

2027 CIEL SoTL Fellowship: Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Overview

The **Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL) SoTL Fellowship** is a time-limited, competitive opportunity for Vancouver Island University (VIU) teaching faculty. The Fellowship provides dedicated, release-time for faculty to engage in systematic, deliberate inquiry into student learning, transforming classroom curiosity into rigorous research to refine post-secondary teaching practices.

2. Eligibility

- Open to all teaching faculty at Vancouver Island University (VIU).
- Applicants must obtain formal approval from their Dean via a signed cover page confirming support for workload release.

3. Award and Time Release

- The successful applicant receives the equivalent of a **0.25 FTE release** (typically equivalent to a 2-course/section release).
- The release time may be taken during **Spring 2027, Intersession 2027**, or another suitable timeframe agreed upon by the Fellow, CIEL, and their Dean.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of the Fellow

The selected Fellow is expected to fulfill the following commitments:

- **Collaboration Plan:** Early in the fellowship, co-design a collaborative work plan with the CIEL support team outlining project milestones, partnership goals, and progress-sharing strategies.
- **Monthly Check-Ins:** Attend monthly progress meetings with CIEL for project support, advice, and accountability.
- **Faculty Workshops:** Design and facilitate at least one 60-to-90-minute learning session (workshop, presentation, or discussion) for VIU faculty. Work with CIEL staff to market and facilitate the session.
- **Blog Contributions:** Author two reflective posts for the CIEL Blog regarding the project process and findings.
- **Dissemination:** Present project findings at a CIEL-sponsored spring event, an SRCA event, and/or relevant external venues (e.g., conferences, OERs, academic journals).

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- **Final Report:** Submit a brief final experience report within **one month** of completing the fellowship term.

5. Application Requirements

Applications must be submitted as a complete package containing the following elements:

1. **Cover Page:** Signed by the applicant's Dean articulating approval for course/work release.
2. **Project Pitch (Max 400 words):** Summary of the project, scope, personal motivation, and justification for dedicated time.
3. **Research Question(s):** Clear, inquiry-driven SoTL questions relevant to teaching practice.
4. **Timeline and Outcomes:** A realistic 6-month work plan mapping out steps during the release period, paired with measurable project goals.
5. **Facilitating Sessions:** Description of 1–2 potential faculty learning sessions to offer at VIU.
6. **CIEL Collaboration (Max 250 words):** Explanation of how CIEL can support the project and how the project aligns with CIEL priorities.
7. **Dissemination Plan:** Outline of plans to share findings within VIU and beyond.

6. Selection and Adjudication Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by an adjudication panel between **October 1 and October 10** using a standardized rubric. See below.

7. Key Dates and Deadlines (2026–2027 Cycle)

- **Application Support Window:** June 15, 2026 – Application Deadline
- **Application Deadline:** October 1, 2026
- **Adjudication Period:** October 1 – October 10, 2026
- **Decision Communicated:** October 12, 2026
- **Fellowship Term:** Spring / Intersession 2027
- **Final Report Due:** 1 month post-fellowship completion

8. Adjudication Committee: Composition and Process

The Adjudication Committee is responsible for reviewing and selecting the successful applicant using the established selection rubric.

Committee Composition

- ☐ CIEL member (non-voting Chair)
- ☐ CIEL member
- ☐ Dean, Faculty of Education
- ☐ AVPA, Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity (SRCA)
- ☐ VIUFA Teaching Faculty Member
- ☐ BCGEU Teaching Faculty Member
- ☐ Student

Committee Responsibilities

- ☐ **Process Orientation Meeting (Mid-September):** Convene once in September prior to the application deadline to review committee expectations, clarify evaluation criteria, and discuss the adjudication process.
- ☐ **Individual Evaluation (Early October):** Review and score all submitted application packages independently using the official selection rubric.
- ☐ **Consensus Meeting (Mid-October):** Attend a group discussion meeting during the adjudication window to deliberate candidate fits, and reach a consensus decision.
- ☐ **Submission of Records:** Submit completed, signed evaluation rubrics to the Committee Chair for documentation and record-keeping.

Rubric

Criteria	Exceptional 4.0—5.0	Proficient 2.0—3.9	Developing 0—1.9
Project Pitch	Compelling narrative (< 400 words); clearly defines project scope, personal motivation, and the necessity of time.	Clear description of project and interest; explains why time is needed. Mostly stays within word count.	Project scope or personal interest is vague; fails to justify the need for dedicated time.
Research Question(s)	Articulates focused, inquiry-driven SoTL questions that are both clear and highly relevant to teaching practice.	Articulates clear research questions, though they may be slightly broad or descriptive.	Research questions are missing, unclear, or do not align with the project pitch.
Timeline and Scope	Provides a realistic, detailed 6-month plan for a 2-course	Provides a logical list of steps over 6 months; scope is	Timeline is unrealistic (too ambitious or too

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	release. Scope is perfectly balanced for the timeframe.	manageable but lacks granular detail.	thin); steps are vague or poorly sequenced.
Desired Outcomes	Identifies specific, measurable, and impactful outcomes that clearly stem from the research questions.	Identifies clear outcomes and goals for the project's conclusion.	Outcomes are poorly defined or do not align with the proposed research and timeline.
Facilitating Sessions	Proposes highly engaging, relevant sessions for VIU faculty with clear learning objectives and "takeaways."	Proposes sessions that would be of interest to VIU faculty; topics are appropriate and well-defined.	Proposed sessions are missing or do not seem relevant to the broader VIU faculty community.
CIEL Collaboration	Clearly articulates a synergistic relationship; identifies specific ways CIEL can support the project and vice-versa.	Describes a basic plan for mutual support between the researcher and CIEL.	Discussion of CIEL involvement is superficial or one-sided.
Dissemination	Outlines a diverse and ambitious plan for sharing findings (journals, conferences, OERs, etc.) <i>beyond</i> the VIU community.	Identifies at least one external venue or method (e.g., a specific conference or blog) to share findings.	Ideas for sharing findings are limited to VIU or are not clearly defined.