



The Challenges &  
Triumphs of  
Collaboration: Co-designing a  
Professional English  
Programme with West  
African Universities

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# Structure:

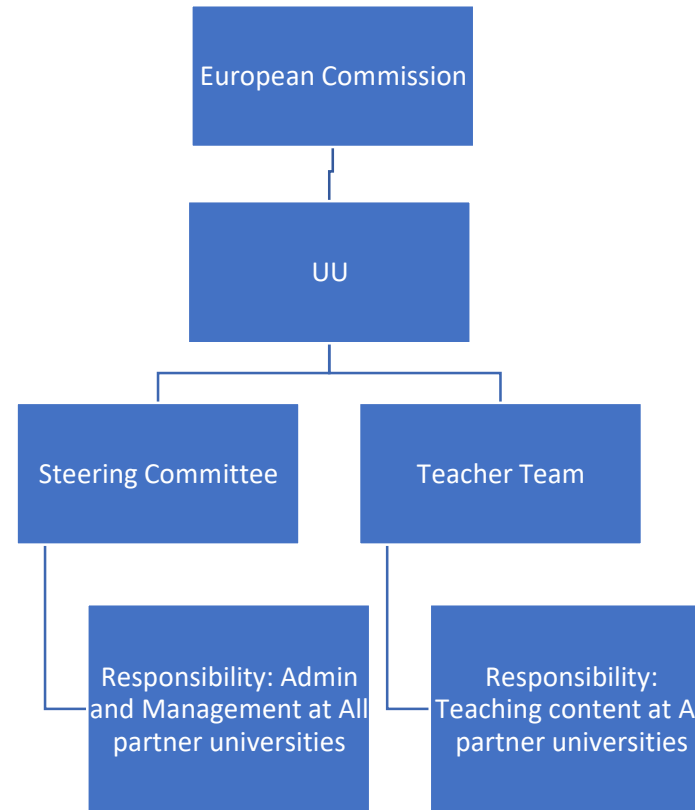
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### Rationale:

- French is the de facto official language in Higher Education, thus level of English – the global lingua franca – remains at a “very low” level (Source: EF English Proficiency Index 2021).
- ELE structurally underdeveloped in both secondary and tertiary education, limiting the countries potential for economic & social development (Agenda 2030).



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### Rationale:

- Francophone Higher Education sector-students/researchers limited in sharing knowledge and expertise with the international academic community.
- More than 80% of the pedagogical and research activities delivered in French.
- Gap between potential of researchers & graduates in the partner countries, and their international visibility.



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## Overview:

- Uppsala University (UU) has an active partnership with the 6 West African universities in the consortium within the International Science Programme (ISP).
- Low English language proficiency poses challenge when communicating with researchers/students & organising research seminars and workshops.
- In 2021, the ISP worked with Uppsala English Unit to deliver two online English courses for Masters students; courses received great feedback & the African partner universities suggested a larger project.



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### Aims:

- Increase competitiveness & institutional capacity of the African partner universities for international collaboration, education and research.
- Contribute to development of English language skills.
- Increase employability and attractiveness of students and researchers.
- Strengthen ability to publish in English language journals, present their research at international conferences & participate in international research collaborations



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### Specific Objective:

1. Develop strategies, frameworks and activities for Professional English Programs.
2. Strengthen the capacity of language teachers for Professional English teaching.
3. Increase the skills of students and researchers for communication and writing in English.



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### Four target groups:

- Professional English language programs with a focus on oral communication & academic writing skills.
- Language teachers: train 12 language teachers in teaching PEP.
- Masters/PhD students: In the test phase, teachers will deliver a new course to a total of 90 graduate students
- Researchers: In the test phase, language teachers will deliver an academic writing course to 90 researchers.



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## Challenges:

- Institutional impasse- decision makers reticent to change. “how do we fund and finance these new programmes?”
- Inconsistent funding- political instability means funding “could go up in smoke”.
- Logistical Limitations- INB (Cote D’Ivoire): 3000 students/ 12 English teachers with varying levels of expertise and no central curriculum.
- USP (Cote D’Ivoire): 3 teachers/1400 students. 20 hours per student per academic year.



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## Challenges:

- UJKZ and UNB (Burkina Faso)- inconsistent course and curriculum design, lack of standard teacher training, lack of availability of reliable resources, low student attendance.
- ULSHB and USTTB (Mali)- infrastructure deficiencies, lack of ICT, and shortage of staff. Political instability impacts T&L environment.
- No standardization of what should be covered . Teachers find it difficult to obtain sufficient teaching materials. Students lack motivation due to lack of recognition of courses.



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## Triumphs!

- Teacher Training & collaboration.
- Six pilot courses in oral communication delivered.
- Daily communication via social media; lessons followed in real time!
- Course evaluation of both students & teachers yielded very positive feedback.



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### Next Steps:

- Pilot project two (academic writing).
- Discussions have already begun remotely.
- All partners will visit Galway in May to further work on PP2.
- PP2 to be delivered in September.



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### Conclusion:

- Still several challenges ahead.
- Collaboration & openness are key.
- Don't be afraid to fail!

