



THE AAU PAN-AFRICAN INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC WRITING/RESEARCH & PUBLICATION MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAMME (Online Programme)

About the AAU Centre of Excellence

The AAU Early Career Researcher Centre of Excellence (AAU ECRs CoE) aims to strengthen the capacity of early career African researchers across the pipeline, building upon existing knowledge and expertise. This will be achieved through targeted capacity strengthening programmes, collaborative research opportunities, and strategic partnerships rooted in African contexts, enabling ECRs to generate impactful knowledge, contribute to locally driven solutions, and inform policy on the continent and beyond.

The CoE will support ECRs across disciplines and career stages, from lecturers with a master's degree to postdoctoral scholars, with tailored support at each level. It will deliver a comprehensive curriculum covering foundational research skills through to advanced topics, including "last mile" publication challenges, using both online and in-person formats. For selected pathways, the CoE will adopt a multi-level mentorship model, pairing ECRs with senior academics and alumni to sustain peer learning. It will also support ECRs through the publication process by facilitating engagement with journal editors from its African and international partner networks; create opportunities for research collaboration across Africa and beyond; offer hands-on grant-writing experience to improve access to research funding; and, in line with the principles of the African Charter, continue to cultivate equitable partnerships with international collaborators.

Pilot Program Overview

Following the launch of the AAU ECRs CoE, the '*The AAU Pan-African Interdisciplinary Academic Writing/Research & Publication Mentorship and Support*' pilot programme will provide a structured framework for supporting early-career researchers (ECRs) across diverse disciplines in Africa, with a particular focus on strengthening research publication capacity. It will enable ECRs to position their work within global and African scholarly debates, navigate the complexities of academic publishing, and build sustainable research careers.

The programme will deliver targeted training across key areas, including understanding publication landscapes and contexts; identifying appropriate journals and engaging with peer review processes; and gaining insight into the perspectives of authors, editors, and reviewers. It will also focus on developing advanced research writing skills, such as articulating contribution and impact, ensuring rigour and transparency, and producing effective abstracts and articles. Complementing this, the programme will incorporate a structured mentorship component to support research writing and publishing, while fostering a culture of peer learning and capacity strengthening within and across institutions.

Objectives

- To strengthen participants' ability to produce rigorous, original, and publishable research writing across disciplines.
- To guide participants through the academic publication process, including journal selection, manuscript preparation, peer review, and responding to reviewers' comments.
- To enhance understanding of publication landscapes and enable participants to position their research within African and global scholarly debates.
- To develop advanced research writing skills, including articulating contribution, significance, and impact, and ensuring rigour, clarity, and transparency.



- To provide structured mentorship and practical feedback through group mentorship meetings, writing clinics, and peer-learning platforms.
- To foster interdisciplinary collaboration, networking, and sustained peer support among early-career researchers.
- To promote ethical research and publishing practices, including integrity, authorship, and awareness of equity, gender, and wellbeing considerations in academia.

Target Participants

The pilot programme is designed for early-career researchers in Africa who already have research data and are seeking structured support to develop this work into publishable outputs. As a paid programme focused on writing for publication, it is most suitable for participants who have completed data collection, or are at an advanced stage of analysis, and are ready to refine their manuscripts, strengthen their academic writing, and navigate the publication process.

Target participants include doctoral candidates in the later stages of their research journey, postdoctoral researchers, and faculty members with master's or doctoral degrees who are actively working on research outputs for publication. The programme is particularly relevant for lecturers and early-career academics seeking to build confidence in research writing, respond to reviewer feedback, identify suitable journals, and position their work within African and international scholarly debates. It may also be suitable for research-active professional staff where they have a clear publication goal and an existing dataset or draft manuscript.

Delivery Team

- AAU Team: Comprising African and international experts, including journal editors from diverse disciplines, ensuring mentees receive tailored support.
- Mentorship Programme Alumni: Previous participants who can mentor new cohorts, fostering a sustainable network of early-career researchers across the continent.

Pilot Programme Structure

The programme will be delivered fully online through a blended model combining synchronous and asynchronous learning, using Zoom for live sessions and Moodle for flexible resources. It will begin with a two-day online workshop held over a weekend, followed by a structured programme of support activities. These will include ten group mentorship meetings, asynchronous learning activities, monthly writing clinics offering targeted feedback, and interdisciplinary Writing Café sessions to foster productivity and peer learning. The programme will conclude with a one-day online workshop to consolidate learning and reflect on progress.

Pilot Programme Schedule

A detailed overview of the programme structure, including the workshops, mentorship activities, writing support, and online delivery model, is provided below.

Phase 1: Online Workshop 1 (2 days, online via Zoom)

Dates: 18–19 July 2026 (TBC)

This opening workshop will provide core training in research writing and academic publishing, covering:

Topic 1: Publication Landscapes and Contexts

- Understanding the contexts of international publication: North, South and African insights



- Contextualising research for publication: positioning African scholarship within global debates

Topic 2: Navigating Journals and Articles

- Identifying journals and understanding the key components of the research article in your disciplines
- Criteria and publication conventions: (1) peer reviewing of journal articles (2) responding to reviewer comments.

Topic 3: Authors', Peer-reviewers' and Editors' Perspectives

- Submitting and getting published/rejected in academic journals: author experiences
- The publication process from editors' perspectives
- Perspectives of peer reviewers: what they look for, common weaknesses, and how review reports are constructed
- Understanding the processes of proposing, editing, and contributing to special issues in international journals

Topic 4: Developing Research Writing Skills

- Demonstrating value, contribution, significance and impact
- Ensuring rigour, transparency and reliability
- Developing effective titles and abstracts for journal articles
- Writing abstracts/proceedings for conferences

Topic 5: Mentoring

- Understanding mentoring for research writing and publishing and the role of the university
- How to be a mentee and how to mentor others (capacity building for sustainability)

Phase 2: Ongoing Support and Mentorship (Online)

Dates: August 2026 – May 2027

Participants will engage in a structured programme of support designed to sustain progress towards publication. Live sessions will be delivered via Zoom, while flexible learning resources will be hosted on Moodle. Activities will include:

- Group Mentorship Meetings: Monthly sessions of 1–1.5 hours providing guidance, accountability, and peer support.
- One-to-One Mentorship: Tailored support aligned with participants' writing goals, available if needed.
- Asynchronous Learning: Flexible Moodle-based resources to reinforce workshop content and support independent learning.
- Writing Clinics: Monthly drop-in sessions for targeted feedback on drafts and research writing challenges.
- Interdisciplinary Writing Café Sessions: Informal, facilitated writing spaces to promote productivity and peer learning.



Phase 3: Closing Workshop (1 day, online via Zoom)

Date: June 2027 (date TBC)

The final workshop will include participant presentations, reflection on learning and progress, networking opportunities, and the formal close of the programme.

Pilot Programme Proposed Timeline, Recruitment Targets and Cost

The first call for applications will open in early May 2026 and close in mid-June 2026, allowing approximately six weeks for recruitment and selection. This timeline provides a one-month preparation period prior to programme commencement to finalise learning materials for the synchronous sessions, onboard facilitators and mentors, and prepare asynchronous learning resources.

The programme will formally begin in mid-July 2026 with the initial two-day online workshop. The pilot cohort will target approximately 35–40 participants, ensuring a manageable group size that supports meaningful engagement, high-quality mentorship, and interactive learning.

The programme will be offered on a fee-paying basis, with payment made in two instalments: USD 500 as the first instalment and USD 250 as the second instalment. This brings the total programme fee to USD 750 per participant for the full 12-month programme, covering training, mentorship, and access to learning resources and support activities.

Pilot Programme Application and Selection Process

Admission to the programme will be based on a short application process designed to ensure alignment between participants' research stage, writing goals, and the objectives of the programme. Applicants will be required to complete an online form providing information on their research area, stage of writing, and motivation for participation.

The programme is intended for early-career researchers who have already collected data and are ready to develop publishable outputs. While the programme is fee paying, places will be limited to approximately 35–40 participants to maintain quality of engagement and mentorship. In the event of oversubscription, a second cohort may be offered, subject to sufficient demand and delivery capacity. Applicants who are not yet ready for '*The AAU Pan-African Interdisciplinary Academic Writing/Research & Publication Mentorship and Support*' pilot programme should be invited to register their interest in '*The AAU Core Research Skills Competency Programme*'. Applicants seeking broader or more advanced research development support should be invited to register their interest in '*The AAU Advanced Research and Impact Programme*'. For the pilot phase, both programmes will be offered online.