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STRCUU Training on Scientific Writing and Preparing Policy Briefs

Dates: 23 – 26 March 2026

TRAINING REPORT

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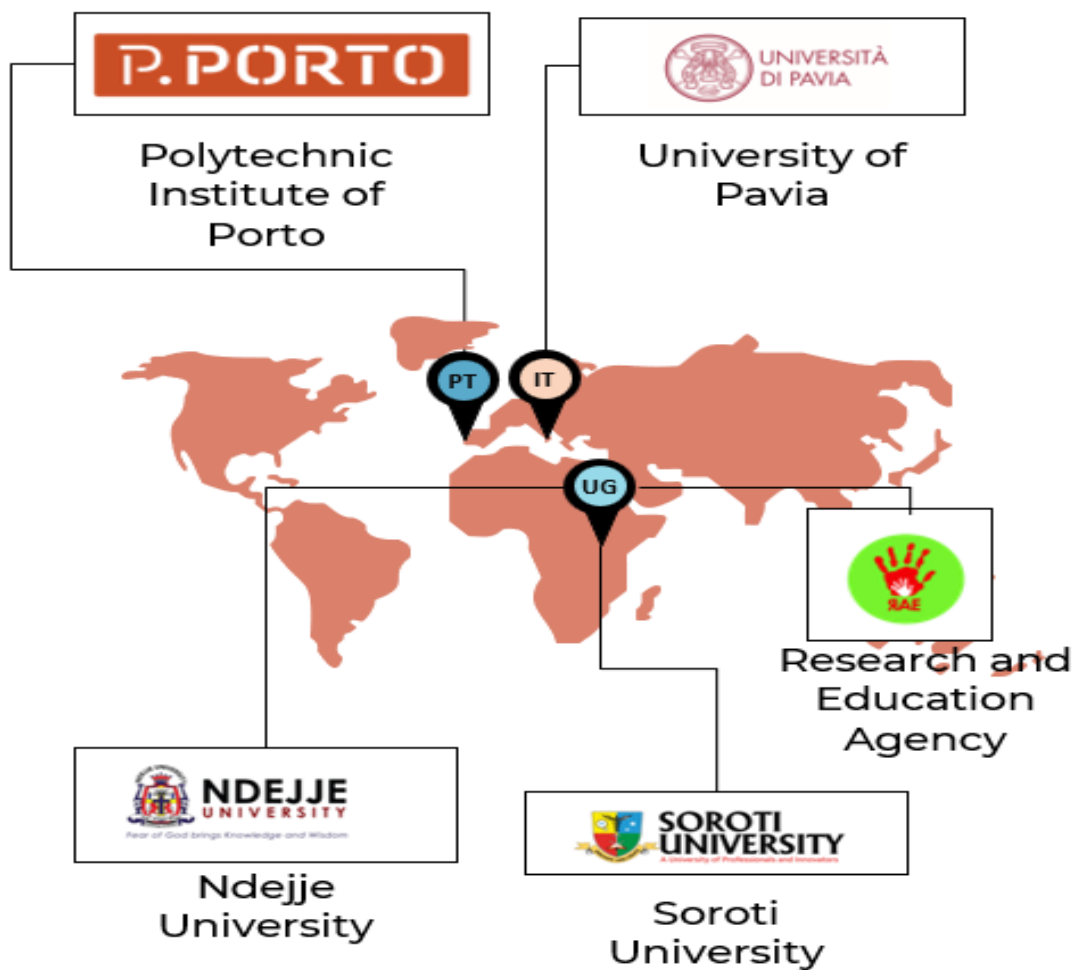
STRCUU/RAE Contacts – Project Website: www.strcuu.org; **RAE:** www.rae.co.ug



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Lead Institution: Ndejje University, Uganda





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Acknowledgements

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We extend our sincere appreciation to the various **Higher Education Institutions, Research Organizations**, and individual participants who made time to attend the virtual sessions. Their active engagement enriched the discussions and contributed to the success of the training.

Special thanks are due to the facilitators, **Assoc. Prof. Paul Nampala** (pnampala@bugemauniv.ac.ug; nampalap@yahoo.co.uk) and **Prof. John S. Tenywa** (johntenywa@gmail.com), whose expertise and commitment guided participants through the complexities of scientific writing and policy communication. We are hopeful that several of the draft manuscripts developed during the sessions will be polished, submitted for peer review, and eventually published in quality accredited journals.

Furthermore, we remain optimistic that participants have acquired the necessary competencies to share their learning with colleagues at their respective institutions, thereby multiplying the impact of this training. The collaborative spirit demonstrated throughout the sessions reflects the collective commitment to advancing scholarship and ensuring that research outputs are effectively communicated to both academic and policy audiences.

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1. Background and Rationale

Success in publishing in high impact journals requires ability to craft inspiring research stories aimed at delivering research and innovations news to a targeted audience to contribute to research, development and policy agenda. It is imperative that this acumen is inculcated systemically in early stage researchers, to enable them to navigate the riddled terrain of career growth. A major challenge in this process is moving from a broad topic of interest to a structured, focused coherent and articulately communicating journal manuscript. This training was designed to address this gap by providing a step-by-step, practice-oriented learning experience through which participants progressively developed their own draft manuscripts. The training is an intervention by the STRCUU project ([Home | STRCUU](#)).¹

The modules followed the core stages of the research process, beginning with description of the research problem, and continuing through construction of research questions/objectives, and presentation, interpretation and discussion of research results. Each day combined two hours of interactive facilitated learning with extended supervised working sessions during which participants applied the concepts to work on their individual manuscript drafts and policy briefs.

2. Overall Goal

The goal of the training was to enhance participants' capacities in crafting coherent and inspiring news-laden journal manuscripts, targeted to scholarly and development audiences, and to prepare policy briefs.

3. Course Objectives

The course was designed and delivered to facilitate participants to attain the following competencies:

- a) Transitioning from a thesis or raw data to a structured, high-impact journal article;
- b) Navigating the IMRAD and other structured components of a journal manuscript;
- c) Developing the resilience and technical skill to respond effectively to reviewer feedback and editorial decisions;

¹ The Strengthening Teaching and Research Capacities in recently established Ugandan Universities to deliver climate change resilience and green energy solutions to farming communities- (STRCUU). The Project aims to strengthen the capacity of young universities in Uganda to contribute meaningfully to national and regional climate resilience efforts. Through enhanced training, research, and international collaboration, the project seeks to equip higher education institutions with the tools and expertise needed to support farming communities facing increasing climate-related challenges.



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- d) Understanding ethical standards to protect and promote research integrity;
- e) Identifying reputable international and regional journals suited to your manuscript; and.
- f) Crafting Policy briefs from research-based results, into simple non-scholarly jargon, empirical based data-supported guiding documents

4.0 Training Approach and Methodology

The training was a Facilitator -led learning online engagement conducted over a period of 4 days running from 23 – 26th March 2026. The facilitation team comprised of two experts that have experience in scientific writing:

Facilitators

- i Prof. John Stephen Tenywa
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- ii Paul Nampala, PhD
Associate Professor and Dean
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The training was open to global participation and a call for registration (<https://bit.ly/4cMpQ6R>) was issued couple of months prior to the learning session that commenced on 23rd March 2026. The intended beneficiaries for the training sessions were Graduate Students, Academic Staff, Researchers, Development practitioners and other interested persons / categories that considered the training useful.

The training adopted a predominantly hands-on approach, supported by guiding presentations on new strategies and innovations for achieving quick and effective writing outputs. A succinct program for each day served as a flexible framework, accommodating participants' emerging and evolving learning needs through participatory methods. A highly interactive environment was fostered, where learners and several members of the STRCUU Project Team actively engaged in sharing experiences, practical exercises and building learning scenarios. Throughout the sessions, participants were encouraged to



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work on their own manuscript drafts while receiving continuous feedback from peers, project team members and facilitators.

The four-day training program on **Scholarly Publishing** – “Scientific Writing and Preparing Policy Briefs” was designed to equip participants with both the technical skills and the scholarly mindset required for effective research communication. Structured around a **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** and **Competency-Based Approach (CBA)**, the sessions progressively built capacity from foundational principles to advanced strategies in manuscript preparation, submission, and dissemination (Table 1).

Day 1 established the **foundations of scholarly publishing**, exploring the motivations for publishing, common pitfalls leading to rejection, and the critical transition from project reports or theses into journal-ready manuscripts.

Day 2 focused on **mastering the manuscript**, introducing the IMRaD structure, guiding participants through the crafting of individual components, and reinforcing the importance of reference management using digital tools.

Day 3 intended to deepen the practice by **synchronizing manuscript components** into a coherent research narrative, integrating literature effectively, and preparing participants to handle rejection and resubmission with professionalism.

Finally, Day 4 broadened the scope to **other considerations in research communication**, including cover letters, plagiarism prevention, data transparency, and translating research into policy briefs for non-academic audiences. The program concluded with a post-training action plan and evaluation to ensure sustainability of learning.

By the end of the training sessions, participants were expected to have developed measurable competencies in scholarly writing, ethical publishing, and effective communication, enabling them to



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confidently navigate the academic publishing landscape and contribute meaningfully to global and local knowledge exchange.

Table 1: Scholarly Publishing Training Outline

Day	Topic	Competence to be Covered	Learning Activity (PBL)	Reference Materials ²	Learning Outcomes
Day 1	Foundations of Scholarly Publishing	Understand reasons for publishing; identify common causes of manuscript rejection; transition from project report/thesis to journal draft	Case study: analysed rejected manuscripts; group exercise converting a thesis section into a draft article	Day & Gastel <i>How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper</i> ; COPE guidelines	Participants able to explain why publishing matters, recognize pitfalls in manuscript preparation, and demonstrate ability to reframe a thesis into a journal-ready draft
Day 2	Mastering the Manuscript	Apply IMRaD and other manuscript structures; craft components of a manuscript; manage references using digital tools	Problem task: draft introduction and methods sections; workshop on Zotero/Mendeley for citation management	APA Manual; Sample IMRaD papers; Zotero/Mendeley guides	Participants produced structured manuscript sections and demonstrate competence in digital reference management
Day 3	Crafting Manuscript Components	Complete manuscript components; synchronize sections into coherent narrative; conduct literature review; handle rejection and resubmission professionally	Group activity: integrate introduction, methods, results, and discussion into a coherent draft; role-play responding to reviewer comments	Selected journal articles; Peer review rubrics	Participants integrated manuscript components into a coherent research story, critically used literature, and drafted professional rebuttal letters
Day 4	Other Considerations in Research Communication	Write cover letters and documentation; prevent plagiarism; ensure data transparency; translate research into policy briefs; plan post-training action	Simulation: prepare cover letter and supporting documents; plagiarism detection exercise; draft a policy brief for non-academic stakeholders; reflective evaluation	COPE Ethical Guidelines; Policy brief templates; Plagiarism detection tools	Participants demonstrated ability to prepare submission documents, uphold ethical standards, and translate research into accessible formats for broader audiences

² Several resource materials were shared with participants for ease of reference.

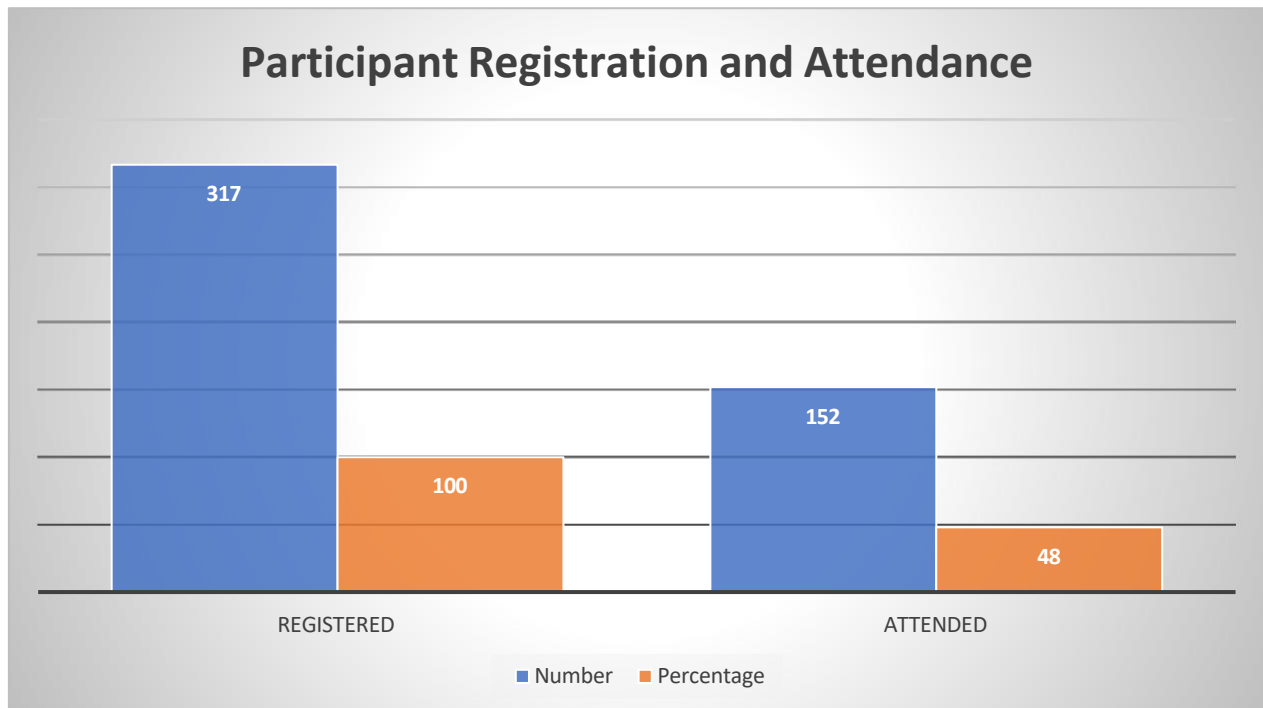


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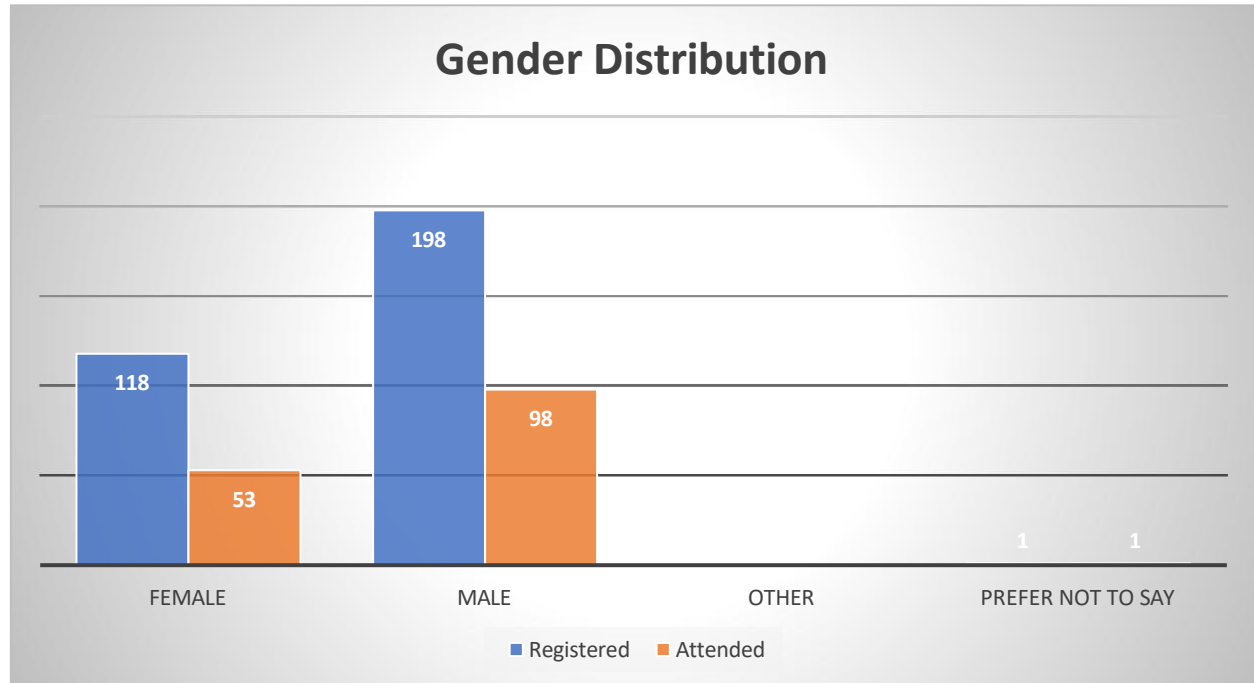
5.0 Participation

Number of participants: 317 Registered participants from 25 countries, 152 Attendees from 20 countries





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Participant distribution by country

No.	Country	Registered	Attended
1	Uganda	113	63
2	Nigeria	79	29
3	Zimbabwe	26	15
4	Côte d'Ivoire	20	11
5	Ghana	20	3
6	Ethiopia	11	6
7	Kenya	10	6
8	Benin	5	4
9	Malawi	5	2
10	Liberia	4	2
11	Mozambique	4	2
12	South Sudan	4	1
13	Somalia	3	1
14	Rwanda	2	1
15	Burundi	1	1
16	Central African Republic	1	0
17	China	1	1
18	Gambia	1	1
19	Iceland	1	1
20	Namibia	1	0
21	Saudi Arabia	1	1
22	Senegal	1	0
23	Sierra Leone	1	0
24	South Africa	1	0
25	Vietnam	1	1
	Grand Total	317	152



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6.0 Daily Highlights - Training Implementation

6.1 Day 1 – Foundations of Scholarly Publishing

The first day of the training program established a strong foundation for participants in the area of **scholarly publishing**. The session opened with an exploration of the **motivations for publishing**, highlighting how dissemination of research contributes to the advancement of knowledge, professional recognition, and career progression. Facilitators emphasized that publishing is not merely an academic requirement but a vital means of engaging with the global scholarly community and influencing practice and policy.

The discussion then shifted to the **common pitfalls leading to rejection of manuscripts**. Participants examined real-world examples of rejected submissions, identifying recurring mistakes such as poor structuring, weak argumentation, inadequate literature review, and failure to follow journal guidelines. This problem-based exercise encouraged critical reflection and helped participants recognize the importance of precision, clarity, and adherence to standards in scholarly communication.

A major focus of the day was the **transition from project reports or theses to journal-ready manuscripts**. Through guided activities, participants learned how to distill lengthy academic documents into concise, publishable articles. Facilitators demonstrated strategies for identifying the core research question, restructuring content into the IMRaD format, and aligning manuscripts with the expectations of peer-reviewed journals.

The session was highly interactive, with participants engaging in group discussions, peer critiques, and practical exercises. By the end of the day, they had not only understood the theoretical underpinnings of scholarly publishing but also practiced transforming their own academic work into potential journal submissions.

Key Outcomes of Day 1

- Participants articulated clear **reasons for publishing** and recognized its role in advancing careers and knowledge.
- They identified **common mistakes** that lead to rejection and developed strategies to avoid them.



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- They practiced **reframing theses and reports into manuscripts**, gaining confidence in preparing journal-ready drafts.
- The session fostered a collaborative learning environment, encouraging peer-to-peer support and critical reflection.

This successful Day 1 laid the groundwork for subsequent sessions, ensuring that participants entered Day 2 with a solid grasp of the **purpose, challenges, and initial steps of scholarly publishing**.

6.2 Day 2 – Mastering the Manuscript

Day 2 built upon the foundations established on the first day by focusing on **mastering the manuscript**. The session introduced participants to the **IMRaD structure** (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), which is the standard framework for scientific papers. Facilitators emphasized how this structure ensures clarity, logical flow, and consistency across disciplines, making manuscripts more accessible to reviewers and readers.

Participants were guided through the **crafting of individual components** of a manuscript. Practical exercises involved drafting introductions that clearly defined research questions, methods sections that outlined procedures with precision, and results sections that presented findings in a concise and evidence-based manner. The discussion also highlighted the importance of the discussion section in interpreting results, situating them within existing literature, and identifying future research directions.

A significant portion of the day was dedicated to **reference management**. Facilitators demonstrated the use of digital tools such as Zotero and Mendeley, showing how these platforms streamline citation organization, ensure accuracy, and maintain integrity in scholarly writing. Participants practiced importing references, generating bibliographies, and applying different citation styles, reinforcing the importance of proper referencing in avoiding plagiarism and enhancing credibility.



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The session was highly interactive, with participants working in small groups to critique sample manuscripts and collaboratively draft sections of their own. Peer feedback was encouraged, fostering a supportive environment where participants could refine their writing skills while learning from one another's perspectives.

Key Outcomes of Day 2

- Participants understood the **IMRaD structure** and its role in organizing scientific manuscripts.
- They demonstrated competence in **drafting individual manuscript components**, ensuring clarity and coherence.
- They gained practical skills in **digital reference management**, using tools to organize sources and maintain citation integrity.
- The collaborative exercises strengthened participants' ability to critique and refine scholarly writing.

Day 2 was equally successful, equipping participants with the technical and organizational skills necessary to produce manuscripts that meet international scholarly standards. This progress set the stage for Day 3, where the focus would shift to **synchronizing manuscript components into a coherent research narrative and handling peer review feedback**.

6.3 Day 3 – Crafting and Synchronizing Manuscript Components

Day 3 was designed to **deepen the practice of scholarly publishing** by moving beyond individual manuscript sections to the challenge of **synchronizing components into a coherent research narrative**. Facilitators emphasized that while each section of a manuscript has its own function, the true strength of a paper lies in how seamlessly these parts connect to tell a compelling and informative research story.

Participants engaged in guided exercises where they integrated introductions, methods, results, and discussions into unified drafts. The focus was on ensuring logical flow,



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consistency of terminology, and alignment between research questions, methodology, and findings. This exercise highlighted the importance of narrative coherence in persuading reviewers and readers of the validity and significance of research.

A second major theme was the **effective integration of literature**. Facilitators demonstrated strategies for conducting targeted literature reviews, synthesizing sources rather than listing them, and positioning one's work within the broader scholarly conversation. Participants practiced weaving citations into their drafts to strengthen arguments and demonstrate awareness of current debates in their fields.

The session also addressed the often-overlooked but critical aspect of **handling rejection and resubmission**. Through role-play and case studies, participants explored how to interpret reviewer comments constructively, identify areas for revision, and draft professional rebuttal letters. This segment underscored resilience and professionalism as essential competencies for successful publishing.

The day was highly interactive, with participants working in small groups to critique each other's drafts, identify gaps in coherence, and suggest improvements. Facilitators provided individualized feedback, ensuring that each participant left with practical strategies for refining their manuscripts.

Key Outcomes of Day 3

- Participants demonstrated the ability to **synchronize manuscript components** into a coherent and persuasive research narrative.
- They applied skills in **literature integration**, moving beyond citation to synthesis and contextualization.
- They gained confidence in **handling rejection and resubmission**, learning to respond to reviewer feedback with professionalism and strategic revisions.
- Collaborative exercises fostered peer learning, enabling participants to refine their manuscripts through constructive critique.

Day 3 was a turning point in the training, as participants moved from technical drafting to mastering the **art of scholarly storytelling and resilience in the publishing process**.



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This prepared them for Day 4, which would expand the scope to broader considerations in research communication, including ethics, policy translation, and post-training action planning.

6.4 Day 4 – Other Considerations in Research Communication

Day 4 broadened the scope of the training by addressing **other considerations in research communication** that extend beyond manuscript preparation. The session highlighted critical aspects such as writing cover letters, preventing plagiarism, ensuring data transparency, and translating research into formats accessible to non-academic audiences.

Facilitators began with a practical briefing on **cover letters and submission documentation**, underscoring their role in framing manuscripts for editors and reviewers. Participants were introduced to strategies for presenting research succinctly and persuasively in these accompanying documents.

The session then turned to **plagiarism prevention and data transparency**, emphasizing ethical scholarship as the cornerstone of credible publishing. Through case examples, participants examined how plagiarism detection tools can safeguard integrity and how transparent data practices enhance reproducibility and trust in research.

Although time constraints limited the depth of engagement with **policy briefs**, facilitators provided an overview of their importance in bridging the gap between academia and policymaking. Participants were briefed on how to distill complex research findings into concise, actionable recommendations for non-specialist stakeholders. While this segment was not explored in full detail, it introduced participants to the relevance of policy translation in amplifying the societal impact of research.

The day concluded with a **post-training action plan and evaluation**, enabling participants to reflect on their learning journey, identify areas for continued growth, and commit to applying the competencies gained in their academic and professional contexts. The evaluation also provided valuable feedback for facilitators to refine future iterations of the program.



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Key Outcomes of Day 4

- Participants gained practical insights into **cover letter writing** and submission documentation.
- They understood the importance of **plagiarism prevention and data transparency** in maintaining ethical standards.
- They were introduced to the concept of **policy briefs**, recognizing their role in translating research for non-academic audiences.
- The **post-training action plan and evaluation** reinforced sustainability of learning and encouraged participants to integrate skills into future scholarly work.

Closing Reflection

Despite limited time for in-depth exploration of policy briefs, Day 4 successfully expanded participants' awareness of the broader ecosystem of research communication. The session emphasized that scholarly publishing is not only about producing manuscripts but also about engaging ethically, transparently, and impactfully with diverse audiences.

7.0 Challenges, Key Observations and Recommendations

Challenges

- i. Early-stage research: Some participants were still at the proposal development stage and did not yet have data, limiting their ability to fully engage in manuscript drafting exercises.
- ii. Online engagement mishaps: Connectivity issues, delayed responses, and occasional technical glitches affected the smooth flow of discussions.
- iii. Time constraints: Limited time meant that certain topics—especially policy briefs—were only briefly introduced rather than explored in depth.
- iv. Varied levels of experience: The diversity of participants, while enriching, also meant differing levels of familiarity with scholarly publishing, requiring



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facilitators to balance content delivery for both beginners and advanced participants.

- **Key Observations**

- a) **Diversity of participants:** The meeting benefitted from a rich mix of undergraduate students, postgraduate students, faculty members, and practitioners. This diversity created a useful hybridization of ideas, with faculty and project team members complementing the facilitation team and sharing their experiences with students.
- b) **Active engagement:** Several questions were raised in the chatroom and Q&A section. Facilitators handled these effectively through open discussions and direct typed responses, ensuring inclusivity and responsiveness.
- c) **Perceived usefulness:** All participants rated the meeting as useful and timely, noting that the skills acquired would be applied to generate publications and package messages for different audiences—including scholarly journal articles and policy briefs for policymakers.
- d) **Contemporary relevance:** The training was highly engaging and addressed pressing issues in scholarship such as plagiarism, salami publishing, paper mills, citation rings, and impact factors. This ensured participants were exposed to both technical skills and ethical considerations.

- **Recommendations**

- I. **Structured follow-up:** Organize follow-up clinics or mentorship sessions where participants can receive individualized guidance on manuscript drafting and policy brief preparation.
- II. **Dedicated time for policy briefs:** Allocate more time in future workshops to explore policy brief writing in depth, including practical exercises on distilling research into actionable recommendations.
- III. **Enhanced digital literacy:** Provide pre-training orientation on digital tools (reference managers, plagiarism checkers, collaborative platforms) to minimize technical barriers during sessions.



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- IV. **Peer learning networks:** Encourage participants to form peer review groups after the training to sustain engagement and mutual support in manuscript and policy brief development.
- V. **Integration of practitioner perspectives:** Continue involving practitioners alongside academics to ensure outputs are both scholarly rigorous and socially relevant.

8.0 Closing Note

Overall, the training was **successful, timely, and impactful**, equipping participants with essential skills in scientific writing and research communication. Addressing the identified challenges—particularly time allocation, digital readiness, and tailored support for early-stage researchers—will further strengthen future workshops and ensure participants translate learning into tangible scholarly outputs and policy contributions.