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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

# EDUCATION FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS 26

### Mini/Maxi

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 11 February 2027**.
- Funding decisions will be announced in May/June 2027.

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#### **About the Knowledge Foundation**

*The Knowledge Foundation is a funder with the mission to strengthen Sweden's competitiveness. The foundation funds research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and newer universities when it takes place in collaboration with the business sector. The Foundation's calls are open to all scientific and artistic subject areas.*

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## The programme Education for working professionals<sup>1</sup>

Sweden faces a series of complex societal challenges, at the same time as a rapid technological development leads to a comprehensive transformation of the business sector. Altogether, this contributes to changed and increasing needs for relevant knowledge and competence, something that no longer solely can be met by the addition of newly graduated students. An increasingly important contribution will be competence development of already working professionals and recurrent education during the working life.

Sweden's universities play an important role in this context by within their subject areas of expertise, being able to offer a research-connected education offering that meets needs of the business sector. To many universities, working professional students is a newly added target group that prompts adaptations of the educational operations to meet the group's needs and conditions for education. The Knowledge Foundation therefore offers the programme *Education for working professionals* as a test bed for the development of competence-enhancing educational activities for working professionals.

### Objectives and purpose of the programme

The objective of the programme is that the applicant research and education environment, together with business partners, develops relevant working methods, formats and content for business-relevant educational activities<sup>2</sup> aimed at working professionals<sup>3</sup>.

The purpose of the programme is to develop or strengthen the research and education environment's collaboration with the business sector, and to strengthen the university's long-term ability to pursue appropriately designed educational operations for working professional students that meet business needs. The purpose is also to strengthen Sweden's competitiveness by offering the business sector competence-enhancing educational activities close to the research frontier.

### Project design

The project should entail that universities, business partners and, where appropriate, other relevant partners, together and in close collaboration, analyse and define competence needs, as well as jointly develop and test implement the educational activities.

The programme primarily refers to support for environments intending to start up educational operations for working professional students in collaboration with the business sector. However, the programme may also provide support to environments that already have existing educational operations for working professional students, but who need to significantly renew it to strengthen the long-term ability. In these cases, the needs should be clearly described and will be assessed under the assessment criteria *Contribution to the development of the research and education environment*.

The project must be planned so that all developed educational activities can be test implemented on two occasions. In this way, lessons learnt from the first test implementation will be used to develop an improved educational activity for the second test implementation. The educational activities must be integrated with the regular educational offering, quality assured and approved according to

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<sup>1</sup> The programme *Education for working professionals* has replaced the former programme *Expertkompetens*.

<sup>2</sup> At second cycle or third cycle level (doctoral level).

<sup>3</sup> Working professionals with an undergraduate degree or equivalent level of working experience.

established routines at the university, as well as being offered free of charge to working professionals as part of the of the university's openly available educational offering<sup>4</sup>.

For a good achievement of the objectives, the following aspects should be particularly considered in the design of the project:

- **Adaptation of the educational activities:** The educational activities should be appropriately designed to meet the needs and conditions of working professional students. This applies both to subject content, format (for example study form, study pace, scope, and examination methods), and pedagogical and/or didactical adaptations. To design the educational activities in close and active dialogue with the business sector is an important component in promoting both attractiveness and high student throughput.
- **Student recruitment:** Marketing, recruitment and admission of working professional students are particularly important factors, that should be given great importance since they need to be adjusted to the specific target group. This part of the project should demonstrate flexibility and ambition to try new solutions.
- **Long-term ambitions with continued operations:** The project should be planned in such a way that the educational operations developed can continue beyond the project period, i.e. still be aimed at working professionals as an open educational offering free of charge. Therefore, primary focus should be on capitalising on the capabilities developed in the project, and in the continued operations build on the *working methods* and *formats* developed and tested within the project (such as collaboration on educational matters, internal processes and lead times, educational formats, pedagogical/didactical adaptations etc.), rather than maintaining a specific subject content.

When preparing the application, please go to [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>5</sup> for a list of tips and advice based on experiences of previous project managers (only available in Swedish).

### Programme variants

To match the needs and conditions of the applicant research and educational environment, the programme is offered in two variants – *Education for working professionals Mini* and *Education for working professionals Maxi* (further referred to as *Mini* and *Maxi* in the call text). The differences between the two variants are shown in the below table.

	Mini	Maxi
Project duration (maximum)	3 years	5 years
Scope of the developed educational offering (to be tested)	20 credits	60 credits
Project funding (maximum)	SEK 5 million	SEK 12 million
Co-financing partners (from project start)	5	10
Hearing part of the assessment	no	yes

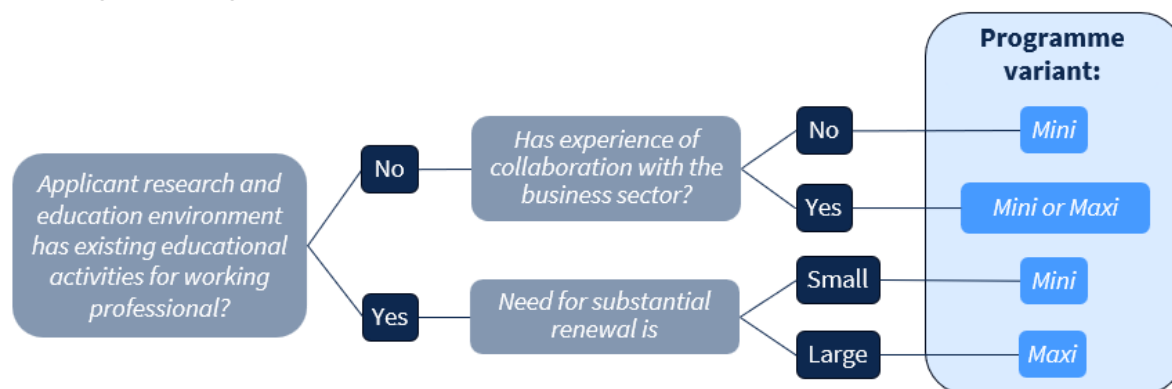
Environments aiming to start up educational operations for working professional students should choose programme variant based on the current level of experience of collaboration with the business sector: Environments without any prior experience of collaboration with the business sector on

<sup>4</sup> The programme does not refer to the development of *contract/commissioned education* which is defined and regulated in the *Ordinance on contract education at higher education institutions (2002:760)*. In short, contract education refers to education arranged by a university for a fully cost covering fee paid by an entity other than a natural person (who is the contracting entity/the employer), where the education is relevant to the employees' work for the contracting entity, and where the contracting entity selects which employees that should take part in the education. For more information, see for example [Higher education institutions' contract education](#) (UKÄ, 2024; only available in Swedish).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kks.se/finansiering/att-utveckla-utbildningar-for-yrkesverksamma/>

research or educational matters should choose *Mini*, whereas environments that already have experience of collaboration may choose between *Mini* and *Maxi* depending on the prerequisites, needs and ambitions of the environment.

Those environments that already have existing educational operations for working professional students may choose between *Mini* and *Maxi* depending on the extent of the needs for substantial renewing of working methods and formats.



The choice of programme variant must be clearly described and justified in the application.

## Terms and conditions

### Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities<sup>6</sup> (hereafter referred to as *universities* in the call text) with degree-awarding powers at master's level<sup>7</sup> or higher within the subject area of the project, may apply (degree-awarding power should be clearly stated in *Appendix 1*). The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all subject areas. When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is to be replaced by *artistic* in the call text.

Several universities within the Foundation's target group may collaborate in the project if this strengthens the application and the project, but only one university may be the main applicant and contracting party vis-à-vis the Knowledge Foundation.

### Participation of the university

For a good fulfilment of the objectives and long-term sustainable educational operations, the project should be well anchored at the university - a clear and active engagement from the applicant university is of significant importance. This applies to, for example, the prioritisation and planning of resources (such as financial resources and staff planning), but also to the involvement of supporting functions of the university. Education-related support functions should already from the outset of the project be actively involved to challenge and develop established working methods, administrative processes and routines to support a successful project implementation and provide enhanced opportunities for continued educational operations for working professional students after the end of the project.

<sup>6</sup> Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Karlstad University, Konstfack, Kristianstad University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm University of the Arts, Swedish Defence University, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, Södertörn University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Skövde, University West, Örebro University.

<sup>7</sup> Degree-awarding powers at master's level (UKÄ: *masternivå*) or higher is required to ensure that good conditions prevail for a close connection between research and education within the subject area.

The project should be implemented in such a way that learnings and experiences are utilised and disseminated within the university. Another important part of experience dissemination is annual experience meetings where all ongoing projects within the programme participate and share experiences and good examples with each other.

The project must have a project manager who is operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. The project manager should have a doctoral degree<sup>8</sup>, be employed by the main applicant university at the latest at the start of the project and have solid experience in developing and implementing education at the relevant level<sup>9</sup>. At the university, there must also be an appointed project owner. The project owner, who must have staff and budget authority at a senior level at the university, is responsible for ensuring proper conditions for the implementation of the project, and for monitoring the implementation. The project manager and the project owner should not be the same person.

## Participation of the business sector and other partners

The project must be conducted in co-production with the business sector. For more information on the Foundation's view on co-production, go to [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>10</sup>.

Already from the outset of the project, and thus in the application, at least five (for *Mini* projects), or at least ten (for *Maxi* projects), mutually independent business actors should co-finance the project, but the project requires an active and extensive collaboration with additional business partners at several different levels throughout all phases of the project. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors can be found on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>11</sup>.

The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least 10 percent of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.<sup>12</sup> For an appropriate balance in the co-production, a single business actor may not account for more than 70 percent of the total co-financing.

All co-financing business actors must attach signed letters of intent describing expected results and benefits of the participation, as well as how the collaboration in the project will take place. The letters of intent must also clearly describe the organisation's financial and resource conditions for meeting the obligations described in the project plan and budget.

Depending on the project orientation, it may be advisable, or even necessary, to additionally include other relevant project partners that do not fulfil the criteria for business actors (e.g. public sector). This to ensure the need and relevance of the planned educational activities to a larger and broader target group of working professionals. Swedish universities outside the Foundation's target group may as well participate in the project if they strengthen the application and the project. All these participating partners must attach signed letters of intent where the contributions to the project are described and motivated, but they bear their own costs in the project, and these costs cannot be counted as co-financing.

Participating business partners (whether co-financers or not) should, for example, contribute with analysis and formulation of competence needs, development of educational content and format, as well as expertise and experience from practical challenges. The involvement of the partners, for example through workshops, reference groups, steering groups, etc., should be described in the

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<sup>8</sup> Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds, alternatively employment as a senior lecturer, associate senior lecturer, or professor.

<sup>9</sup> At second cycle or third cycle level (doctoral level).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>

<sup>12</sup> Note that the study time of the working professional students (i.e. lost working time when the employees participate in the developed educational activities) cannot be counted as co-financing from the business sector.

project plan. It should also be indicated whether, and if so how, business partners will contribute by co-production in the actual test implementation of the educational activities (as lecturers/teachers or similar).

Any connections, such as financial or personal links, between for example participating partners, between any partner and university, or between any partner and individual project participant(s), must be stated and clarified in the application form and the project plan. Any dual roles must be clarified and will be reviewed by the Knowledge Foundation. Specify, for example, company connections, share ownership, board positions, employment, or consulting activities.

## Project duration

The project duration should be 3 years (*Mini*), or 5 years (*Maxi*). Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2027, and no later than 1 February 2028.

## Financial framework and budgeting

The programme refers to the funding of an educational project conducted in collaboration with the business sector. The amount to be requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed the sum of SEK 5 million (*Mini*), or SEK 12 million (*Maxi*).

The funds from the Foundation should primarily be used for salary costs related to working time within the project for the project manager and other project participants employed by the applicant university(ies). In addition to salary costs, other direct costs arising within the project at the applying university(ies) can be included in the budget. Within *Education for working professionals* the funds from the Knowledge Foundation may be used for the development and test implementation of the developed educational activities on two occasions (no more and no less). Within this programme where granted projects are expected to participate in programme-wide experience meetings, costs related to travels and organisation of the meetings may be included in the budget.

Information on approved costs and instructions for budgeting of funds are available in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, which can be found on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>13</sup>. The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH surcharge of 20 percent will be added by the Foundation if the application is granted.

## Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system *SBS Manager* via [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>14</sup>. Supplementing the application after the closing date of the call is not possible.

**N.B!** In the application form, the project title should be preceded by the programme variant applied for, that is, '*Mini: [Project Title]*' or '*Maxi: [Project Title]*'.

## Appendices to the application

The following appendices (as PDF files) should be attached to the application in the same order as below. The structure of the appendices must follow the headings specified for each appendix. Under each heading, the main characteristics of the information that the Foundation expects are stated. However, applicants may provide supplementary information that is deemed appropriate based on the direction of the call.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/general-terms-and-conditions-for-projects/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/apply-and-report/>

The application may be written in Swedish or in English. Note that all body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, single line spacing and normal margins (2,5 cm for all margins).

### **Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment**

Maximum 3 pages. If a project is applied for jointly by several research and education environments, all environments must be described according to the instructions below (the appendix may be extended by a maximum of half a page per additional environment). To be uploaded under *Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s)*.

All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in different ways to supporting the development of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, the business sector, and society. Therefore, all projects applied for must be situated within a context in which they contribute to strengthening the development and profile of the research and education environment. In this way, the environment can also become a long-term and valuable partner for the business sector. For more information on what the Knowledge Foundation means by strong research and education environments, and how such an environment can be defined, go to [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>15</sup>.

This appendix should be based on the group (research and education environment) within which the project will be conducted and should be prepared jointly by the management of the research and education environment and the project manager.

#### *1.1. The research and education environment where the project will be conducted*

Briefly describe the research and education environment in which the project will be conducted. Tailor the description to what is most relevant in relation to the programme and the project but specifically include information on the degree-awarding power for the relevant subject area and, where applicable, experiences and results from existing or earlier educational operations for working professional students.

#### *1.2. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment*

Describe the ambitions and objectives of the research and education environment for becoming a stronger environment. Justify how the project will contribute to the environment's desired development in the short and long term. Also describe in what way the project adds value in relation to previous and ongoing projects within the environment. The choice of the programme variant (*Mini* or *Maxi*) must be clearly described and justified (see more information under the *Programme variants* section).

### **Appendix 2. Project plan**

Maximum 8 pages (*Mini*), or 12 (*Maxi*) (including any references). Page numbered. To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan*.

- Describe the project's objectives, purpose, and implementation.
- Describe how the research and education environment's scientific expertise aligns with the competence area in the business sector.
- Report whether there are any other similar subject-specific initiatives for competence development of working professionals in Sweden. If so, relate to them to justify the need for additional educational offerings.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/>

- Provide an overview of the strategic importance of the competence area in the business sector and present an analysis of the business sector's competence needs and demands (including an estimate of student volumes in the short and long term).
- Account for whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's educational content and in the design of the project, and if so, how these perspectives are included (more information on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>16</sup>).
- Describe the pedagogical and didactical development work that will be performed to meet working professional students' needs and conditions.
- Account for all participating partners and their reasons for participating. Describe how their needs and involvement have relevance to a broader target group of working professionals. It should from the description be possible to relate to information in the letters of intent.
- Describe how the business sector will be involved in the various phases of the project and how the project continuously will maintain a high level of business relevance.
- Specify how monitoring, learning and continuous adaptation of the operations during the project period will take place, and how the implementation will contribute to sustainable educational operations for working professional students in the longer term.
- Describe the project group's scientific and pedagogical/didactical competence.
- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management, and staffing. Account for the competence, role, and work contribution of key individuals, including individuals from participating partners. The description should relate to information provided in the budget, the appendix *Staff in the project*, and CVs.
- Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>17</sup>).
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget so it is clear what the costs consist of, why they are relevant to the project, and which partner will cover the costs.
- Include an activity plan and a timetable.

### Appendix 3. Project participants

Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>18</sup>, but must be converted and attached to the application as a PDF file (ensure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page). To be uploaded under *Appendix 3. Staff in the project*.

Enter information on all planned project participants from the university (or universities) in the table. From other participating partners, only key participants need to be entered.

### Appendix 4. Qualifications

Maximum 1 page per person (with the exception of the project manager, whose CV must not exceed 2 pages). To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

Attach CVs for all individuals in the project group who are crucial for the implementation of the project.

The Foundation applies a broadened review of academic merits (more information on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>19</sup>). Thus, all academically active participants should present a selection of the merits and experiences that are most relevant to the project and the programme form. *For example*, emanate from the following categories:

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/broadened-review-of-academic-merits-and-advanced-assessment/>

- **Education and degrees**
- **Employment and assignments**
- **Research output:** select at most ten (10) research results/outputs. In addition to scientific publications, this could be for example: documented artistic merits, instrumental or product development, data set, software, patent, process or policy development, as well as implementation of research results.
- **Teaching:** pedagogical qualification including, for example, teaching, training and supervision, education development including development of open teaching resources and learning objects (learning and teaching materials).
- **Cooperation:** with academia, business sector, or other societal actors, as well as communication efforts.
- **Management:** project management, organisational development, assessment assignments, centre management, department assignments, granted funding.

### Appendix 5. Letters of intent

Approximately 1 page per partner. To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

Signed letter of intent from each of the participating partners must be attached. Each letter of intent must include

- expected results and benefits of the participation
- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project
- ability to contribute in accordance with the project plan and budget

Letters of intent should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.

### Appendix 6. Signatures from the university

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>20</sup>. To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

The application must be signed by the project manager, the project owner, and the vice-chancellor. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for the described implementation. The project owner and the vice chancellor assure through their signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description.

The signature appendix should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, eduSign, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.

## Preparation and assessment

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met. If these are met, an external assessment panel will conduct an overall assessment based on the assessment criteria below. As a supplement to the written application, a hearing will be held with representatives from the project within *Maxi*. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's CEO (*Mini*), or the Foundation's board (*Maxi*), after recommendation by the external assessment panel.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

## Formal requirements

The following requirements must be met for the application to be considered for evaluation by the Knowledge Foundation. Applications that do not meet the requirements, will be rejected for formal reasons.

- The applicant university must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group and have degree-awarding powers at master's level or higher for the subject area (this must be clearly stated in *Appendix 1*).
- The project manager must have a doctoral degree<sup>21</sup> and be employed by the university at the latest at the start of the project.
- The application must include appendices according to the call instructions.
- The educational offering to be developed and test implemented should comprise 20 credits (*Mini*), or 60 credits (*Maxi*).
- At least five (*Mini*), or ten (*Maxi*) business actors must co-finance the project from the start.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.<sup>22</sup>
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least 10 percent of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- Signed letters of intent from all participating partners must be attached.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 5 million (*Mini*), or SEK 12 million (*Maxi*) (excl. OH costs).
- The project duration must be maximum 3 years (*Mini*), or 5 years (*Maxi*).
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2027, and no later than 1 February 2028.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

## Assessment criteria

### Contribution to the development of the research and education environment<sup>23</sup>

- To what extent are there clear and relevant descriptions of the current state of the research and education environment, as well as its ambitions and objectives for strengthening the environment?
- Considering the choice of programme variant, how well justified is the project's contribution to the desired development of the research and education environment in the short and long term?
- Is there a sufficiently well-described justification for the choice of programme variant, and is the choice considered appropriate and relevant from the description?

### Scientific quality<sup>24</sup>

- How well does the scientific expertise of the environment align with the competence area in the business sector?
- To what extent is there a clear report on whether there are any other similar subject-specific initiatives for competence development of working professionals in Sweden? If so, is the need for additional educational offerings well justified in relation to them?

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<sup>21</sup> Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds, alternatively employment as a senior lecturer, associate senior lecturer, or professor.

<sup>22</sup> More information on the Foundation's website: <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>.

<sup>23</sup> In cases where several research and education environments submit a joint application, the assessment criterion applies to each of the environments.

<sup>24</sup> When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

- To what extent is there an adequate description of whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's educational content and in the design of the project? If so, are these perspectives adequately included?
- How appropriate is the project group's scientific and pedagogical/didactical competence in relation to the project content?

#### **Benefit to the business sector**

- To what extent is there a well-founded analysis of the business sector's competence needs and demands (including estimated student volumes in the short and long term)?
- How appropriate is the overall constellation of project partners?
- How relevant are the project partners' reasons for participating in the project and to what extent do their needs and involvement have relevance for a broader target group of working professionals?
- To what extent is the involvement of the business sector in the various phases of the project adequate and sufficiently comprehensive?

#### **Implementation**

- How well is the implementation of the project described, and to what extent does it lead to the fulfilment of the project's objectives and purpose?
- How relevant is the pedagogical and didactical development work that will be performed in the project?
- To what extent does the implementation allow for monitoring, learning and continuous adaptation during the project period, and to what extent does it contribute to sustainable educational operations for working professional students in the longer term?
- How appropriate is the project's organisation, management and staffing?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?
- How appropriate and realistic is the activity and timetable?