



Brussels, 12 February 2016

COST 022/16

## DECISION

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Subject: **Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action “Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development.” (WeRELaTE) CA15221**

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The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development. approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 12 February 2016.



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Horizon 2020

COST Association, International not-for-profit  
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Register of legal Entities Brussels: 0829090573

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## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For the implementation of a COST Action designated as

### **COST Action CA15221**

### **ADVANCING EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL MODELS TOWARDS COHESIVE TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH AND WRITING DEVELOPMENT. (WeRELaTE)**

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State, accepting the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wish to undertake joint activities of mutual interest and declare their common intention to participate in the COST Action (the Action), referred to above and described in the Technical Annex of this MoU.

The Action will be carried out in accordance with the set of COST Implementation Rules approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), or any new document amending or replacing them:

- a. "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" (COST 132/14);
- b. "COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval" (COST 133/14);
- c. "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" (COST 134/14);
- d. "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation" (COST 135/14).

The main aim and objective of the Action is to create synergy among increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities, namely, research, writing, teaching and learning. The Action will classify, as 'frontier taxonomies', the shared territories and will offer models for more complementary support for these four areas. This will be achieved through the specific objectives detailed in the Technical Annex.

The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at EUR 40 million in 2015.

The MoU will enter into force once at least five (5) COST Member Countries and/or COST Cooperating State have accepted it, and the corresponding Management Committee Members have been appointed, as described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

The COST Action will start from the date of the first Management Committee meeting and shall be implemented for a period of four (4) years, unless an extension is approved by the CSO following the procedure described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

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**OVERVIEW**

**Summary**

This Action addresses the challenge of creating synergy among the increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities - research, writing, teaching and learning - which frequently fail to capitalise on their shared territories and common ground. In many institutions, central support for these four areas continues to grow, repeatedly in a reactive rather than strategic manner, in the form of sometimes overlapping programmes or activities, centres, institutes and other units. This responsive growth, often influenced by external forces, can result in the goals, structures and services of these central supports being less than optimal. Equally, what contributes to success, productivity and quality of outcomes, across research, writing, teaching and learning, can remain tacit, ill defined or indeed invisible. This Action addresses the dearth of professional conversations and research around the *shared territory* of support for, and development of, these four areas. Such dialogue and research, across units and institutions, will illuminate intersections and contribute to institutional transformation based on complementary, coherent and integrated provision.

This Action will address the identified challenge by:

- classifying, as ‘frontier taxonomies’, the common ground in terms of shared purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills among centralized institutional supports for research, writing, teaching and learning in order to capitalise on their synergies
- offering the most advantageous models and practices for supporting these four areas that are mindful of the availability of new technologies and assessments and that prompt a reworking of current institutional supports which will be valuable and far-reaching.

<p><b>Areas of Expertise Relevant for the Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational sciences: Education: training, pedagogy, didactics</li> <li>• Languages and literature: Linguistics: formal, cognitive, functional and computational linguistics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education Pedagogy - Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Higher Education Academic Writing</li> <li>• Building research capacity and processes</li> <li>• Higher Education institutional transformation and reform</li> <li>• Innovation in higher education central supports</li> </ul>
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**Specific Objectives**

To achieve the main objective described in this MoU, the following specific objectives shall be accomplished:

Research Coordination

- Clarify and publish what we mean, collectively, by key terms associated with the Action (agreed working definitions; glossary of terms where beneficial; shared bibliography on which definitions are based)
- Develop a common understanding of the desirable functions of higher education centralised supports for teaching, learning, research and writing internationally (agreed published matrix mapping desirable



functions of centralised supports)

- Co-ordinate the identification of existing centralised models which aim to support teaching, learning, research and writing in higher education with particular regard to their place institutionally and their existing interconnectedness/interoperability (research informed, evidence-based publication and graphic illustrations of existing models internationally)
- Co-ordinate the mapping of the purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship basis, skills development and values of the existing aforementioned centralised models of support (shared database of mapping exercise)
- Develop a replicable, reusable data gathering instrument, for use with key informants in order to capture their individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity, in each of the four areas (data gathering instrument)
- Agree criteria for the identification of key informants and subsequent identification of key informant group (list of criteria and database of key informants)
- Co-ordinate the deconstruction of each of the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing with key informants in order to classify the elements that have typically led them to success, effectiveness and productivity (data gathering with key informants)
- Co-ordinate the collation and cross tabulation of data gathered from key informants in order to identify the common ground that exists, in terms of positive development and performance through purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship, skills development and values, across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing.
- Consider and propose, mindful of the insights provided from the analysis of data and taking into account existing models, what alternative centrally provided models and practices might best support the effective, successful and productive development of learning, teaching, research and writing
- Produce a framework, publications and electronic resources which serve two purposes:

o□ To present alternative central support models which address the Action's challenge

o□ To suggest a blueprint for how such models might be adopted or integrated in an institutional environment.

### Capacity Building

- Facilitate knowledge exchange across the Network in order to establish a clearer picture of current provision, arrangement and organization of centrally offered supports for teaching, learning, writing and research
- Commit to growing the Network, over the life of the Action, in order to expand the dialogue and to acknowledge the value that diversity of experience can bring to the Action
- Bring together colleagues, who work in central support and development of teaching, learning, research and writing, in order to facilitate immediate and ongoing professional, global conversations about how these four areas could complement each other towards greater success, productivity for staff and students and capacity building for institutions
- Capitalise on the wealth of discipline experience, specialist expertise and research that exists currently across the higher education sector globally in order to craft new shared models and frameworks
- Broker links within and beyond the Action Network to prompt further groundbreaking research into innovative and synergistic ways of viewing staff and student support around teaching, learning, research and writing
- Build research capacity by including, where appropriate, continuing professional development elements around securing and engaging in significant research projects at Action meetings and training schools
- Share current successful practice and new proposed models and frameworks around centralized support with colleagues in near neighbour and developing countries in order to collaboratively bolster development efforts across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing
- Advocate for and with near neighbour and developing country colleagues with regards what provision of central support might best fit their particular developmental stage and cultural and socio-economic context
- Inspire colleagues at all career stages, particularly those from under-represented groups and early career investigators, to make beneficial connections and to be courageous in their own contributions to



international professional conversations and research

- Model good practice in terms of international collaboration founded on robust ethics, sound values and respect for difference and diversity



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## 1. S&T EXCELLENCE

### 1.1. Challenge

#### 1.1.1. Description of the Challenge (Main Aim)

This Action addresses the challenge of creating synergy among increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities - research, writing, teaching and learning - which frequently fail to capitalise on their shared territories and common ground. In many institutions, central support for these four areas continues to grow, repeatedly in a reactive rather than strategic manner, in the form of sometimes overlapping programmes or activities, centres, institutes and other units. This responsive growth, often influenced by external forces, can result in the goals, structures and services of these central supports being less than optimal. Equally, what contributes to success, productivity and quality of outcomes, *across* research, writing, teaching and learning, can remain tacit, ill defined or indeed invisible. Our Action addresses the dearth of professional conversations and research around the *shared territory* of support for, and development of, these four areas. Such dialogue and research, across units and institutions, will illuminate intersections and contribute to institutional transformation based on complementary, coherent and integrated provision.

This Action will address the identified challenge by:

- classifying, as ‘frontier taxonomies’, the common ground in terms of shared purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills among centralized institutional supports for research, writing, teaching and learning in order to capitalise on their synergies
- offering the most advantageous models and practices for supporting these four areas that are mindful of the availability of new technologies and assessments and that prompt a reworking of current institutional supports which will enhance institutional productivity and quality.

#### 1.1.2. Relevance and timeliness

This Action is relevant, timely and groundbreaking because it marks the beginning of a global conversation around new models for the central support of teaching, learning, research and writing, for both staff and students, which are based on shared reported findings of what leads to effectiveness, success and productivity. This dialogue will take place alongside, and building on, the ‘disciplining’ approach that has predominated but it will offer an alternative for consideration in a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary space.

The Action addresses four areas which are core activities in higher education namely teaching, learning, research and writing. Because the Action is concerned with central support for each of these areas, the relevance and timeliness of the Action is expressed with reference to the institutional and sectoral landscape. In this regard, three key factors of institutional and sectoral significance make this Action timely and relevant:

1. the massification of higher education in terms of growth in student numbers and diversity of the student population (Altbach et al., 2009; Arum and Roksa, 2011; Barber et al., 2013; European Commission, 2013; Guri-Rosenblit, 2007; OECD, 2008, 2012, 2014; Shavit et al., 2007)



2. Neoliberal, managerial approaches in higher education including a ever growing range of stakeholder demands, a transactional approach to the higher education experience and the need for alternative models (Barnett, 2012; Lindley and Machin, 2013; Lynch et al., 2012)
3. the growing use of technology in higher education (Conole, 2010; Ellis and Goodyear, 2012; Laurillard, 2012; Wheeler and Gerver, 2015).

The Action is proposed in a time of unprecedented change in higher education in terms of growth in student numbers, diversity of the student population, changes in staff roles and responsibilities, increase in the number and variety of stakeholder demands, a neoliberal institutional organization and the influence of technology. These factors combined, or even taken separately, mean that scaffolding and enhancing the staff and student experience of teaching, learning, research and writing has become ever more complex in terms of institutional organisation and professional and student support. In the past, the incremental nature of responsive development across these factors made it a somewhat achievable task for many established higher education providers in developed world contexts. Currently, however, this gradual approach has resulted in institutions frequently developing in reaction to these factors rather than in anticipation of them. In addition, because of the need for constant change in higher education there is often little time to strategically respond and to achieve any coherence before the next student/staff support initiative, imperative or demand appears on the horizon.

At present, there is no framework and/or taxonomy that articulates the common ground in terms of purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills and across the four areas of teaching, learning, writing and research. If such a framework and/or taxonomy existed it could guide institutions as to the creation of models of central support which accentuate the complementary nature of the four areas while acknowledging their differences. Higher education will continue to face demands and need to be responsive; increasingly, for most providers, this will happen against the backdrop of diminishing resources, fewer fulltime staff members, greater diversity, larger student populations and growing stratification within the sector. Beginning this Action now initiates a global conversation which could lead to alternative models which could in turn provide for a reimagining of approaches to central supports for teaching, learning, research and writing. These new conceptions would focus on effectiveness, success and productivity in terms of purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills and would serve to capitalise on commonalities and synergies.

Professional conversations and collegial engagement such as this Action are necessary if we are to address the institutional and sectoral changes which are occurring. Without groundbreaking work such as this Action there is a risk that the quality of the student and staff experience and indeed, in some instances, the continuity of provision are in jeopardy.

## 1.2. Specific Objectives

### 1.2.1. Research Coordination Objectives

Please note: Indicative deliverables associated with each of the Action's research coordination objectives are listed in brackets after each objective.

This Action will fulfil the following objectives in order to address the identified challenge:

- Clarify and publish what we mean, collectively, by key terms associated with the Action (agreed working definitions; glossary of terms where beneficial; shared bibliography on which definitions are based)
- Develop a common understanding of the *desirable* functions of higher education centralised supports for teaching, learning, research and writing internationally (agreed published matrix mapping *desirable* functions of centralised supports)

- Co-ordinate the identification of existing centralised models which aim to support teaching, learning, research and writing in higher education with particular regard to their place institutionally and their existing interconnectedness/interoperability (research informed, evidence-based publication and graphic illustrations of existing models internationally)
- Co-ordinate the mapping of the purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship basis, skills development and values of the existing aforementioned centralised models of support (shared database of mapping exercise)
- Develop a replicable, reusable data gathering instrument, for use with key informants in order to capture their individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity, in each of the four areas (data gathering instrument)
- Agree criteria for the identification of key informants and subsequent identification of key informant group (list of criteria and database of key informants)
- Co-ordinate the deconstruction of each of the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing with key informants in order to classify the elements that have typically led them to success, effectiveness and productivity (data gathering with key informants)
- Co-ordinate the collation and cross tabulation of data gathered from key informants in order to identify the common ground that exists, in terms of positive development and performance through purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship, skills development and values, across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing (presentation of initial findings, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, collaborative discussion of analysis, shared presentation of insights, exploration of potential to classify insights as frontier taxonomies)
- Consider and propose, mindful of the insights provided from the analysis of data and taking into account existing models, what alternative centrally provided models and practices might best support the effective, successful and productive development of learning, teaching, research and writing (identify synergies between these areas drawing on all Action objectives, drafting of framework, publication and associated electronic resources)
- Produce a framework, publications and electronic resources which serve two purposes:
  - To present alternative central support models for teaching, learning, research and writing which capitalise on the inherent commonalities and intersections among these areas and which are evidence-based and grounded in successful practice
  - To suggest a blueprint for how such models might be adopted or integrated in an institutional environment.

### 1.2.2. Capacity-building Objectives

In order to address the Action's challenge and to build future research and networking capacity within the group and beyond the Action will:

- Facilitate knowledge exchange across the Network in order to establish a clearer picture of current provision, arrangement and organization of centrally offered supports for teaching, learning, writing and research
- Commit to growing the Network, over the life of the Action, in order to expand the dialogue and to acknowledge the value that diversity of experience can bring to the Action
- Bring together colleagues, who work in central support and development of teaching, learning, research and writing, in order to facilitate immediate and ongoing professional, global conversations about how these four areas could complement each other towards greater success, productivity for staff and students and capacity building for institutions
- Capitalise on the wealth of discipline experience, specialist expertise and research that exists currently across the higher education sector globally in order to craft new shared models and frameworks



- Broker links within and beyond the Action Network to prompt further groundbreaking research into innovative and synergistic ways of viewing staff and student support around teaching, learning, research and writing
- Build research capacity by including, where appropriate, continuing professional development elements around securing and engaging in significant research projects at Action meetings and training schools
- Share current successful practice and new proposed models and frameworks around centralized support with colleagues in near neighbour and developing countries in order to collaboratively bolster development efforts across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing
- Advocate for and with near neighbour and developing country colleagues with regards what provision of central support might best fit their particular developmental stage and cultural and socio-economic context
- Enthuse and excite colleagues to work together towards the development of comprehensive research projects which would re-imagine and reinvent the way that we currently view staff and student support for teaching and learning, research and writing
- Inspire colleagues at all career stages, particularly those from under-represented groups and early career investigators, to make beneficial connections and to be courageous in their own contributions to international professional conversations and research
- Model good practice in terms of international collaboration founded on robust ethics, sound values and respect for difference and diversity
- Share all Action outcomes and outputs through publication, or equivalent, under Creative Commons, or equivalent, licensing.
- Engage with colleagues outside of education in order to explore creative solutions and unconventional approaches
- Communicate our work within the higher education community, including policy makers, and beyond the higher education community in order to share the benefits of our collaborative learning.

### **1.3. Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and Innovation Potential**

#### **1.3.1. Description of the state-of-the-art**

The state-of-the-art as it relates to this Action is largely around expertise and research in each of the four areas as separate entities; there is an abundance of research about the distinct areas of learning, teaching, researching and writing in higher education. It would be well beyond the scope of this document to present even a brief review of this work which includes several key texts from authors who refer specifically to what leads to effectiveness in each area (Anson, 2014; Akerlind, 2005; Bain, 2004; Elizabeth and Grant, 2013; Geller and Eodice, 2013; Kuh et al., 2010; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Sorcinelli et al., 2006; Stefani, 2011; Thaïss et al., 2014; Trowler et al., 2012; Yorke, 2004). Some of this work has addressed these four areas more holistically an approach which is also demonstrated in particular scholarship, organizations/associations (and their academic publications) and in the emergence of cross-functional/cross-disciplinary areas, such as, for example, academic/educational development, which by their very nature involve a multi-perspective approach.

In terms of a theoretical or philosophical basis, the Action identifies the work of Ernest Boyer (1990) on scholarship as particularly useful. Boyer's four scholarships touch on all four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing to varying degrees. Associations such as International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) explore Boyer's ideas and provide opportunities for academics who are interested in his work to share their research and to discuss their ideas; their

international peer reviewed journal *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* serves a complementary function. The collaborative, holistic spirit of Boyer's work is reflected in other international efforts towards synergistic consideration of teaching, learning, research and writing. These include:

- the International Society for the Advancement of Writing Research (ISAWR) which host an international biannual Writing Research Across Borders (WRAB) Conference
- the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), particularly through its special interest groups, on writing, higher education and researcher education and careers
- the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) through their conferences and their journal *International Journal for Academic Development*.
- COST Actions, particularly Action IS0703 The European Research Network on Learning to Write Effectively (ERN-LWE) and Action IS 1401 Strengthening Europeans' capabilities by establishing the European literacy network.

The work of these organizations and the individuals that contribute to them brings the gravitas of well-established traditions and foundational research and scholarship to the joint consideration of disciplinary disparate areas in order to promote new thinking and to build new research communities.

### 1.3.2. Progress beyond the state-of-the-art

This Action is groundbreaking and pioneering in that, to the best of our knowledge, no previous work has approached the articulated challenge in the manner the Action proposes. This Action will move beyond the state of art by exploring, employing and exploiting the range of foundational theoretical perspectives and experience that exists (and can be further built) within the Action's Network to create five distinctive outcomes none of which exist at present. These outcomes are:

- the development of a shared discourse across the expertise of higher education support for learning, teaching, writing and research so that colleagues can begin to understand each other's perspectives
- the combined mapping of current centralised institutional models of support for learning, teaching, writing and research in order to identify (a) what models exist for each area and (b) what common ground they share or could share
- the development of a reliable and robust data gathering instrument that can be used with key informants across all areas of teaching, learning, research and writing, to identify the individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values they enact which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity
- the classification of findings as 'frontier taxonomies'
- the creation of a framework with draws on the mapping of models and the analysis of data gathered to suggest new innovative institutional models/centres that would better support the complementary development of teaching, learning, research and writing.

These key outcomes, combined with the achievement of the objectives noted in this Annex (sections, 1.2.1 and 1.2.2) will allow the Action to identify good practice which will inform coherence in terms of support and structures. The outcomes of the Action will offer institutions a way to address the frequently siloed approach to central support for the four areas. Identifying and capitalising on the fruitful common ground and shared territory between support for these four areas could lead to much improved models of provision of support and rationalising of input. The Action will thus suggest new models, innovative frameworks and exciting new ways of facilitating and supporting teaching and learning, research and writing for higher education staff and student communities.

### 1.3.3. Innovation in tackling the challenge

As noted previously, this Action will address the challenge of identifying synergies among the increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for teaching, learning, research and writing. The Action's approach is innovative in that it aims to build very deliberately on the research and expertise that exists, *across* the four areas, in order to address the challenge; it does not limit itself to one discipline or research tradition. It is innovative also in that it will combine data from student and staff key informants across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing; research projects and indeed supports for these areas are generally either staff or student facing. The Action is also groundbreaking because it begins with reported effectiveness, success and productivity in the four areas as the foundations for central models; at present many models are reactive, designed in response to specific individual factors or deeply rooted in past traditions and disciplines. Finally, the Action is pioneering in the Network's make up of experts from related areas who traditionally rarely communicate and even less frequently collaborate. As a result of the conversations and the feedback from key informants the Action will apply its learning to current provision in order to illuminate new models of more intentional networks among current units and more collaborative, seamless structures, models and practices that would benefit both staff and students.

## 1.4. Added value of networking

### 1.4.1. In relation to the Challenge

The challenge that the Action addresses is a global one particularly with reference to the factors which contribute to its timeliness and relevance (noted in Section 1.1.2). Within the network of proposers the Action will immediately have access to an international high calibre consortium of higher education colleagues all of whom work in support for teaching, learning, research and writing within their institutions. In turn, many of the members of the Network as it exists are connected to national endeavours around support for these four areas separately and are central to international networks who are either specialising in support for teaching, learning, research and writing independently or are seeking to see where one or other of these areas might overlap. It would be highly improbable, and undesirable, for the work of this Action to be completed without networking as it is unlikely that any individual academic or institution could provide the breath of experience and expertise necessary to consider commonalities and synergies across these areas. It is because each of these areas of support for teaching, learning, research and writing has become so specialised that it is entirely necessary to bring together colleagues from across each of the different areas, working in different contexts and at different stages. The networking associated with the Action will provide a valuable hub of learning, a space for developing a shared discourse, enormous potential for the design of related research projects, ongoing communication and collaboration, and the potential to truly build on existing efforts which are concerned with shared endeavours.

Practically, the nature of the COST Networking tools will facilitate the collaborative achievement of the Action's challenge. All meetings, workshops, conferences, training schools and Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) will help the Network to develop a shared discourse which is essential where specialist areas are learning to work together. The meetings, both management committee meetings and working group meetings, will allow the Action to develop efficient ways of working and shared approaches which can be built on in pursuit of further collaboration and joint research projects. Similarly STSMs will help the Action to achieve shared outcomes in terms of the development of instruments, reviewing of existing expertise, drafting of models and connecting with various pockets of international expertise which can then be communicated back to the Network and beyond. Conferences and workshops will facilitate the Action in sharing and honing findings and in the dissemination of progress, while training schools will build capacity within and beyond the Network.

#### 1.4.2. In relation to existing efforts at European and/or international level

This Action will produce outcomes that will be new to the higher education sector. The Action relates to existing efforts in terms of the current state-of-the-art as noted in Section 1.3. That Section highlights the collaborative approach currently within work that attempts to bridge or find synergies between the areas of teaching, learning, research and writing. This Action already connects with current state-of-the-art through its theoretical and practical foundations and through the interests, research and participation of its Network of proposers. It will deliberately connect with other COST Actions and other EU research projects through its work and its Network; the Action, in this regard, will not replicate existing work, rather it will provide an alternative approach to how shared concerns might be tackled.

### 2.1. Expected Impact

#### 2.1.1. Short-term and long-term scientific, technological, and/or socioeconomic impacts

In the short-term (understood as lifetime of the Action) the Action will:

- Fulfil all of the Action's objectives (see Section 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.) and produce associated outputs and deliverables
- Provide, through its Networking tools, the opportunity for international colleagues to meet to address the Action's challenges and to build new relationships and future working partnerships
- Grow to accommodate other Network partners particularly those who might most benefit from inclusion
- Contribute and add to the work of existing state-of-the-art in this area
- Connect directly with other networks concerned with related challenges and seek to work collaboratively with them (see Section 1.3.1)
- Support capacity building and continuing professional development for its Network proposers and other colleagues
- Submit joint research proposals
- Aim to be a conduit for research and networking around addressing the Action's challenge.

In the long-term (understood as beyond the lifetime of the Action) impact will continue in terms of:

- The maintenance of the community of practice which emerges through partnership in the completion of the Action
- Collaborative research projects by Network partners
- The availability of the instruments, tools and models developed through the Action
- Continued connection with other existing networks
- The ongoing availability (online) of any publications or other dissemination outputs of the Action
- The development in institutions of different models and approaches to the Action's challenge
- Influencing of higher education policy at national and international level
- The commitment to continue to share outcomes, outputs, expertise and other benefits with colleagues and countries struggling to keep up with the ongoing rapid changes and demands in higher education (as outline in Section 1.1.2)

Contributing to pursuing good practice for all higher education providers and endeavouring to counteract any negative impacts which institutions may experience as a result of an ever more stratified global provision.

## 2.2. Measures to Maximise Impact

### 2.2.1. Plan for involving the most relevant stakeholders

Given the nature of this Action there are many relevant stakeholders. They will include, but may not be limited to the following groups:

- all staff working in higher education central units which support teaching, learning, research and writing. This will also include staff who work in Technology Enhanced Learning and staff who work with non-traditional students including students with disabilities, mature students, students from under-represented groups and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- higher education academic staff (teachers and researchers) and students
- higher education senior managers
- librarians and information literacy experts
- higher education policy makers and curriculum planners
- national and international organizations, societies and associations concerned with support for teaching, learning, research and writing
- international bodies, including the EU, the OECD, the UN who support and examine systems and models of support for teaching, learning, research and writing
- employers who are concerned with how support for teaching, learning, research and writing contributes to graduate attributes
- employers with regards how models designed in a higher education context might be applicable to continuing professional development or training in other contexts.

All Action Networking tools will be mindful of the need to involve our stakeholders. Stakeholders will be invited to participate in the Action's workshops, seminars, conferences and training schools. Similarly, the themes of these Networking tools will reflect the variety of stakeholders. Equally, we will endeavour to co-ordinate our Networking tools so that they complement the work, and where beneficial, the logistics of some of the Action's stakeholders e.g. shared venues for events, back-to-back scheduling etc.

### 2.2.2. Dissemination and/or Exploitation Plan

The dissemination plan for this Action will exploit a variety of communication tools for internal and external communication: internal communication will be between the Action partners as they complete the Action's objectives; external communication about the Action and the achievement of its objectives could be with any of the above listed stakeholders.

The Action will employ the following communication tools for internal communication and dissemination:

- A communications and dissemination strategy and a post of responsibility within the Action partners for Internal Communications
- Terms of reference for communicating within the Action
- A dedicated web space with necessary tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication
- A listserv – for Action partners
- Shared project plans
- Shared documents space and the development of shared documents
- Virtual meeting tools e.g. Skype, Blackboard Collaborate, Google Hangout

- Appropriate social media tools
- Event advertising and reporting
- An e-bulletin
- Progress reports

The Action will employ the following communication tools for external communication and dissemination:

- A communications and dissemination strategy and a post of responsibility with the Action partners for External Communications
- Terms of reference for communicating outside the Action and/or on behalf of the Action
- Action partners – partners will be encouraged and reminded to talk about and publicise the Action as widely as possible.
- A dedicated web space with necessary tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication
- A blog
- A listserv –for stakeholders
- An Action summary flyer – hard and soft copy
- Online publication of Action produced resources, including data gathering tools and framework
- Appropriate social media tools
- An electronic newsletter
- Academic publications/journals
- Conference participation
- Progress reports
- Targeted communications with key stakeholders
- A resource pack for stakeholders interested in replicating the activity of the Action
- An eBook which brings together all of the Action's outputs
- Publications associated with events including book of abstracts, published proceedings etc.

All Action outputs and publications will be available under Creative Commons or similar licencing agreements.

The Action will also try to engage with broadcast media where possible.

Because a key objective of the Action is to generate greater conversation around the Action's challenge Action partners, with their current and future networks, will be key to the Action's dissemination strategy.

With regards exploitation, the Action will actively seek to exploit the fulfilment of its objectives through the pursuit of other research projects of an international nature.

All of the deliverables noted in Section 1.2.1 will also be published and disseminated.

## **2.3. Potential for Innovation versus Risk Level**

### **2.3.1. Potential for scientific, technological and/or socioeconomic innovation breakthroughs**

The greatest risk associated with the Action is that there is lack of engagement amongst the partners and that the Action fails to complete its objectives. There is also a risk that the Action's concern is too significant and sprawling to be addressed through a COST Action and that a more comprehensive research project might better suit the challenge as articulated. However, because the challenge is so multifaceted the preferred way to approach it *is* through extended dialogue and professional conversation in the first instance. Through the Action's networking tools the Action will build strong connections between partners and beyond, fulfil the Action's objectives and craft strong research proposals which will have their foundations in the accomplishments of the Action. The completion of the Action will result in a unique contribution to higher education which is groundbreaking and will prove very useful as the sector negotiates its future.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION

### 3.1. Description of the Work Plan

#### 3.1.1. Description of Working Groups

There will be 3 Working Groups in the Action. The composition of these groups will be reworked, as will the Working Groups' focus half way through the Action.

In Years 1 and 2 the Working Groups will be as follows:

Working Group 1 – Teaching and Learning

Working Group 2 – Researching and Writing

Working Group 3 – Frontiers and Borderlands across Teaching, Learning, Research and Writing.

The groups are composed along these designations in order to capture the expertise in each of these separate areas that exists in the Network. In practical terms, it is intended that the majority of face-to-face working group meetings will be two days in duration and will happen in tandem in the same venue. The intention is that the working groups will meet as their separate group on day 1 but that they will share their outcomes with colleagues from the other working groups on day 2.

In Years 3 and 4 members of Working Groups 1, 2 and 3 will be reorganized into two new working groups namely:

Working Group 4 – Seeking and identifying new knowledge

Working Group 5 - Articulating new models

This arrangement best reflects the nature of the project and the desire to both build on expertise but also to share expertise in order to create new knowledge.

Each group will work to collectively achieve the Action's objectives. Specifically, the groups will have responsibility for the following deliverables in the noted timeframe.

<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Agreed working definitions; glossary of terms; shared bibliography on which definitions are based	1,2 and 3	2016, Q4
Published matrix mapping <i>desirable</i> functions of centralised supports for teaching, learning, research and writing	1,2 and 3	2016, Q4
Research informed, evidence based publication and graphic illustrations of existing models of support for teaching, learning, research and writing internationally	1, 2 and 3	2017, Q2
Shared database of mapping of the purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship basis, skills development and values of the existing centralised models of support	1, 2 and 3	2017, Q2
Develop a replicable, reusable data gathering instrument, for use with key informants in order to capture their individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity, in each of the four areas	1, 2 and 3	2017, Q4
Agree criteria for the identification of key informants and subsequent identification of key informant group	1,2 and 3	2017, Q4
Data gathering with key informants and presentation of initial findings	4	2018, Q2
Qualitative and quantitative data analysis and presentation of insights towards new models	5	2018, Q4
Collaborative discussion of analysis and insights	4 and 5	2018, Q4
Identify synergies between the four areas drawing on all Action objectives,	4	2019, Q2
Drafting of frameworks, models and taxonomies based on synergies	5	2019, Q2
Production of published frameworks, models and taxonomies and any associated electronic resources	4 and 5	2019, Q4

These deliverables will also be connected to other Networking tools including workshops, training schools and STSMs. Working groups will be expected to be engaged with these Networking tools many of which will thematically reflect the deliverables of the working groups. Similarly, each working group will have shared responsibility for contributing to dissemination deliverables and activities.



### 3.1.2. GANTT Diagram

Task Name	Start Date	End Date	Duration	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Meetings</b>	03/01/16	02/28/20	1044d	Meetings																			
MC Meeting	03/01/16	03/01/16	1d	MC Meeting																			
MC Meeting	10/31/16	10/31/16	1d		MC Meeting																		
MC Meeting	03/13/17	03/13/17	1d			MC Meeting																	
MC Meeting	10/30/17	10/30/17	1d				MC Meeting																
MC Meeting	03/19/18	03/19/18	1d					MC Meeting															
MC Meeting	10/29/18	10/29/18	1d						MC Meeting														
MC Meeting	05/10/19	05/10/19	1d							MC Meeting													
MC Meeting	10/28/19	10/28/19	1d								MC Meeting												
MC Meeting	02/28/20	02/28/20	1d																			MC Meeting	
Working Group Meetings	05/19/16	05/20/16	2d	Working Group Meetings																			
Working Group Meetings	11/01/16	11/02/16	2d		Working Group Meetings																		
Working Group Meetings	10/31/17	11/01/17	2d			Working Group Meetings																	
Working Group Meetings	10/30/18	10/30/18	1d				Working Group Meetings																
Working Group Meetings	03/18/19	03/19/19	2d					Working Group Meetings															
Working Group Meetings	10/29/19	10/30/19	2d						Working Group Meetings														
Workshop	11/03/16	11/04/16	2d	Workshop																			
Workshop	11/02/17	11/03/17	2d		Workshop																		
Workshop	10/31/19	11/01/19	2d								Workshop												
Conference	10/31/18	11/02/18	3d							Conference													
Communication and Dissemination	03/01/16	02/28/20	1044d	Communication and Dissemination																			
<b>Training Schools</b>	03/14/17	03/22/19	529d	Training Schools																			
Spring Training School1	03/14/17	03/17/17	4d		Spring Training School1																		
Spring Training School 2	03/20/18	03/23/18	4d			Spring Training School 2																	
Spring Training School 3	03/20/19	03/22/19	3d				Spring Training School 3																
<b>STSMs</b>	04/01/16	01/31/20	1001d	STSMs																			
STSM1	08/29/16	10/28/16	45d	STSM1																			
STSM2	01/09/17	03/10/17	45d		STSM2																		
STSM3	04/03/17	06/02/17	45d			STSM3																	
STSM4	08/21/17	10/20/17	45d				STSM4																
STSM5	01/08/18	03/09/18	45d					STSM5															
STSM6	08/20/18	10/19/18	45d						STSM6														
STSM7	01/07/19	03/08/19	45d							STSM7													
STSM8	01/07/19	03/07/19	44d								STSM8												
<b>Milestones</b>																							
Milestone	11/04/16	11/04/16	0		Milestone																		
Milestone	03/17/17	03/17/17	0			Milestone																	
Milestone	11/03/17	11/03/17	0				Milestone																
Milestone	03/24/18	03/24/18	0					Milestone															
Milestone	11/02/18	11/02/18	0						Milestone														
Milestone	03/23/19	03/23/19	0							Milestone													
Milestone	11/02/19	11/02/19	0								Milestone												
Milestone	01/31/20	01/31/20	0									Milestone											
<b>Reporting, Budgets and Plans</b>																							
Progress Report 1	09/05/16	09/05/16	1d	Progress Report 1																			
Progress Report 2	12/14/18	12/14/18	1d									Progress Report 2											
Final Achievement Report	01/31/20	01/31/20	1d																			Final Achievement R	
<b>Work and Budget Plans</b>																							
Work and Budget Plan 1	04/01/16	04/01/16	1d	Work and Budget Plan 1																			
Work and Budget Plan 2	04/03/17	04/03/17	1d		Work and Budget Plan 2																		
Work and Budget Plan 3	04/02/18	04/02/18	1d				Work and Budget Plan 3																
Work and Budget Plan 4	04/01/19	04/01/19	1d					Work and Budget Plan 4															

The timeframes offered in the GANTT Chart are indicative and will be confirmed at the first MC meeting and revisited at each work and budget plan.

### 3.1.3. Risk and Contingency Plans

The plan is designed to minimize risks associated with completion. The main risk is around the complexity in terms of the organization of the work and the scheduling of events. The former we hope will be addressed through robust management structures and particularly through comprehensive project management procedures. The latter is addressed through the consistency of the scheduling of events, from year to year of the Action to allow for predictability, and by the avoidance of key vacation times. Both of these issues will be considered at the annual planning and budget times. Where there appear to be challenges they will be addressed at that stage and the necessary contingency steps taken. There is also the issue of the financial complexity associated with this range of events; that issue will be addressed at project management level through dedicated budgetary and financial support.

## 3.2. Management structures and procedures

The Management Structures and Procedures of the Action will reflect the COST rules and be mindful of good practice in terms of accountability and project management. As per COST rules the Action will include a Management Committee (MC) as the decision-making body. As noted in COST documentation, the MC will be made up of 'up to two representatives of each COST member country having accepted the Memorandum of Understanding of the Action'. MC meetings will occur as noted in the Gantt chart and will be concomitant with the Action's various Networking Tools. Viewing the Action as a project, the Action will have a project management team and made up of the appropriate representatives from the MC and Working Group members. It will have an identified project manager and support in terms of budgetary management. Once established, members of the project management team will have particular areas of responsibility which are associated with the effective completion of the project. These will include responsibility for Working Groups, Communication and Dissemination, Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs), Training Schools and Workshops. These responsibilities will be shared between 2 or 3 members of the project management team to prevent the risk associated with only one point of contact and to build capacity within the group. A separate Conference Steering Group will be established to manage the conference planned for Q4 2018. In addition, a Final Achievement Steering Group will be established in Q1 2019 to manage the final achievement report writing process. This group will also collate, publish and ensure the open access to all the outputs of the Action including definition documents, data gathering tools, databases, matrices, frameworks, taxonomies and models. Milestones associated with the project will include the annual Work and Budget Plans and Progress Reports. Completion of major Networking Tools, for example, Training Schools, STSMs and the Conference will also act as milestones; the conclusion of STSMs has been designed to precede Training Schools so that the former can feed into the latter with the milestone occurring after the Training School. Milestones will also act as review points with additional review points being designed into the project plan as appropriate. Key to successful completion of the project will be vigilance, transparency, exceptional planning and open communication. With this in mind, the project management team will review its processes and make up regularly to ensure that it is performing optimally; as necessary throughout the lifetime of the Action, the make up of the project management team may vary. In addition, the team, as the Action as a whole, will exploit technology to assist in communication and the achievement of the Action's objectives.

## 3.3. Network as a whole

The Action demands a range of expertise across the key areas of teaching, learning, research and writing. As a result, the current Network of Proposers includes specialisms predominantly from the defined areas of Education, Academic Development and Languages and Literature. Colleagues from



other disciplines, who are also part of the Network, also bring a strong commitment to the Action's four key areas of concern. The expertise within the Network, as it is currently composed, does represent a critical mass that could address the Action's objectives. The scholarship and practical experience within the Network is exceptional; a particularly important feature of its make up is the breath of experience from prolific, global leaders in the field to colleagues who are early career and pioneering in terms of their own professional development and their contributions. This diversity of experience is essential for the Action in terms of its aim to be groundbreaking and to propose new models, frameworks and taxonomies.

In terms of geographical distribution the current Network provides a firm foundation to begin the Action and to expand to include other partners. It is the intention to expand the Network in the first year of the Action in order to deepen the scope of the project while maintaining a clear emphasis on the need for diversity. The Action will seek particularly to connect with COST partners in countries which are less research intensive; it will do so in the first instance by utilising the connections of the current Network and by linking with existing associations such as those mentioned in Section 1.3.1 of this Annex.

This Action's Network does include International Partner Country (IPC) colleagues and Near Neighbour Countries (NNC). The IPC colleagues bring particular expertise and experience to the Action; in many cases they have been considering the Action's concerns in different ways and in some instances for much longer than COST Country colleagues. Their work is also grounded in different scholarship and traditions which brings further richness and diversity to the Action. Similarly colleagues in NNC bring experiences and practice which has different foundations, in different contexts which provides for significant learning opportunities for COST Country and IPC colleagues. Through the Action there is a mutual benefit for all partners in the provision of time and space for these groups to meet, explore and learn together. The variety of experience and the spirit of openness which these partners bring to the Action will provide for a unique opportunity to share current knowledge, to build on it and to create new knowledge together.

