Relating, Bringing In, Transforming:

Teaching in Engaged Universities

Call for Papers for the Fifth Annual Elkana Symposium

Conference Date and Location: March 3-5, 2027, in Vienna (in-person)
Deadline for abstracts: December 15, 2026

Proposed Topic

The Yehuda Elkana Center for Teaching and Learning at Central European University (CEU) welcomes applications for its Annual Elkana Symposium, which will take place from March 3 to 5, 2027. The Elkana Symposium is an international gathering in Vienna that brings together faculty, educational developers, educational theorists, and higher education researchers to explore the intersections of teaching, the university, and democratic society. As such, it offers scholars and educational practitioners the chance to link classroom practices with theory – and higher education with its broader social purposes and contexts.

This year's theme is "Relating, Bringing in, Transforming: Teaching in Engaged Universities." Universities are living, dynamic spaces enacted through relationships: between researchers, teachers and students; in the moving frontier between the known and the uncertain; and between various disciplines and forms of knowledge. Embodiment and relationships, including care, trust, dialogue, and belonging, are receiving more attention in education, partly because they can improve teaching and restore fractured trust, but also because they raise deeper questions about the university as a space that connects people, brings them in, and transforms them. Teaching is central to this process, as it shapes how we create and share values, knowledge, and possibilities.

Relational approaches to teaching and the university have roots in feminist and other critical pedagogies, which raise fundamental questions about power, voice, knowledge, agency, and liberation. They understand the classroom and university as spaces in which relationships of power can be reproduced, negotiated, or transformed. When shifting institutional and political contexts take up and shift these languages and practices, can relational approaches fulfil their original ambitions? Can they transform how people relate to, experience, and make sense of the university?

How do classroom interactions shape whose knowledge is valued and whose voices are heard? What might universities look like if they prioritized transforming relationships between teachers and students, among students, and between the university and wider communities? How do we bring academic knowledge into dialogue with the knowledge and experiences of learners both within and beyond the university? What productive connections might emerge if we treat the university's three missions not as distinct but as integrated parts of an engaged university?

Conference Themes

We welcome proposals for individual paper presentations or full panels that address these questions, as well as other topics linked to the conference theme, including:

- Relational pedagogies
- Embodiment
- Trust, polarization, and conflict in classrooms
- Technology in educationally relevant relationships and decentralized learning
- Relationships in education in different cultural contexts
- Learning in and from universities in settings of crisis, conflict, and rebuilding
- Learning from others for collective transformation
- Engaged research and/or teaching as a model for engaged universities
- The university or university teaching in relation to democratic and open society
- Teaching and learning as a potentially central and unifying activity for higher education institutions in face of dissension, attacks, and uncertainty

We welcome proposals on these and other pertinent themes via the application form by December 15, 2026. Presentations will be approximately 15 minutes. For applications for individual papers, please submit your abstract of 300-400 words (approximately 3,000 characters, with spaces). For panel proposals, please submit one abstract for the panel, as well as individual proposals by each prospective presenter.

Contributions may be based on empirical research, theoretical enquiry, or case studies, provided the latter engage with the scholarly literature on the topic and demonstrate applicability outside of the case setting. To assist the reviewers, please ensure your abstract adequately conveys your methodological approach, as well as key findings. We welcome proposals from individuals at all stages of their careers; early-career academics are particularly welcome.

Panel Submissions

Proposals for both individual presentations, as well as for full panels, are welcome. To propose a full panel, please submit a title and a 250–300-word description outlining the panel theme, introducing the panellists, and explaining their connections. Panels should include three to five presentations, as specified above. (We regret that we are unlikely to have openings for roundtable proposals.) The panel chair, who may or may not be a presenter, will submit the panel proposal. All panellists should also submit individual applications, including an abstract of their presentation. We encourage attention to gender, institutional, and regional balance when composing panels.

Details and Logistics

Apply here via Microsoft Forms

Applicants will be notified of the outcome in late December.

The conference will be in-person to enhance informal dialogue and exchange among participants. We regret that we are unable to accommodate online presentations. There is no registration fee; funding permitting, catering during the day will be provided.

Questions to the organizers are welcome at elkanacenter@ceu.edu