by the adjudication committee.

✓ funded	X not funded
Buying-in additional hours from part-time staff	Buy-out staff time (i.e., teaching/teaching-related/teaching preparation)
Employing Edinburgh students (UG, PGT, PGR) for project roles	Payment or buy-out to external collaborators or students (i.e., non-Edinburgh folks)
Paying for technical and research assistance	Payment for business-as-usual duties (i.e., work considered to be already the responsibility of Schools, such as routine course development which staff would do as part of their usual role)
Production or printing of materials (e.g., publications, blogs, events, teaching/training materials etc.)	Equipment or hardware that a School would normally be expected to purchase in ongoing teaching/IT budgets
Specialist Software** not usually provided by the University	
Costs for sharing and communicating project outcomes (e.g., travel, conferences, workshops, other events run internally or externally, art work or illustration to communicate outcomes)	Research or learning initiatives already internally funded by the University (e.g., doctoral student scholarships) or externally funded
Transcription, data entry, data processing costs	Travel or conference fees for external collaborators
Vouchers or gift cards for compensating participation and contributions to project	



**Please note, funds may be used to buy in time for part time staff to increase their hours, however it is not possible to buy out time for full time staff. We recommend discussing any buy in time with your local finance team.*

***Check with Information Services on which software is commonly available.*

Building a good budget

Here is a list of key considerations and suggestions for building a good budget:

- ☐ There is no 'Full Economic Costing' for PTAS projects
- ☐ Although the grant bids' limit is 'up to £2,500' (small) and 'up to £18,000' (regular) there is no need to match this limit exactly, please request the budget needed for your project.
- ☐ During budget creation (prior to submitting your proposal) it is important to consult with and gain advice from local HR (School-level) specialists. Things to consider:
 - o [Fair and transparent recruitment processes](#)
 - o Expected recruitment timelines.
 - o Appropriate salary and grade levels for hired personnel, including employment oncosts or overheads. Guidance for this can be found on [employ.ed](#). Note that you should budget for personnel to be hired at the top of a salary Grade, not the bottom. You can't know prior to hiring whether the applicant will be at the bottom or top of a salary Grade.
 - o Financial administration of grants (budgets, codes, processes, etc.)
- ☐ Please note that accrual (carrying forward monies from one financial year, ending 31 July to another starting 1 August) is not always possible. Your local finance officer should help with this, but you need to do it well in advance of 31 July, sometimes in June. Should you be awarded a grant you will be asked to complete a form with financial codes and at this point you may ask to split the funds over the current and next two financial years. This may NOT be possible for any 'special call' monies.
- ☐ Personnel should be listed at an appropriate salary or pay scale and be sure to include oncosts (a.k.a., employment costs, typically 30%) for staff and check for expected increments for future financial years.
- ☐ All student workers should be compensated appropriately noting that you must pay at least the national minimum wage <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>
- ☐ Students could be hired onto PTAS projects in a variety of ways across the Colleges.
- ☐ Vouchers for participants are required to be £20 per hour of participation with a minimum payment of £20 per participant. We recommend using love2shop vouchers and we will require a reason for using alternative vouchers.

Management of PTAS project underway

It is the responsibility of the Principal Applicant to lead, guide, and manage a PTAS project once it has commenced, with the support from the PTAS project team members. This includes participation of the Principal Applicant in all stages of the project such as planning, recruitment of research assistance, data collection and analysis, evaluation, communications, and reporting. It is the Principal Applicant's responsibility to manage the funds allocated in a PTAS award. They should track all spending in the project and work with local HR support. Please note that once an award has been given, we cannot top-up funds. The Academic Development team is not responsible for tracking and managing spending of PTAS projects, this is the responsibility of the Principal Applicants with support from their local HR and finance specialists.

Ethical review

Research involving human participants typically requires approval by a Human Research Ethics Board. Please be aware that if you are conducting research, you will likely need to apply for ethics approval using the relevant procedures in your School or College.



Adjudication of proposals

Proposals will be adjudicated by a committee usually comprised of representatives from Academic Development, EUSA, an assessor external to the University, Professional Support Services, and one representative from each of the three Colleges. Adjudication meetings typically take place 6-8 weeks following submission of the applications. In adjudicating proposals, the quality of submissions as well as the distribution of funds from across the three Colleges and across the Professional Service areas will be taken into consideration. All applications received will be assessed against specified criteria ensuring that those projects that get funded are of high quality. It is anticipated that each year some high-quality proposals may need to be rejected due to limited funds.

Key criteria for success

- ☐ Fully completed application form with all signatures and consultations completed (including the Principal Applicant's Head of School/Service)
- ☐ Clear and comprehensibly communicated project idea with a sound evaluation or methodology
- ☐ Feasible project within the given timeframe and resources allocated.
- ☐ Demonstrated some knowledge of the relevant and existing educational literature related to the project research or innovation
- ☐ Value for money, where outcomes of the project are broadly applied with stronger proposals reaching across the disciplines and service areas
- ☐ Project that demonstrates good practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles described in an equality impact statement
- ☐ Demonstrate due consideration to the roles and participation of students
- ☐ Embeddedness and longevity considered. Are the project activities embedded within existing curriculum and services? How could these activities be resourced beyond the lifetime of the PTAS grant?
- ☐ Effective sharing and communication plan for project findings and outcomes within and beyond your school.
- ☐ A standalone project – i.e. does not require a follow-on project to get the full benefit from the original project.

Common stumbling blocks

Going beyond standard curriculum development and revision: Some PTAS project ideas might involve curriculum development or updating of existing services that you offer in your area. Please note that PTAS funds projects where staff and students propose innovative pedagogies and technologies that will uplift existing programmes, but we don't fund projects with standard curriculum development changes that staff are expected to conduct on a normal year-to-year basis. We don't recommend proposing projects that are centred around typical revisions to content or delivery, minor changes to assessment, or an adjustment in service or support offered to students. Revisions and changes to curriculum should be supported by your school or deanery as standard practice. If curriculum development is part of your proposal, you should make it really clear in your writing why this idea is an innovative project and isn't 'business-as-usual' teaching practices.

One-off-events: PTAS is interested in having broad and longer-term positive impact on students and staff at UoE. It is common for proposals to include events and activities as part of the project; however, we do not typically fund 'one-off events'. Examples of one-off events would be a weekend workshop or mini festival that students compete for prizes. Though these events might be enjoyable, enriching, or a positive networking experience, we feel that these events don't on their own provide value for money. It is permissible to include events as part of a programme or suite of activities (in a research or innovation project), where presenting ideas or soliciting information from a group of people is a great way to gather people together, however the event itself should not be



the only activity or the main focus of the project. If your proposal includes a series or larger event it must be clear, if successful, how it would move into mainstream L&T and be sustained.

Narrow impact located within one course or area: The University of Edinburgh is a large and multidisciplinary institution with a wide variety of educational programmes. Due to its breadth of interests and subjects, PTAS 'Regular' grants should demonstrate a clear plan for broader impact outside of a single course, a single degree, or a single service area. We strongly encourage proposals that include student groups from more than one discipline or subject area. If you would like help finding a collaborator or case study partner in another part of the university, please get in touch with the PTAS academic convenor (ptas@ed.ac.uk). Please note that due to the timescale and resources allocated, it is appropriate that PTAS 'Small' grants may be hosted in a single area, course, or service.

Final reporting

Within four months of the project finishing, the Principal Applicant and team will be expected to produce a short report which will be published on the AD PTAS web pages.

We strongly encourage PTAS teams to provide copies or links to any final materials e.g., journal/newsletter articles, conference papers or presentations should be attached. Please let us know if it is possible for us to post these on the AD PTAS web pages.

Sharing and communicating about your project

Award holders will be expected to share the results of their project within the School and University, but also more widely, e.g., through journal articles or through other relevant conferences, events, and communications with donors. Academic Development will help facilitate the wider sharing of innovations and evidence resulting from the Scheme through the AD website. Award holders will be encouraged to present their findings at the annual University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Conference, and at other University events. Upon successful completion of their project, we are happy to offer assistance to staff applying for external grants for more substantial projects. Lastly, always be sure to acknowledge the source of the funding, the University of Edinburgh Development Trust, in any public communications about your project.