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## Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI)

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### Research Management Project

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### Research Excellence & Research Quality Workshop

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**Venue:** AAU Secretariat, Accra, Ghana

**Date :** 15 -16 April 2025 in Accra, Ghana

Concept Note



## Background Information

The Science Granting Council Initiative Research Management Phase II Project titled Strengthening the capability of Africa's Science Granting Councils in Research and Grants Management is a project Funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the UK- Foreign Commonwealth Development office to strengthen the research and grants management systems and practices among the Councils. The overall goal of the project is to fortify the capability of Science Granting Councils in explicit areas of research management, namely research excellence (particularly the knowledge and use of tools such as Research Quality Plus framework), research ethics, emerging scientific practices (especially open data, open access and citizen science) and development of online grant management systems (including databases of peer reviewers).

The Research Management SGCI-1 specifically aimed to enhance the Councils' capacity to manage research in the domains of Research Excellence, Research Ethics, good financial grant practices, and the deployment of a digital grants management system.

In this phase, the project aims to facilitate the adoption of digital grants management systems to enhance research management practices. It also seeks to assist councils in implementing Research Excellence by adopting relevant frameworks, as well as to help them benchmark and improve their governance of grant funding through the utilization of the Good Financial Grant Practices (GFGP) tool.

## Participating Countries

The Research Management Project is being implemented in 17 sub-Saharan African countries – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Namibia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Malawi and Rwanda.

## About the Research Excellence & Research Quality Workshop

To enhance the project's substantial impact and to reinforce its accomplishments, the AAU intends to utilize a modest grant from IDRC/FCDO to promote the integration of the knowledge shared with councils during Research Management Phase I. This integration of knowledge regarding Research Excellence will be pursued through a dual approach, which includes a benchmarking exercise and country-level support that engages both the Councils and the beneficiaries of the SGCI-funded Project.

A 2-day country-level workshop is being organized in Accra, Ghana to address Research Excellence, Research Ethics, and Research Quality. The workshop is specifically targeting Science granting council staff members in Ghana (The Ministry of Environment, Science and



Technology) and its beneficiaries from the funded projects under the Research and Innovation Project. This workshop falls under a series of engagements planned for the seventeen Science Granting councils. The workshop will be duplicated in seven additional councils, which will subsequently convene with the other remaining Nine (9) science granting councils to review and discuss the consolidated recommendations derived from the country-level discussions.

The country-level engagement will introduce participants to the essential elements of conducting high-quality research, while addressing the core ethical considerations involved in research design, data collection, and dissemination.

### Date and Venue

The workshop will be held at the AAU Secretariat, Accra, Ghana from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

### Workshop Topics:

Defining Research Excellence; Understanding Research Ethics; Best Practices for Designing High-Impact Research; Ensuring Rigor and Reproducibility in Your Research; Writing an Effective Research Proposal; Navigating Research Ethics Review Processes

### Workshop Goals:

Specifically, the workshop seeks to

1. Train SGCs on the Research Quality Plus (RQ+) framework and other Research Excellence Frameworks and promote the tools effective usage post-project.
2. Highlight good practices and strategies in promoting ethics in research and innovation.
3. Highlight lessons learnt from the previous workshops in the context of research support capacity strengthening for SGCs.

### Workshop Delivery Format

The Research Excellence and Research Quality Workshop will incorporate a diverse range of interactive and impactful formats, designed to optimize participants' learning experience. These formats include:



- Presentations by Workshop Facilitator: An Esteemed facilitator will deliver informative and engaging presentations, sharing his expertise and insights on the topics of Research Excellence and Ethics.
- Brainstorming and In-depth Discussion Sessions: Participants will actively engage in brainstorming sessions and in-depth discussions, fostering a collaborative environment to explore complex ideas and address pertinent issues.
- Role-Play Scenarios: The workshop will feature role-play scenarios, allowing participants to practically apply various facilitation techniques and strategies. Through hands-on practice, participants can enhance their training skills.
- Reflective Sessions: Dedicated sessions will encourage participants to reflect on their current practices and compare them with the recommended approaches shared during the ToT workshop. This introspective exercise will enable participants to identify areas for improvement and implement best practices.

### Expected Outcomes and Impact

1. Enhanced understanding of the research quality plus (RQ+) framework by SGCs and other Research Excellence frameworks and how to use the RQ+ tools in their SGC contexts as well adopt other tools.
2. Enhanced understanding and adoption of findings on research ethics among participating SGCs.
3. The delegates shall also interact with the learning tools and modules produced from the project to ensure that the SGCs can use the tools post-project.

Beyond this engagement, the AAU intends to engage various councils and other different points to ensure that the impact of the Research Excellence & Ethics Workshop extends beyond the workshop itself, creating lasting positive changes in the research landscape of the participating countries.

### WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

## Workshop Day 1: Foundations of Research Excellence and Ethics in Research



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## Day 1: Research Excellence and Ethics

This workshop will introduce participants to the essential elements of conducting high-quality research, while addressing the core ethical considerations involved in research design, data collection, and dissemination.

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### 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM: Registration and Welcome Breakfast

- Icebreaker activities to introduce participants
  - Overview of the workshop objectives and agenda
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### 9:00 AM – 9:45 AM: Keynote Address on Research Excellence

- Defining **Research Excellence**: What it means in terms of quality, innovation, and impact.
  - The role of integrity, rigor, and reproducibility in research.
  - Highlighting examples of research excellence from different fields.
  - **Interactive Q&A**: Participants can ask questions based on their specific research domains.
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### 9:45 AM – 10:30 AM: Understanding Research Ethics

- Overview of **ethical considerations** in the research process: Informed consent, confidentiality, conflict of interest, data integrity.
  - The importance of **ethical review boards** and protocols.
  - **Case Study Exercise**: Participants will review a case study involving ethical dilemmas in research and discuss possible solutions.
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### 10:30 AM – 10:45 AM: Morning Break

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### 10:45 AM – 11:30 AM: Best Practices for Designing High-Impact Research



- Strategies for developing **innovative research questions** and hypotheses.
- **Research design:** quantitative vs. qualitative, mixed methods, and interdisciplinary approaches.
- **Open Science Wheel:**  
[https://figshare.com/articles/figure/Wheel\\_of\\_Open\\_Science\\_practices\\_image\\_/4628014/2?file=7564978](https://figshare.com/articles/figure/Wheel_of_Open_Science_practices_image_/4628014/2?file=7564978)
- Engaging with stakeholders and community involvement in the research process.
- **Interactive Exercise:** Participants will brainstorm research topics in small groups and develop a clear research question.

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## 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM: Ensuring Rigor and Reproducibility in Your Research

- The importance of **transparent methodologies**, data sharing, and open access.
- How to ensure **research validity**, avoid bias, and maintain high standards of data integrity.
- The use of reporting guidelines in qualitative (SRQR, COREQ), quantitative (STROBE), systematic reviews (PRISMA) and mixed methods research. Examples from the EQUATOR Network. See <https://www.equator-network.org/>
- **Discussion:** Researchers share their personal strategies for maintaining rigor in their work.
- **Reporting Guideline Decision Tree:** <https://www.equator-network.org/toolkits/selecting-the-appropriate-reporting-guideline/>

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## 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM: Networking Lunch

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## 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM: Writing an Effective Research Proposal

- The components of a strong research proposal: Introduction, methodology, objectives, expected impact.
- How to align research goals with **funding priorities** and **relevant funding bodies**.
- **Practical Workshop:** Participants begin drafting sections of their own research proposals, with feedback from facilitators.

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## 3:00 PM – 3:45 PM: Navigating Research Ethics Review Processes



- The steps involved in obtaining **ethical approval** for your research project.
- Best practices for ensuring ethical compliance and dealing with ethical challenges.
- **Ethical Dilemmas Game:** Participants play the ethical dilemmas game and report on lessons learned. See <https://www.eur.nl/en/about-university/policy-and-regulations/integrity/research-integrity/dilemma-game>

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### 3:45 PM – 4:00 PM: Day 1 Wrap-up and Q&A

- Recap of the day's discussions.
- Open floor for any questions or final thoughts on research excellence and ethics.

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## Workshop Day 2: Grant Proposal Writing, Fundraising, and Online Grants Management

### Day 2: Writing Winning Proposals and Fundraising Strategies

This second workshop will focus on practical skills related to grant writing, fundraising techniques, and using online tools for grants management.

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### 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM: Registration and Morning Networking

- Welcome and informal networking.
- Brief overview of Day 2 objectives and agenda.

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### 9:00 AM – 9:45 AM: Introduction to Grant Proposal Writing

- The anatomy of a **successful grant proposal**.
- Key sections: Executive summary, needs assessment, objectives, methodology, budget, and sustainability.
- **Interactive Exercise:** Participants will critique a sample proposal and identify strengths and weaknesses.





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## 9:45 AM – 10:30 AM: Identifying the Right Funding Opportunities

- How to find **funding sources** that align with your research goals.
- Key platforms for discovering grants (e.g., government, foundations, international organizations).
- Understanding the different types of grants: **seed grants, institutional funding, collaborative funding**, and more.
- **Group Discussion:** Participants will share their experiences with finding funding and discuss strategies for identifying the right fit.

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## 10:30 AM – 10:45 AM: Morning Break

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## 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM: Writing a Persuasive Research Grant Proposal

- Crafting a compelling **narrative** that connects your research to broader societal needs and priorities.
- Writing an **engaging budget justification** and ensuring cost-effectiveness.
- Common pitfalls in grant writing and how to avoid them.
- **Practical Workshop:** Participants will work on drafting an abstract and specific aims section of a proposal, applying the tips learned.

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## 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Networking Lunch

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## 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Fundraising Strategies for Research Projects

- **Fundraising basics:** How to identify and approach potential donors and funding partners.
  - Building relationships with private donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors.
  - **Crowdfunding for research:** Emerging strategies and platforms for raising funds for research initiatives.
  - **Interactive Group Exercise:** Participants will brainstorm fundraising strategies for their projects and develop a pitch for potential donors.
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## 2:00 PM – 2:45 PM: Understanding Grant Compliance and Reporting Requirements

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** How to track project progress and outcomes.
- The importance of **compliance** with grant terms and conditions, and best practices for maintaining transparency and accountability.
- **Practical Case Study:** A walkthrough of a grants management compliance scenario, where participants will evaluate and propose solutions for addressing challenges. Excel worksheet on roles and responsibilities in post-award phase.

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## 2:45 PM – 3:00 PM: Closing Remarks and Next Steps

- Recap of key learning points from both workshops.
- Opportunities for participants to continue collaborating post-workshop.
- Provide resources for ongoing support (e.g., grant writing guides, ethics resources, online communities).
- Q&A session and final thoughts from participants.

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## Post-Workshop Activities:

- **Follow-up Webinars/Office Hours:** Offering additional support to participants in refining their proposals or addressing specific challenges.
- **Online Collaboration Platform:** Setting up a forum or shared space where participants can continue networking, sharing proposal drafts, and offering feedback to one another.

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This agenda ensures that participants not only learn the foundational principles of research excellence and ethics but also gain practical skills in writing and managing grants, fundraising, and navigating online grants management systems. The interactive workshops and exercises are designed to engage participants actively, ensuring they can apply the knowledge gained in their real-world contexts.