

GTC Funding Line “Core Projects”

Call for proposals “Facts and Fakes”

The measures of the Strategic Funding line serve the targeted profile sharpening and further development of teaching at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) beyond individual project funding. The aim of the funding is to initiate a competition of innovative and exemplary teaching ideas on specific focus topics and to open up broad exchanges among all those involved in teaching. Within the framework of this funding line, the GTC announces focus projects on alternating themes every two years. The funding concentrates on teaching projects that, if successful, can serve as a model for a subject, a faculty, or the entire university, or contribute to a sustainable improvement of regular teaching. With this competitive call, the GTC aims to create opportunities for testing innovative formats and to set new impulses. The funding is aimed at all JGU employees involved in teaching. The maximum funding amount for a focus project is €30,000.

With the current call for proposals, GTC is focusing on the topic of **“Facts and Fakes”** - an area of high relevance in our society. Informed, fact-based judgment is a central prerequisite for democratic opinion-forming and decision-making. Universities have a special responsibility in this regard: they not only prepare students for a career, but also for responsible action in a liberal, democratic society (§ 16 HochSchG). Universities are not only places of knowledge transfer, but also of critical reflection. The ability to question statements, examine sources and distinguish between evidence and opinion must be systematically developed and promoted in all subjects throughout the course of a study program - not just selectively. Especially in times of increasing disinformation and polarization, the role of the university as a place of rational debate and enlightened judgement becomes all the more important.

Science stands for the acquisition of knowledge through transparent methods, verifiable results, and critical self-correction. These fundamental attitudes must also be actively taught and practiced in all fields of study — especially in light of current challenges such as fake news, conspiracy theories, or growing skepticism toward science and the media. It should be emphasized that critical engagement with alleged facts, the examination of arguments for plausibility and scientific reliability, as well as the willingness to revise one’s own convictions, are not additional skills but core components of scientific education. Higher education teaching holds the responsibility to create spaces where students learn to tolerate uncertainty, deal with ambiguity, and at the same time rely on a well-founded understanding of truth. The university must also reflect on itself and its own knowledge and teaching practices in this process.

The call for proposals specifically aims to promote **new teaching ideas and methodological approaches** that go beyond established concepts. It is not about merely repeating existing formats but about innovative impulses that integrate the topic “Facts and Fakes” into teaching in an original way. Experiments are sought that demonstrate how critical thinking can be taught and learned within the subject, through interdisciplinary exchange, or in dialogue with stakeholders outside academia — for example, through new forms of science communication, evidence-based argumentation, or active

engagement with manipulation strategies. Ideally, the funded projects should be transferable and adaptable for other subjects, teachers, and contexts both within and beyond the university.

Examples of possible **questions** could be:

- How is critical thinking promoted and practiced in the respective disciplines? Which didactic concepts and methodological approaches are particularly suitable for this?
- How can scientific methods and processes of knowledge acquisition be taught in such a way that students learn to realistically assess their validity and limitations?
- What typical challenges exist within the discipline for distinguishing between facts and fakes? Where are the potential risks for falsifications or misinterpretations?
- How can students learn to communicate facts in an evidence-based and audience-appropriate manner — whether within the academic community, to political stakeholders, or to the general public?
- What role do formats of science communication (e.g., podcasts, storytelling, collaboration with external partners in science communication) play in teaching?
- How can teaching contribute to reflection on subjective perception, psychological biases, and dealing with ambiguity?
- How can the university contribute to promoting critical judgment skills and democratic resilience in society?

The following projects can be applied for within the framework of the call:

- Teaching projects conducted by one or several teaching staff members at JGU
- Projects that are applied for and carried out by an institute or department and focus on an entire degree program or involve a larger number of the respective teaching staff.

Funding Objectives / Selection Criteria

Please outline the goals of your project and the planned measures to achieve these goals on the application form. Please explain why you assume that the planned measures are suitable for achieving your set goals (assumption of effect). Additionally, explain how the achievement of the project objectives can be assessed.

The application must detail how the project pursues the objective of "Innovation". It should also address either the funding objective 'Model Character' or 'Sustainability.'

1. **Innovation:** The proposed project fosters innovation and enhances the teaching profile. It can involve the further development of established formats, the testing of new teaching, learning, or examination formats, the transfer of innovations from other universities or disciplines, or introducing a new content focus in teaching. Projects that are merely improving the status quo are unlikely to receive funding.
2. **Model Character:** The application should clearly state how and under what conditions the experiences from the proposed project can be transferred to other courses within the subject, to other disciplines, or to other departments/universities. It is advantageous if the proposed project is carried out in cooperation with multiple instructors.
3. **Sustainability:** The proposed project should lead to the sustainable development and improvement of teaching within the subject. Sustainability may be present if the innovation in

teaching becomes established, such as through the development of replicable teaching formats or teaching materials suitable for long-term use or through securing resources for future funding. Sustainability may also consist of making the insights gained from an exploratory project available to a wider teaching audience within the subject.

The involvement of students in the conception and implementation of the project is expressly encouraged.

Expenses eligible for funding

- Additional personnel and material costs for the project, e.g.:
 - Academic or non-academic staff
 - Student assistants
 - Contract teaching staff („Lehraufträge“)
 - Fees for external personnel („Honorare“)
 - Travel expenses
 - Costs for documenting and publishing the results of the funding.
- Costs used for prizes, scholarships, and representation expenses are not eligible for funding. The financing of basic equipment („Grundausstattung“) is generally also not possible
- Catering costs are permissible within the framework of conference events (similar to the GTC call „Teaching Day“); the regulations of the JGU catering policy must be observed.

Eligibility

- All JGU employees engaged in teaching are eligible to apply as well as heads of degree programs, institutes, faculties / schools, or similar teaching-relevant organizational units.
- Please ensure that no cross-financing occurs between GTC projects and projects funded by the Stiftung für Innovation in der Hochschullehre or other funded projects. If necessary, clearly separate activities with other funding from your GTC project

Application and Approval

- Application deadline: December 1, 2025
- The preliminary selection for funding decisions will be made at the end of December. Pre-selected projects will be invited to present their project at the leadership committee meeting on January 20, 2026. The final funding decision will be made by the leadership committee.
- Please use the corresponding application form (www.gtc.uni-mainz.de/core-projects-for-teaching-staff-and-management/).
- If your application includes costs for software/software licenses, please contact the Digital Teaching Competence Team („Koordinierungsstelle digitales Lehren und Lernen“ HE1-EP4) well in advance (at least three weeks before the application deadline) at digitale-lehre@uni-mainz.de to receive an assessment on whether there are any issues with using the software at JGU (e.g., data protection compliance, performance, IT security, comparison with existing software). Attach the team's assessment to your application. This applies to all faculties and schools at JGU; the

competence team will organize coordination with the Office for Digital Transformation of University Medical Center if necessary.

- If your project includes costs for Audiovisual technology for digital teaching (e.g., for the production of videos or podcasts), please contact the Center for Audiovisual Production (“Zentrum für Audiovisuelle Produktion”, ZAP) at <https://www.zap.uni-mainz.de/the-zap/> to check whether existing equipment can be used for your project. Attach ZAP's assessment to your application. This applies to all faculties and schools at JGU.
- You must also provide approval from your department head and from your faculty or school with your application. A paper version is not required.
- Applications not fully submitted to the GTC mailbox by the deadline cannot be considered.
- Approved funds are allocated to the general faculty or departmental budget. The GTC does not provide positions for staff, etc., but only funding.

Networking, Project Documentation, and Public Relations

- The GTC aims to support the creative development and testing of teaching innovations and make these innovations accessible to as wide an audience as possible at JGU. Therefore, funded projects are required to submit a video (maximum 5 minutes) within six weeks after the end of funding that reports on goals, results (insights gained), and potential broad impact of the project. This video may be used by the GTC for communication purposes.
- Our websites provide information on previously funded GTC projects and sabbatical semesters, including the videos mentioned above. The list is searchable by keywords and full text. Use this as inspiration and to network with past leaders of GTC projects.
- To contribute to a shared exchange of experiences and achieve broad impact, the GTC strongly encourages exchanging ideas with colleagues within the faculty or school during the project's term, such as in workshops, observation visits, or presentations. The results of the project should also be made accessible.
- The GTC strives to offer networking events for funded projects and expects funded projects to participate whenever possible.
- A brief report on the use of funds and project activities (max. 5 pages) must be submitted within six weeks after the end of the funding. The proper use of funds must be confirmed with a signature. Please submit the report in both paper form with your signature and by email (without a signature).

Scientific Support / Evaluation

All funded projects are expected to show a general willingness to participate in the scientific monitoring of the project. The evaluation will focus in particular on the funding objectives of innovation, model character, and sustainability, with regard to the focus theme as well as other goals specified by the applicant.

Contact

- For general questions about the call for proposals, please contact the GTC office (glk@uni-mainz.de, Tanja Meyer, phone: 39-27240).
- Questions regarding the calculation of costs or, in the event of approval, regarding billing formalities or personnel-related matters can best be answered by the responsible staff members in your department or the caseworkers in the Finance Department (www.verwaltung.finanzen.uni-mainz.de/) or the Personnel Department (www.verwaltung.personal.uni-mainz.de/).
- GTC funding in University Medical Center: Please clarify billing formalities or personnel-related matters with the responsible contacts from the Department of Research and Teaching ("Ressort Forschung und Lehre") or the Personnel Service Center ("Servicecenter Personal").
- Please seek advice for the application process from the facilities you plan to collaborate with in your project (e.g., Center for Audiovisual Production (ZAP), Data Processing Center (ZDV), Digital Teaching Competence Team).