

Pontifical Gregorian University

Grant Proposal for establishing a Center for Didactics

Reasons for the proposed Center:

The Pontifical Gregorian University (PUG) currently serves students from 122 countries, training those who will exercise important leadership in their home countries for years to come. Students come to the Gregorian University from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; they arrive with dissimilar skills, various motivations, and vastly different learning histories. Teaching styles that focus primarily on providing input (such as through lectures) have little opportunity to take these students' specific starting points, aspirations, and needs into account. Furthermore, simply providing information does not bring about the holistic development Pope Francis demands that ecclesiastical universities foster in their students.

This is essential for a Church that “goes forth”! All the more so because today we are not only living in a time of changes but are experiencing a true epochal shift, marked by a wide-ranging “anthropological” and “environmental crisis”. (...) This vast and pressing task requires, on the cultural level of academic training and scientific study, a broad and generous effort at a radical paradigm shift, or rather – dare I say – at “a bold cultural revolution”. In this effort, the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas. (*Veritatis Gaudium*, paragraph 3)

The PUG intends to respond to the Holy Father's challenge for ecclesiastical education by supplying professional didactic training not only for its teachers but also for its graduate students who will be teachers in educational institutions in their home country.

The proposed Center for Didactics will operate as specified in the following paragraphs.

Main Objectives:

- Engage lecturers of all academic units in ongoing reflection on their teaching styles to help them optimize their strengths for teaching and bring their lectures and exams into conformity with the best practices of contemporary pedagogy.
- Help lecturers to adopt a learner-centered approach in their own teaching and at the level of departmental practice.
- Consolidate and expand existing e-learning programs at the Gregorian University in line with the kind of pedagogy that Pope Francis envisions in *Veritatis Gaudium*.
- Develop more online courses for current students and for alumni who want to keep abreast of ongoing development in their respective fields.

Means to achieve the Objectives:

Establish a Center for Didactics whose main mission will be as specified below. In line with the University Statutes, the Center will have a director who will be supported by a council of four or five professors from within the Gregorian who have developed their own pedagogy (and have a reputation/interest in this). The Director will be entitled to commission experts from outside the Gregorian if necessary and will operate in line with the Center's own Regulations as will be approved by the University.

The director will provide:

1. Formation programs addressed to lecturers.
 - a. A yearly formation program for a group of about 25 lecturers. In this way, over a period of three years the center will have helped in the formation of about 75 lecturers.
 - b. For new faculty, attendance at one of these programs will be mandatory.
 - c. Input for the program will be offered not only by the director of the Center but also by invited specialists.
 - d. More details about the program:
 - i. The program will consist of
 - 1) an introductory week at a retreat center (5 days)
 - 2) 5 Friday afternoon/Saturday sessions at the Gregorian
 - 2) 6 additional Friday afternoon sessions
 - 3) a closure event of 3 days at a retreat center.
 - ii. The various sessions will take place throughout a single year to ensure that there is enough time in between for the participating lecturers to reflect on their teaching methods, devise new strategies, try out alternative (student-centered) approaches, evaluate their successes, and make necessary adjustments.
 - iii. Apart from the principles of Ignatian Pedagogy, the content of the program will include didactics-related topics such as: the advanced use of the university's learning management software that supports e-learning (Moodle); best practices regarding video recording of one's own lectures; how to formulate course objectives, methods, and evaluation; how to optimize the support that lecturers can receive from tutors and/or assistants; etc.
 - iv. The three-day sessions allow for extensive time to inculcate pedagogical-methodological concepts and apply those to one's own subject and teaching style, develop ideas, share hopes and challenges with peers, and engage in-depth reflections that promote change. There will also be time for the important spiritual dimension of an ecclesiastical faculty.
 - v. The weekend structure ensures time and focus on the program, especially for those who work in multiple positions. In-between sessions participants will read necessary background materials, pilot their new teaching styles, and reflect on the outcomes.
2. Formation programs addressed to students.
 - a. The Center will offer one course on didactics aimed at doctoral students and another to master's students.

- b. These courses will be listed within the Program of Studies of all the academic units as optional or compulsory courses according to the needs of the relative academic units.
- c. These courses may include some specialized classes offered by professors from the respective academic units. Arrangements in this regard will be determined by the director of the Center in dialogue with the deans concerned. For instance, a course could have 9 lectures of a general nature offered by the director and 3 lectures on more specialized teaching techniques focused on a particular discipline.

Project Budget

Expenses regarding the hiring of the Director for the Center for Didactics.

Purpose	Explanation	Yearly amount	Amount for three years
Full-time professional for three years	In line with the job description indicated above	40,000.00 €	120,000.00 €

Expenses regarding the Program for Lecturers

Purpose	Explanation	Yearly amount	Amount for three years
Two professors helping the Director during the Program for Lecturers	Elaborating, conducting, and evaluating the program will take up approximately the equivalent of 2,5 months of full-time teaching per person, i.e., 5 months of teaching altogether.	15,000.00 €	45,000.00 €
Per diem for 8 days of retreats for up to 27 people	8 x 27 x 100 €	21,600.00 €	64,800.00 €
Meals for the participant on Saturdays	27 x 6 x 25 €	4,050,00	12,150.00 €

Overtime reimbursement	2000 € per participant	50,000.00 €	150,000.00 €
Travel expenses etc.	for PUG staff visiting other universities, experts coming to the PUG	5,000.00	15.000,00
Pedagogical Literature and overheads		2,000.00 €	2,000.00 €
Total	Up to	97,650.00 €	292.950.00 €

Explanations:

Since Italian full-time salaries for university teachers especially in their first 6-10 years are less than 2,000.00 € a month, it is crucial to offer prospective candidates financial incentives to allow them to turn down other jobs and fully engage in the program on top of their teaching activities.

Annual evaluation of the program's effectiveness may lead to readjustment of the allocation of some funds to maximize pedagogical success.

Timeline:

Jan 2024 – March 2024: formulate the profile and regulations of the Center for Didactics and obtain the formal approval conferred by the university.

Mar 2024 – Sept 2024: conduct interviews and hire a specialist as Director of the Center for Didactics

Oct 2024 – June 2025: first year of activity, followed by an evaluation.

Oct 2025 – June 2026: second year of activity, followed by an evaluation.

Oct 2026 – June 2027: third year of activity, followed by an evaluation.

Grant Proposal Coordinator and Contact Person

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