



AFRICALICS

**AFRICALICS PhD ACADEMY ON INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN
AFRICA**

Concept Note

Background

The purpose of the AfricaLics PhD Academies is to support the training of African Doctoral students engaged in research in the field of ‘Innovation and Development’; a multidisciplinary social science research area that includes elements of innovation studies and development studies. This is an under-acknowledged field of study in much of Africa. The Academies provide a chance for PhD students to come together, support each other, receive training, and broaden their awareness of policy and management issues related to this field of research. The major goal is to ensure that young scholars are equipped with the requisite research, theoretical, and analytical capabilities to interrogate the African innovation landscape, with the ultimate goal of generating evidence-based insights for potential uptake by policymakers, private sector and civil society actors, international development agencies, and other stakeholders.

The AfricaLics Academy is usually arranged in close collaboration with a local partner organisation. This organisation provides the venue and some other local logistics support in its role as host of the Academy. In turn, the organisation is guaranteed the presence of some of the leading academics working in the field of innovation and development at the Academy. We often encourage the host organisation to make the most of these academies by holding a half/one day Open Symposium on Innovation and Development that is tailored to concerns of academics and policy-makers in the host country and to which members of the public (policy makers, private sector and civil society representatives) are invited together with a broader range of faculty and students from the host organisation.

Academy specifics

The Academy occurs over a two-week period and hosts between 25-30 students from Africa and a handful of students from the rest of the world. The Academy invites frontier researchers in innovation and development from around the world to provide lectures and mentor students during the two-week period. The lectures cover specific issues in innovation studies, economic development, and innovation management, as well as research methods and innovation policy. In addition, we sometimes bring in external speakers/ trainers to provide training sessions on methodology or academic writing or similar subjects.

Organising the Academy involves a close collaboration between the host organisation and the AfricaLics Secretariat and requires an agreement in advance on the division of responsibilities.

The main activities that are required in organising and implementing the Academy are as follows:

Main activity area (in order of occurrence)	Who is usually responsible?
Call for papers and subsequent review of papers	AfricaLics RCS team, with support from the AfricaLics Secretariat and AfricaLics Scientific Board (ASB)
Programme organisation and invitation of facilitators	AfricaLics RCS team, with support from the AfricaLics Secretariat
Logistics for the Academy (venue, accommodation, airport transfers, food etc.)	Host institution
Travel support applications and approvals	AfricaLics RCS team
Additional fundraising	Host institution (AfricaLics RCS team may have limited funds, especially for travel support of accepted students)
The Academy itself (implementation)	Host institution with support from the AfricaLics RCS team
Reporting (after the event)	Host institution and the AfricaLics RCS team

Call for papers and review process

At least eight months before the Academy is due to take place, a call for papers is agreed on and advertised. The call is advertised through AfricaLics' usual channels and other appropriate channels (including the host organisation's website) as necessary. The call is open for at least one month.

The call usually requests participants to submit an extended abstract of no more than 5 pages. Abstracts must be typed double-spaced in English (an exception is sometimes made for a few applicants from French-speaking countries), with a font size of 12. The abstract must state the objectives, methodology, expected results and conclusions of the work, including supporting figures and main references. The abstract must be accompanied by a CV and a recommendation letter from the supervisor or a senior scholar.

All extended abstracts are reviewed by at least two senior scholars from a review panel comprising members of the AfricaLics Scientific Board (ASB) and the host institution.

Selection is made based on the academic quality of papers and on criteria aimed at promoting diversity (by location, gender, etc.); a template for the review process is available in Annex 1. In addition, the following criteria are also listed in the call:

- Students should be at least in the beginning of his/her second year at the time of the Academy;
- Work explicitly on issues related to policy-oriented analysis of science, technology and innovation systems;
- Be able to present an original paper reflecting his/her research and/or thesis work.

It is useful to have a mix of students from across Africa attending the Academy, so that they can gain a diversity of views and ideas. The current experience shows that the local-to-foreign student ratio that works well is no more than 1 to 3.

Successful applicants are notified of their acceptance to the Academy 3-4 months before the actual Academy. This allows students time to process visas which often requires students receiving letters from the host institution confirming their place on the Academy and formally inviting them to attend. It also needs to be clear about who will pay for their travel, accommodation and other costs.

Students selected are expected to provide a full paper a month before the Academy.

Programme organisation and invitation of facilitators

Once the students have been selected, their research topics and methodologies are reviewed. This is used to guide the final Academy programme and the selection of facilitators. That said, there are a few sessions at the conference that are traditionally given to provide a basic grounding in the Academy's subject matter. These include the history of innovation studies and systems thinking, as well as the current state of innovation studies and innovation management thinking. This is important as many students come from traditional disciplinary backgrounds and often have not engaged with much of the literature relevant to these topics before.

AfricaLics academy sessions often include the following activities:

- Lectures by senior researchers on areas ranging from research methodologies to the latest theories and empirical research in the fields of innovation, innovation management and development studies.
- Presentation by PhD students of their work, which will be discussed by senior scholars, and who will give feedback.
- There is a possibility to include more interactive sessions, enabling engagement with innovation practitioners and policymakers, as well as relevant field visits and associated project work.
- An Open Symposium on Innovation and Development, usually on the first day, provides a means to leave a more lasting legacy within the host country.

Once a final agreement is reached on the topics and lectures to be covered, a list of facilitators is prepared. These are contacted by either the host institution or the AfricaLics RCS team, depending on the final division of responsibilities.

Facilitators are usually invited for 2-3 days at most. This means students attending the Academy meet a range of academics in the field, and academics aren't taken out of their work for too long. This is important because we do not pay facilitators for their time. Academy facilitators volunteer their time for free as part of the AfricaLics community's communitarian spirit.

It is often useful to have a mix of facilitators from both the host institution and from abroad. We also aim to ensure gender balance among facilitators wherever possible.

The final programme can take many forms. The main elements of an Academy are given below.

Opening session & Open Symposium	Organised by AfricaLics Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductions (people and Academy activities)
Special sessions	Organised by the host institution and partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Showcasing STI for development in the host country
Student papers stream	Approximately six-10 parallel sessions, sometimes with sub-sessions. Sessions consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-3 students present papers on an aspect of their PhD research for 20 minutes each - Comments from 2 reviewers (a student and a senior) for 10 minutes each - Comments and questions from the floor <p>NOTE: reviewers are expected to prepare written feedback and provide it to students. Students are expected to write a one-page overview of how they have taken on board comments and send it to reviewers within one month of the Academy</p>
Methods stream	A series of lectures and workshops introducing students to, or upgrading students' skills, in certain research methods
Theory stream	A series of lectures introducing students to key theories and concepts from innovation studies
Impact stream	Sessions where external stakeholders from government, business or the third sector come in and debate key topics; often in a roundtable format.
Armchair discussions/ Drop-in sessions	Sessions held in the evening, which are more relaxed in format. In these students can 'ask a practitioner' about the issues faced with innovation in the host country and/or receive one-to-one support e.g. on publications
Problem-solving stream/ project work	[Optional] To get students to think more broadly about the impact of their work and to get them thinking about writing research proposals, policy briefs, and key skills as an academic. Students are expected to conduct group project work activities that revolve around field visits, planned in advance of the Academy by the host institution. Students are grouped together and asked to identify a research gap from their field visit, write a one-page research proposal and a one-page policy brief outlining why the research is necessary. They make an oral presentation on this on the last day of the workshop to a panel of experts. Usually, a prize is given to the best team effort.

Logistics

There are four core logistics areas which are the most important. These are: the venue, accommodation, food, and airport transfers. In some of these areas, there are smaller considerations that can 'make or break' the experience of those attending. Each of these is considered in turn.

Venue

The Academy is traditionally held at an academic institution, as this often provides the practical setup required for such an event (classrooms with projectors, larger lecture theatres, and breakout spaces). It also ensures that the Academy serves as an inspiration to students at the host institution by making them aware that such events exist.

Depending on the organisation of the programme, the following venue requirements are needed:

1. One large lecture room able to accommodate around 35 persons (the students plus all facilitators present at any one time). This is used for plenary lectures
2. 2-3 classrooms to be used for parallel sessions where student presentations take place
3. A common breakout space for refreshments, lunches and general relaxation when there are no classes, or they have group work.
4. One larger room/ lecture theatre for the Open Symposium (although this sometimes takes place in a totally different location to ensure maximum public attendance)
5. If there are Muslim students attending, then a prayer room will also need to be provided or details of the university mosque. Similarly, for Christian students or those of other faiths, details of the closest place of worship should be made available. A notice of the location of all of the nearest places of worship is a useful part of the information pack.

Accommodation

Facilitating discussion is easier when facilitators and students are in the same location, but sometimes this isn't possible. To reduce the need for buses (often at an extra cost), it is preferable to have students and facilitators stay within walking distance of the Academy venue, if at all possible.

Accommodation at previous academies has sometimes been in hotels and other times in student halls of residence. The most important criterion is that, wherever it is, it is clean, secure, and preferably has individual bathrooms.

Because the Academy takes place over a two-week period, students and facilitators will be around over a weekend. Therefore, it is important to ensure that any hall of residence where students stay provides food on weekends. It is also often useful if the accommodation has common facilities that students and facilitators can use on weekends. At its simplest, this is a common room with a TV.

Accommodation is provided by the Academy from the night before the Academy starts to the morning that the Academy finishes. No additional nights are usually provided. If students or facilitators have to stay additional nights, they are usually told they must pay for them themselves. If you start allowing extra nights, then the final billing of the rooms can get very confusing.

It is also important to make clear to students and facilitators what is paid for in terms of accommodation, i.e., that bar bills, room service, phone calls, etc., are the students' and facilitators' own responsibility.

Food

The Academies are always fully catered. Therefore, students and facilitators receive three meals a day from arrival to departure. In addition, when they are 'in class', the Academy provides refreshments at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. We find that this ensures high levels of concentration. In addition, it enables students not to worry about money, and it means we don't have to pay facilitators per diem. Good food (not fancy food but good, tasty

food of which there is plenty) ensures that there is a good atmosphere at the Academy. It can make or break an Academy.

It's also important to ensure there is a variety of food and that the caterers are aware of any dietary requirements. It is common for some students at AfricaLics Academies to need vegetarian or Halal meals.

Airport transfers

It is important to be clear which airport students must arrive at for the Academy and to ensure this information is given to students early on (preferably in the Call), so they can book their flights accordingly.

Students and facilitators are responsible for getting themselves to this airport (including organising all visas, including transit visas). But once in the country, it is the responsibility of those organising the Academy to ensure they are picked up and taken to the Academy venue/accommodation. This is important because it ensures the security of the students and facilitators.

Airport transfers have been arranged in the past using hotel shuttle buses, university buses or dedicated taxi drivers. Arriving participants have been picked up on demand or at hourly intervals. Whichever transfer method is used, it is important to ensure this is clearly communicated to students and facilitators before they travel.

Other issues

While the issues above are the major ones that need to be addressed to ensure a successful Academy, several others also need to be considered. The main ones are listed below:

1. *Visas*

Participants need to know the exact details of visa requirements as early as possible. It is easier to provide this information for them than leave them to find out. This avoids the problems of students or facilitators getting stuck without transit visas or thinking they can get visas on arrival when in fact they can't etc.

2. *Student helpers and support staff*

It is useful during the preparations, but also during the Academy itself to have sufficient support staff on hand. This includes cleaners and security during the event. But it also includes students or others who can assist students and facilitators in finding rooms within the venue, helping them buy local phone cards, and directing them to the best place to buy things (from toiletries that have been forgotten to souvenir shops), etc.

Having a student or two help with the organisation before the event takes place also frees up the host organiser's time, which will be full of answering emails, writing emails, dealing with hotels, caterers, etc.

Often, local students are happy to help without payment if they can participate in the Academy and attend the sessions.

3. *ICT and associated support*

The Academy requires projectors in each room and internet access. Students often bring their own laptops these days, but having a computer room is still useful, especially since many want to access a printer.

Having dedicated IT support during the event can minimise delays in the programme.

4. *Translation services*

AfricaLics does not have a policy on events taking place in one or more languages. We tend to manage this in an ad hoc fashion as needs require.

As a result, previous academies held in North Africa have been predominantly in French, with English translation, while Academies in other parts of Africa have used only English (although abstracts will be accepted in French). However, this need not be the case, and other options can be agreed upon by the local organisers and the AfricaLics secretariat.

The key is to ensure translation issues are not forgotten, that a conscious discussion about the language of the Academy and support services for those not fluent in or regular users of English occurs, and that remedies are put in place where necessary and communicated early to students and facilitators.

5. *Central file for documents*

Students are asked to submit full papers one month before the Academy. This gives facilitators and other students time to read the papers that are in their sessions. In addition, facilitators are encouraged to provide material before the session to enable students to 'read up' in advance.

Having a central online repository for these is useful for easy access by all involved. The AfricaLics Secretariat or the AfricaLics RCS team can provide this.

6. *General information and advice sheet*

It is useful to develop a general information sheet for students and facilitators. This contains details of the venue, accommodation, a map of the area, airport transfers, etc. But it is useful for it also to contain the following:

- a. Details of local customs and cultures
- b. Details of local places of worship
- c. Details of where they can go to get more information on the location and activities available in the town/ locality, should they wish to stay on or do something in the evening.
- d. Details on money and how to change money, access to ATMs etc.
- e. Details of any health or security issues, including key contact info
- f. A request that students and facilitators take out adequate medical and travel insurance

We find that providing this information drastically reduces the number of emails organisers receive and ensures that organisers have done their due diligence.

Open symposium/colloquium

This requires a special mention because, in some ways, it requires a separate organisation in and of itself.

The host institution may consider holding a half-day colloquium or an open symposium at the Academy's opening. This follows the successful inclusion of an open half-day symposium on innovation and development issues affecting Africa at the previous AfricaLics PhD Academies. Traditionally, this is open to the public, government representatives, the private sector, civil society, and the research community.

The objective of the Open Symposium is to allow the different communities of practice to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities facing the host country and Africa in general, and how opportunities can be harnessed to promote innovation and development. The host institution is expected to invite keynote speakers to facilitate participants' deliberation on this subject. The host organisation, for instance, may choose to showcase the programmes and activities run by the University and how they address a variety of innovation and development challenges faced by the host country.

The keynote speakers can come from the AfricaLics fraternity or from outside. These keynote speakers will speak to the Academy participants, plus, usually, a wider invited audience and/or the general public.

Travel support

The AfricaLics RCS team or AfricaLics Secretariat can, at times, provide financial support for travel (air tickets) to students who are accepted into the Academy. The amount available is not fixed, and it cannot be guaranteed to support all students. Sometimes the Secretariat or RCS team can also provide travel support to facilitators.

The support available is always bound by the following conditions:

1. Only covers economy class cheapest return air fares (all other transport costs are covered by the individual)
2. Is available only by prior written agreement. A call for travel support applications is issued alongside the call for papers, and/or selected participants are invited to apply upon receipt of their acceptance letters.
3. Travel support is by reimbursement only, i.e. the individual has to pay for the ticket themselves and request a refund from the AfricaLics RCS team or the AfricaLics Secretariat.

Full details of the AfricaLics travel support policy are available on the AfricaLics website.

Fundraising

Running a PhD Academy costs money. The AfricaLics Secretariat or the AfricaLics RCS team may have funds to help cover travel costs, but increasingly the host institution will be expected to provide in-kind or cash support.

Therefore, we hope that the host institution can raise funds from local sources to cover all or part of the Academy's operating costs. The AfricaLics RCS team, through funds from Sida, from 2026 to 2029, may be able to support some of these costs; notably:

- Accommodation expenses, including meals, for all selected PhD students for the two weeks of the Academy who attend from outside of the host city.
- Travel expenses (return economy air tickets) for PhD students unable to secure funding from their institutions who have been awarded a place at the Academy and are attending from outside the host country.

None of this funding is guaranteed, and the RCS team may not always be able to cover all these costs.

All other costs must be funded by the host institution. The AfricaLics Secretariat can provide guidance on fundraising.

Based on experience from previous academies, we recommend that a budget be developed as early as possible to ensure sufficient time to determine which costs will be covered through in-kind contributions and which through sponsorship from others.

The Academy itself

If the above is arranged and organised, the Academy itself can be implemented smoothly. A few things that need to be considered in addition to the above issues, when planning the Academy:

1. *Programme and name tags*

A printed programme is really useful for enabling students and facilitators to always know what is happening and when. If there are changes in the programme, then reprinted programmes are also useful. An Academy app can also be considered.

2. *Media*

Some academies have invited members of the press to certain elements of the Academy. This can be useful for publicity purposes and for wider knowledge dissemination.

3. *Social media*

Depending on how the academy functions, it has sometimes been useful to have an online programme or a WhatsApp group to keep participants up to date on changes.

4. *Survey*

A post-academy survey is usually conducted. This helps the Secretariat and RCS team learn for future Academies and provides input for the final report (see below).

Reporting

After the Academy, a report must be written within 2 months of the event. This needs to provide a breakdown of activities, details of the participants and facilitators, plus any lessons learnt.

Part of the report consists of the results of a survey administered on the last day of the Academy to gather feedback on individuals' expectations and how well those expectations have been met by the Academy.

A decision must be made early on who will write the first draft of the report (the host organisation or the AfricaLics RCS team) and how notes will be captured at the Academy to assist with report writing. Normally, the host organisation provides a first draft of the Academy report, and the RCS team adds to this. The report format is available from the AfricaLics RCS team.

Timeline for organization

Once agreement has been reached on the location of the Academy, the plan of action, who will be responsible for what, and the date by which actions will be undertaken.

REMEMBER: the organisation should start at least 8 months before the Academy is due to take place.

The Academy is often held around June each year, therefore giving the following general timeline:

Activity	Completed by
Identification of the local host organisation	18 months before (at the latest). Preferably at least 24 months before
Initial discussions and agreement on responsibilities between the local host organisation, the AfricaLics RCS team and the AfricaLics Secretariat	At least 12 months before
Resource mobilization & fundraising	During the 12 months leading up to the event
Initial logistics	January - March
Call for applications	December – early February
Applications for travel support close	February or March
Paper review	February
Notification of paper acceptance and travel support	March
Invitation of facilitators	January - March
Programme finalized	March
Academy logistics	March - May
Final confirmation of attendance by students with confirmation of air ticket and visas received (where applicable)	April-May
Full papers submitted by participants	May
Academy held	June
Travel support claims submitted	June
Travel support claims reimbursement completed	July
Report written and accounts closed	July

Annex 1: Selection Criteria during AfricaLics Phase II for Academies

An open call for applications is made through the AfricaLics network and social media as well as other network groups. Students who are interested in applying are expected to submit a short abstract of their PhD proposal, their CV, and a covering letter outlining why they should be considered. These documents are reviewed by a scientific committee composed of a number of AfricaLics Scientific Board members and other experts from the network as well as the host organisation, as required. Every application is reviewed by at least two members of the scientific committee. Scores are given to each application based on:

- Quality of the application
- Relevance of PhD project work for innovation and development studies in Africa, including the AfricaLics research agenda
- Academic background and qualifications.

The highest-scoring applications are accepted up to an agreed ceiling, depending on their overall quality. The remaining places are utilised to ensure a geographical spread and a sufficient gender balance, wherever possible. This has proved difficult to achieve in the past, especially on the gender front, but we managed in 2016 to achieve a nearly 50-50 split of female and male students for the first time and should aim for this in all future Academies.

The review process occurs as follows:

1. Academy Organisers receive all applications and upload them to a designated AfricaLics RCS Team or Secretariat Google Drive folder made available for each Academy
2. The Academy Organisers review all applications and complete an initial vetting of them: removing any papers that are not relevant (e.g. those that focus on 'doing innovation') and only select those that are focused on the relationship between innovation and development (in the most general of terms).
3. Papers that pass this initial sifting are allocated to reviewers. Each paper is allocated to two reviewers. The papers have their author's details removed and a number coding added.
4. The anonymised papers are sent to reviewers together with a scoring sheet (see Appendix 1) requesting reviewers to give written feedback and a score against the following criteria:
5. The scores from both reviewers of each paper are added together and added into a master sheet (template in Appendix 2)
6. Additional data is added to the master sheet by the academy organisers relating to year of study, gender, nationality and whether previously attended an academy
7. 70% of participants are then chosen based on those who received the highest cumulative score from reviewers and who have NOT attended an academy before, and are in their second and third year. In addition, only those who are nationals of and residents in least-developed, low-income, or low-middle-income countries in Africa (see the latest OECD listings) should be sent through.
8. The remaining 30% are chosen to ensure that there is representation from each of the six AU regions and as close to a 50-50 gender balance as possible. This might mean some 1st-year students who apply are chosen alongside those who are relatively poor academically and/or not based in Africa. A preference should be given to candidates from low-income countries and to female candidates.
9. Any applications in the 30% who are from (i.e. nationals of OR studying in) upper middle income countries or high income countries CANNOT be selected until the go-ahead has been received by Sida, which provides core funding for AfricaLics activities, including the PhD Academies.

Appendix 1: Scoring template for reviewers

Name of evaluator:.....

Number of the application being reviewed.....

Title of the application being reviewed:

Rank the application in terms of: (0-3, 0 being lowest)	0	1	2	3
Is the proposal relevant to AfricaLics' agenda and main themes? (see over for themes and sub-themes)	()	()	()	()
The scientific quality of the proposal?	()	()	()	()
Is the methodology suitable for the objectives of the applicant's research?	()	()	()	()
Can the applicant improve her/his work through participation in the academy?	()	()	()	()
Would you recommend the applicant's inclusion in the forthcoming AfricaLics PhD Academy?	()	()	()	()

Please provide a few narrative comments to provide to the applicant regarding how to improve their paper:

.....

Please provide any specific comments for the Academy organisers (internal comments):

.....

Table 1: Thematic research areas of AfricaLics

Situation at present	Research gaps and opportunities identified	Thematic area of analysis in Phase II	Thematic research areas in Phase I/ sub-themes in Phase II
<p>Changing landscape of innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing interest in innovation - Changing geopolitical and innovation governance dynamics 	<p>Innovation governance research lacking</p> <p>More on global value chains and sustainable business models</p> <p>Different research on the linkage between education systems and business</p>	<p>Geopolitics and governance of innovation</p>	<p>National strategies to stimulate spill overs from BRIC-presence in Africa</p> <p>The role of financial institutions in relation to innovation and development in Africa including micro-finance</p>
<p>Changing landscape of innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable Development Goals and green growth emphasis - De-industrialisation and growth of services - Increasing recognition of the informal sector - Alternative thinking of ways to 'catch up' 	<p>Need for more thinking on sustainable business models and alternative industrialisation approaches</p> <p>Increased recognition required of everyday learning and innovation in less high-tech sectors</p> <p>More work on alternative linkages between business and the education sector</p>	<p>Innovation and competence building for sustainable industrialisation</p>	<p>Work organisation and competence building in formal and informal sector</p> <p>Overcoming raw material curse through new manufacturing and service activities</p> <p>Engineering and design capacity and economic development in Africa</p> <p>Building Low-carbon Energy Innovation Systems</p> <p>Agro industrial innovation systems and food security</p>
<p>Crisis in education and jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serious youth unemployment - Exclusion of key groups from employment market - Continuing deficiencies with the education sector 	<p>Need for more social science research and innovation policy studies especially</p> <p>A change in focus is required to seriously interrogate ideas of inclusive development and inclusive innovation</p>	<p>Inclusive innovation and development</p>	<p>The role of women in Africa's innovation systems</p>

Appendix 2: Master scoring sheet

		First-tier criteria						Second-tier criteria				Final decision	
		Combined scores by reviewers						Additional information				Mark: Yes/ No	
Applic ation No.	Surname	Relevance	Scientific quality	Methodology choice	Could improve by attending	Accept?	Total score	Year of study	Gender	Nationality	Already attended Academy?	Include in Academy?	Other Comments
1													
2													