

# WRITING A SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

## Grant writing through peer review course

University of Stavanger 2-3. March 2016

This course is led by Dr. Peter Dukes of the UK's Medical Research Council (MRC). He is Assistant Director of the MRC Africa Research Development Office, which is based in The Gambia. He is also running a charity (AREF) to enable the development of outstanding early-career African health researchers. Peter's previous responsibilities at the MRC in the UK include managing research funding boards and the programme of research fellowships and studentships. He has many years of experience in grant writing, peer review and shaping of research strategies and funding.

The course is designed to help scientists to write better research proposals by developing their understanding of peer review and what funding organisations expect from a good proposal. Core to the course, is a 'mock' peer review panel, in which participants will play the role of reviewers. They will evaluate real proposals and "decide" which to recommend for funding. We will work on three proposal drafts from UiS researchers. The drafts are mature, though not necessarily ready for submission.

**Participants:** Up to 24 researchers

**Leaders:** Peter Dukes and Marianne Lorentzen, adviser external funding, research and innovation department, UiS

**Course language:** English.

**Date:** Thursday 2 & Friday 3 March 2016

**Venue:** Kjell Arholms Hus, room 135, UiS

### Programme

#### DAY 1: 2. March 2016

- 09.30**            **Registration and coffee**
- 10:00**            **Introductions and welcome** – *Marianne Lorentzen*  
**Course objectives** – *Peter Dukes*
- 10:30**            **The process of writing a research proposal**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes*
- Typical structure of a research proposal**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes*  
The main categories of information in a proposal
- 10:45**            **The black box: How peer review works**  
**Principles & Criteria** Plenary session  
*Leader: Peter Dukes*

- 11:00**            **Class critique and scoring of Research Proposal S1 (Manual Therapies)**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes*  
*All participants must have critically read the delivered proposal. IN CONFIDENCE.*
- 12:00**            **Lunch**
- 12:30**            **Evidence that you can meet the criteria**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes*  
(i) Writing a strong research question or hypothesis  
(ii) Presenting a research design effectively  
(iii) Demonstrating you can deliver  
(iv) Effective supporting statements
- 13:30**            **The black box**  
**How peer review works** Plenary session  
Process and Video – NIH  
How peer review works at the RCN – *Marianne*  
Scoring: The RCN scoring sheet – *Marianne*  
Discussion
- 14:30**            **Break**
- 14:45**            **The Research Council Norway** Plenary session  
*Leader: Marianne Lorentzen*  
(i) The structure of the RCN: funding Panels and the evaluation process  
(ii) The call: FRIPRO specifics  
(iii) Upcoming opportunities and their deadlines  
(iv) Questions and discussion
- 15:15**            **Briefing: Preparation for Day 2**  
(i) Peer Review exercise  
(ii) Writing an abstract (300 words)  
(iii) Mapping and presenting a proposal
- 15.45**            **End of Day 1**

## DAY 2: 3. March 2016

- 08:30**            **Review from Day 1:** Peer review criteria and the scoring sheet  
**Peer review exercise**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes. The organisers will chair the panels*  
Three or four panels of preferably 6 members who will act as peer reviewers. Each panel will consider and score three grant proposals. Each proposal will have two lead panel members identified in advance of the course.
- 10:00**            **Panel feedback:** Scoring comparisons. Plenary session  
*Leader: Peter Dukes - plenary*  
(i) Strengths and weaknesses of the three proposals  
(ii) What lessons have participants learnt from this exercise?  
(iii) How to handle referees' comments and rejection?
- 10:40**            **Break**
- 10:50**            **Titles and abstracts**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes – group and plenary*  
(i) Groups of four exchange and read their titles & abstracts  
(i) Comparison of three versions of one abstract & discussion  
(iii) Pairs work together to improve their own abstracts
- 11:35**            **Checklist**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes – group and plenary work*  
Participants work in ca. four groups to create checklists of what makes a good application  
The lists are presented in plenary and discussed
- 12.00**            **Final Q&A and feedback** to the organizers - Lunch and mingling
- 13.00**            **End of course or Optional afternoon session, as follows:**  
**13.00**            **Mapping out and presenting a proposal.**  
*Leader: Peter Dukes – Group work and plenary.*  
The learning objectives are  
(i)        Rapid identification of a research question and mapping of a strategy that meets funding criteria  
(ii)        Confident written (one slide) and oral (1 minute x4) presentation: Clear and impactful communication  
(iii)        Critical analysis of presented proposals.
- Six groups of ca. 4 participants: Each group has one hour to define a research problem and to map out a research proposal, using only one PowerPoint slide. Groups will have 4 minutes to present their proposal “in competition”, followed by 10 minutes of tough questioning by a Panel.
- 15.00**            **Final end of course**