



Earmarked Funding for Promoting Outcome-based Approaches to Student Learning (OBA Funding)

Call for Proposals 2007-08

1. About the Funding

University Management has earmarked a special funding (OBA Funding) to support colleagues to develop strategies and methods for implementing outcome-based approaches (OBA) to student learning in their departments / programmes / subjects.

Effective implementation of outcome-based approaches to student learning involves:

1. Defining programme/subject intended learning outcomes to encompass both academic/professional knowledge/skills and generic competences and communicating them to relevant stakeholders.
2. Designing teaching, learning and assessment methods for the subjects to facilitate students' attainment of the subject outcomes.
3. Mapping the intended learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment of the subjects to the programme outcomes to ensure attainment of programme outcomes
4. Designing appropriate strategies, methods and plans for collecting evidence on students' attainment of the subject and programme outcomes.
5. Using the outcome data to further improve the quality of the programmes.

OBA Funding is established to support projects which aim to develop, pilot and evaluate strategies and methods pertaining to one or more of the above areas. Each round of the funding may give priority to proposals which address areas identified as most needing development at the time.

The first round of the funding was distributed in June 2007 to support faculties, schools and departments to implement the OBA action plans in their Business Plans for the academic year 2007/08. Application for the second round of the funding is now open, and the deadline for submission of proposals is **31 January 2008**. Interested colleagues are invited to take note of the scope and priorities for this round detailed below.

2. Call for Proposals 2007-08: Scope and Priorities

In the Curriculum Revision 2004, we have achieved significant progress in defining intended student learning outcomes. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that more work still needs to be done in developing effective methods for teaching and assessing learning outcomes at both of the subject and programme levels. It is also found that the revised programme documents were commonly prepared by a group of core programme team members while the mass of frontline teachers still need to get involved.

The current round of funding therefore aims to support efforts that involve substantial collaboration among frontline teachers such that participation in the outcome-based initiative expands from the 'core' to the 'mass'. Preference will be given to proposals which address the following themes. Other topics are also encouraged. Applicants are reminded to take into account the context of their own faculty/department/programme/subject when conceiving their proposals.

a) Designing effective methods for guiding students to achieve learning outcomes

The ultimate goal of outcome-based education is that students will be able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Using suitable teaching and assessment methods to facilitate the attainment of intended learning outcomes is crucial to the implementation of OBE. However, it is often noted that *conventional teaching and assessment methods are seldom effective in bringing about intended outcomes valued by today's employers, particularly generic competences such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, global outlook, etc.*

Developing all-round students with professional competence is the overarching goal of all PolyU programmes. Creative efforts to develop, pilot and evaluate teaching and assessment methods which are aligned with intended learning outcomes of the programmes are greatly encouraged; in particular, *effective methods for integrating generic competences into the formal curriculum are specially needed.*

Possible projects may include developing teaching methods for a particular learning outcome, e.g. design, problem-solving, creativity, or a group of related outcomes, e.g. teamwork and leadership, global outlook and entrepreneurship.

It is anticipated that many of the methods can be applied across different subjects. Colleagues are strongly recommended to form *collaborative team projects to involve more colleagues* and to enhance sharing and mutual support in developing innovative methods.

b) Assessing professional and generic programme outcomes

Programme outcomes are qualities that require students to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills learnt and developed over the course of their study in the programme. They include generic outcomes as described in (a) above as well as professional learning outcomes such as designing an engineering process, clinical decision making, communication in business context, etc.

Subject assessments focus on knowledge and skills specific to individual subjects and do not generally assess the broad qualities of programme outcomes. The overall GPA is only the aggregation of grades obtained from individual subjects. It is not the best evidence on how students could holistically integrate and apply what they have learned in various subjects to perform in real-life situations. This means that more encompassing assessment methods have to be developed and piloted for assessing programme outcomes. Listed below are some examples of practicable methods:

- Capstone project/experience: Typically set near the end of a programme, and is usually real-life and sufficiently complex. It allows students to demonstrate holistically their competence in most (if not all) of the programme outcomes.
- Professional workplace assessment: Performance assessment of student competencies in actual workplace.
- Student learning portfolio: A collection of students' work throughout the period of study to provide evidence for the achievement of major programme outcomes.
- Embedded assessment of programme outcomes within subject assessments: Assessment tasks/questions specifically designed to assess a particular programme outcome being incorporated into subject assessments.

Possible projects may include developing and piloting the methods listed above and other suitable methods for assessing the programme outcomes.

c) Reviewing the alignment and mapping of subjects to programme outcomes

To ensure that students will attain all of the programme outcomes, a well-designed outcome-based curriculum should be carefully structured such that

- subjects in the programme collectively will address *all* of the programme outcomes adequately; and
- students develop learning outcomes *progressively* throughout the course of their studies in the various subjects.

Possible projects may include reviewing and improving the effectiveness of the alignment and mapping of the subjects to the programme outcomes in terms of the subject learning outcomes and the teaching, learning and assessment in the subjects. Another interesting area for proposals is tracking/improving the progressive development of specific programme outcomes across the period of study.

Effective curriculum mapping could not be achieved without the joint effort of teachers of the contributing subjects. For projects on mapping, it is preferred to involve *a significant portion of front-line teachers* and not only the core programme team members.

Priority will be given to proposals addressing themes (a) and (b).

3. Assistance for Preparing Proposals

The Educational Development Centre (EDC) will be organising a series of workshops to provide more information about the topics recommended above. Consultation sessions on preparing proposals will also be offered. You will be notified about these activities via EDC notices and posters in due course.

4. Information for Applicants

4.1 Eligibility

Project proposals can be submitted by faculties, schools, departments, programme teams, subject teams, or individual teaching staff.

4.2 Use of Funding

For each successful proposal, the proposer(s) will receive a budget approved for carrying out the project, including the cost of hiring project staff and other justified expenses.

To enable project proposers to have time to work on their OBA projects effectively, funding is also provided to support time release for them. The School(s)/Department(s) with which the proposers affiliate will be allocated an amount of funding which can be flexibly used for enhancing the general staffing level in their School(s)/Department(s) such that the time release recommended by the project proposers can be arranged, based on the Total Workload Model. Details of calculating the funding for time release can be found in the budget column of the Application Form.

4.3 Funding limit

The overall funding limit for each project is \$400,000 which should cover the budget for carrying out the project and the funding allocated to the School(s)/Department(s) for providing the recommended time release for the project proposers.

4.4 Selection criteria

A selection panel will be set up under the Working Group on Outcome-Based Education to review the applications and recommend funding decisions. The selection criteria are as follows:

<i>Criteria</i>

1. Alignment with institutional goals and priorities in implementing OBA to student learning

The degree to which the project

- (a) helps to achieve the University's *strategic goals* of promoting OBA to student learning
- (b) contributes to the advancement in the *most needed areas* in relation to the development and assessment of student learning outcomes at PolyU

2. Outcomes / deliverables:

The extent to which

- (a) outcomes / deliverables are clearly *identified* in the proposal
- (b) plans for achieving the outcomes / deliverables are *feasible*
- (c) plans to *evaluate* project outcomes / deliverables are *appropriate*
- (d) *effective* plans to *disseminate* project outcomes / deliverables are specified

3. Impact:

The potential of the proposed project to

- (a) generate *innovative* and *effective* strategies/methods for developing and/or assessing student learning outcomes, or
- (b) bring about *extensive* and *sustainable* impact on the implementation of OBA across the University

4. Collaboration and engagement of front line teachers

The extent to which the project involves

- (a) engagement of more front line teachers in implementing OBA actively across the campus
- (b) collaboration of *programme team members* to tackle developments at a programme level
- (c) collaboration across programmes / departments / faculties to facilitate development of *widely applicable strategies and methods*

4.5 Reporting

Project Leaders should submit progress reports and/or completion reports which should include a systematic evaluation of the outcomes of the project to the Working Group on Outcome-Based Education via their DLTC and F/SLTC according to the following schedule:

- Progress Report: No progress report is required of projects if they are completed within 1 year. For projects whose duration lasts more than 1 year, a progress report has to be submitted half way through the proposed project period.
- Completion Report: All projects have to submit a completion report within 3 months after the project completion date.

4.6 Sharing of outcomes and deliverables

All projects are expected to share the outcomes and deliverables among PolyU staff via sharing sessions and other means organised by the Working Group on Outcome-Based Education or EDC.

4.7 Deadline for the use of the allocated fund

The fund will be allocated in lump sum upon approval of the proposal. Any balance of funding not used when the completion date is reached will be clawed back.

4.8 Application procedures

Interested colleagues should complete the attached application form and forward it to their Head of Department for endorsement via their DLTC. Departments are requested to indicate the priority of their proposals if there are more than one submission within the Department. Endorsed proposals should be sent to Miss Miranda Fung, Secretary, Working Group on Outcome-Based Education, c/o EDC, on or before **31 January 2008**.

4.9 Enquiries

For enquiries about the application procedures, please contact the Secretary, Working Group on Outcome-Based Education:

Miranda Fung (EDC) Ext. 6299 Email: etmifung@inet.polyu.edu.hk