



Circle U.
European University Alliance

Academic Matchmaking Events for New Educational Collaborations

Concept Note

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This concept note was prepared as a working document following the discussions on the Academic Matchmaking Events and builds on the experience of the Brussels and Vienna events. It was developed collaboratively by Viktoria Nagy (Circle U. Teaching Innovation Lab, UCLouvain), Sonja Buchberger (Circle U. Teaching Innovation Lab, University of Vienna), and Mira Vogel (Open Campus, KCL) with the aim of clarifying the objectives, methodology, and potential formats of future matchmaking events within Circle U. The document is intended as a shared draft for discussion and collective refinement by the organizing partners.

1 Background and Strategic Context

The **Circle U. Alliance** seeks to expand opportunities for international learning and teaching by enabling students and educators across partner universities to collaborate in innovative educational formats. Within this context, the **Circle U. Teaching and Innovation Lab (CU.til)**, in collaboration with the **Open Campus**, contributes to **strengthening pedagogical collaboration and fostering the development of joint international learning experiences.**

One of the main barriers to the creation of joint courses or collaborative modules is not primarily institutional policy but the difficulty for academics to meet potential collaborators across universities who share similar teaching interests, pedagogical ambitions, or thematic areas.

Academic matchmaking events aim to address this gap by creating structured opportunities for educators to connect, exchange ideas, and initiate new international teaching collaborations.

These events contribute to the broader objectives of Open Campus and Circle U. educational cooperation, supporting the development of new international modules and expanding the range of international learning experiences available to students across the alliance.

2 Objectives

Academic Matchmaking Events aim to contribute to increasing the number and diversity of international learning opportunities available to students across the alliance by:

- Enabling academics from Circle U. partner universities to meet potential collaborators
- Facilitating the creation of new international teaching collaborations
- Supporting the co-design of new educational initiatives or collaborative teaching formats
- Providing practical information on institutional and mobility frameworks
- Strengthening the capacity of educators to develop international teaching projects

3 Types of Educational Collaborations Supported

The matchmaking events are **format-neutral** and support the development of a **wide range of international teaching formats**, allowing educators to identify the collaboration model that best fits their **pedagogical objectives** and **institutional contexts**.

In order to build capacity among educators, the events also include moments where these different pedagogical formats are explained and discussed, **including what they imply in terms of pedagogical investment, institutional coordination, and potential administrative or funding constraints, including low and high threshold formats.**

For more on how to create an international course, read the [following article](#).

4 Event Methodology

Academic matchmaking events combine networking activities with facilitated pedagogical co-design, allowing participants to move from initial contact to the early stages of course development and/or pedagogical collaboration through internationalising existing courses.

The methodology typically unfolds in **three phases**.

4.1 Matchmaking and networking

Participants engage in structured networking activities (e.g., speed networking sessions) designed to:

- Help educators become acquainted
- Identify shared interests and potential collaboration themes
- Form preliminary working groups around common topics

This stage focuses on teaching interests and pedagogical motivations rather than academic CVs, encouraging participants to reflect on their teaching practices and collaboration ideas.

4.2 Pedagogical co-design

Once thematic groups have formed, participants engage in a design-thinking inspired ideation phase guided by educational development facilitators.

During this stage, groups work through a structured process to:

- Define the topic and purpose of a potential module
- Identify the target student audience
- Formulate intended learning outcomes
- Identify ways students can demonstrate these learning outcomes (assessment)
- Explore pedagogical approaches and delivery formats
- Outline a timeline and implementation scenario

Groups conclude this phase by preparing a short pitch of their proposed course idea and next steps.

4.3 Implementation orientation

The final stage provides participants with guidance on:

- Possible funding opportunities
- Mobility frameworks
- Recognition and administrative procedures
- Relevant institutional contacts

This phase typically involves collaboration between:

- International offices
- Educational development units (such as CU.til)
- Relevant Circle U. project teams

5 Event Format

The matchmaking events are typically organized as two-day in-person workshops bringing together educators from several Circle U. universities.

A typical structure may include:

5.1 Day 1

- Welcome and introduction
- Input session on international teaching collaboration
- Lunch and informal networking
- Structured matchmaking activities
- Group formation
- First round of pedagogical ideation
- Networking dinner



5.2 Day 2

- Second round of pedagogical ideation and design sprint: development of preliminary course concepts and pitch preparation
- Pre-pitch and counselling
- Lunch break
- Pitch adjustment
- Project pitches and discussion of next steps
- Closing session and follow-up planning

6 Roles of Supporting Actors

Successful matchmaking events rely on the collaboration of several actors within the alliance:

6.1 Educational development units (e.g., CU.til)

- Facilitate the pedagogical design process
- Provide guidance on course design and learning outcomes
- Support participants during the ideation phase

6.2 International offices and university leadership

- Provide guidance on institutional context
- Provide expertise on mobility schemes and funding opportunities
- Clarify administrative procedures and institutional constraints

6.3 Circle U. project teams (WP1, 2 and 3)

- Provide information on alliance initiatives and collaboration frameworks
- Support the follow-up and implementation of emerging projects

7 Optional Online Matchmaking Format

In addition to in-person events, **online matchmaking sessions** can serve as a preparatory or complementary format.

Online meetups allow educators to:

- Meet potential collaborators before an in-person event
- Explore thematic interests
- Form initial working groups

Such sessions typically combine short speed meetings in breakout rooms with open thematic discussion spaces, enabling participants to interact with several potential collaborators in a short period of time.

Detailed facilitation guidelines for this format are described in the [Online Meetup Guide for Academic Matchmaking](#) (Vogel, 2026).

Alternatively, the online session can serve as an **information session to prepare** participants for the onsite event. In this case, the session may include activities such as:

- Inform about the onsite event
- Organize a Q&A

- Distribute pre-reading material
- Check LMS access
- Raise interest about the event and the networking possibility it provides

8 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the matchmaking events include:

- The creation of new international teaching collaborations
- The emergence of preliminary course concepts
- Stronger connections between educators across Circle U. universities
- Increased international learning opportunities for students

Over time, the matchmaking series aims to contribute to the systematic expansion of international collaborative teaching within the Circle U. alliance.

9 Governance and Implementation

Academic Matchmaking Events are organized as part of an **ongoing series of collaborative activities within Circle U.**, developed in connection with the work of the **Circle U. Teaching and Innovation Lab (CU.til)** and the **Open Campus initiative**.

The events are **hosted by different partner universities** across the alliance and organized collaboratively with the involvement of local educational development units, international offices, and relevant Circle U. project teams.

While each event may be locally hosted, the matchmaking initiative is conceived as a **shared Circle U. activity**, contributing to the alliance's broader objective of expanding international collaborative teaching and learning opportunities.