



## 19<sup>th</sup> RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

### PRINCIPALS AND DEANS COMMITTEE MEETING

**Date and Time:** Monday, 30 October 2023 (08:30-10:30 GMT+1)

**Venue:** Huis-Clos, Palais des Congrès, Yaoundé, Cameroon

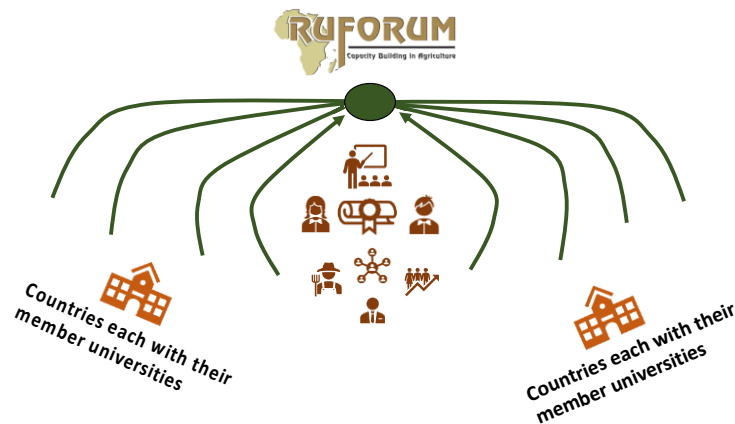
**Zoom Registration Link:** <https://bit.ly/3OVBccg>

### Concept Note

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### Introduction

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a pan African organization of predominantly agriculture teaching and research universities in Africa. RUFORUM was founded by Vice Chancellors in 2004 and has a member of 163 Universities in 40 countries of Africa for details (see [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)). RUFORUM sees, “*vibrant, transformative universities catalysing sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa*”, as a major mechanism for transforming and growing African economy and global development in general. Since its inception, RUFORUM operations have been based on the vision and mission of its members. To that extent therefore, RUFORUM is established as an umbrella organisation that derives its operational agenda from its members at country level (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** RUFORUM as an umbrella organisation that derives its agenda form its membership.



Using this collective approach, RUFORUM supports its members to transform how they implement their core missions of teaching and learning, research for development and impactful outreach. RUFORUM supports its members by acting as a broker of information and knowledge, science and technologies, strategic partnerships and thought-leadership, in emerging and futures of agricultural higher education, and economic development and social transformation.

The Principals and Deans Committee is one of RUFORUM's eight (8) governance organs that provides oversight and guidance to the Secretariat. The Committee is among others designed to promote ownership of the organization by member universities and ensure that international quality standards and practices are maintained. Currently the Secretariat as the convener of African agricultural higher education has noted key trends shaping the directions of investments in higher education. These areas are highlighted below and inform the agenda of the pre-AGM Principals and Deans Committee meeting, whose outcomes will be further discussed during the 2023 AGM.

1. **Inclusion, diversity and safeguards.** The need to address a key development challenge of equitable development through interventions that enhance inclusion and diversity is more urgent today and in fact is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number five is on Gender Equality. Africa is a divided continent in that regard, with some countries making slow progress and others advanced. But in general, many women and girls are “still left behind” including in academia, and especially the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. A recent study by Nature research publication shows that women in Africa experience greater barriers to developing careers in STEM subjects than do women in high-income countries<sup>1</sup>. In RUFORUM operations, we have been able to increase our gender parity from less than 18 percent in the early 1990s to about 45 percent today. Clearly, we must increase that target. A new programme we are developing has a target of 70 percent female participation. Equally, we must not leave behind refugees and persons with disability. The learning environment must also be conducive for learning. All people should feel safe to study with no sexual or any form of harassment. This is why addressing safeguards <sup>2</sup>is paramount.
2. **Strengthening the Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Programme.** The GTA programme was established by Vice Chancellors to support member universities to train for one another at local costs. It involves two universities i.e., the sending University that pay the students stipends and living costs through their salaries, while the receiving university recruits the students and trains them, with the student serving the host university as assigned by the leadership. RUFORUM compliments with research costs. The GTA Programme contributes to one of RUFORUM's three strategic goals to “build synergy from networks of specialisation to develop quality human resources and capacity required to intensify and increase Africa's agricultural productivity and competitiveness (for more details see <https://www.ruforum.org/gta>). After eight years of implementation, it is time to evaluate the Programme to inform further design improvements.

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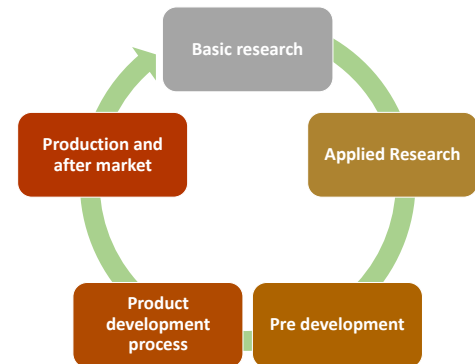
<sup>1</sup>Nature **602**, 547-548 (2022). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-022-00492-x>

<sup>2</sup> Refers to having policies and procedures that enable staff and students to freely identify and raise concerns with the leadership who in turn feel confident in responding to and referring concerns and working with other agencies and units of the university to protect students and staff.



The evaluation questions will focus on the extent to which the programme has delivered on its objectives of:

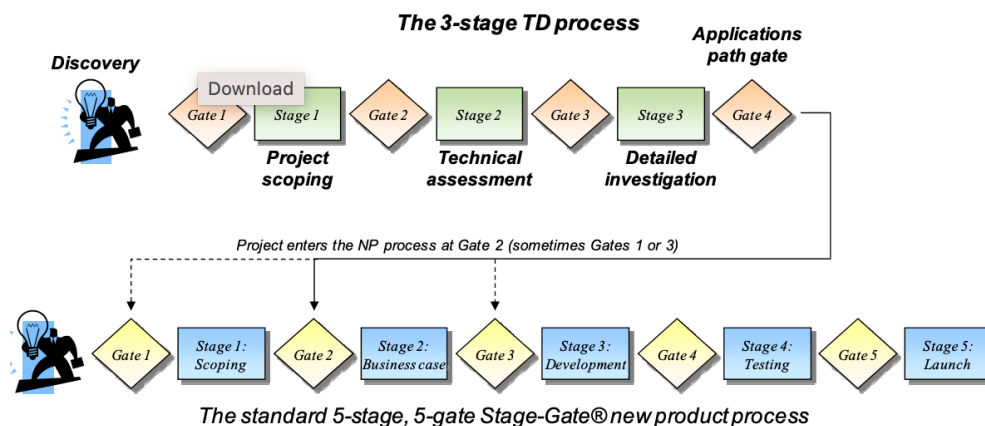
- a. Improving the quality of higher education and increase the pool of PhD-level trained academic staff in African universities;
  - b. Providing opportunities for the doctoral research to contribute more directly to African development;
  - c. Strengthening inter- university collaboration in the field of higher education in Africa; and
  - d. Promoting staff mobility among RUFORUM member universities, and across Africa. Initially, the programme focused only on agriculture and related fields; recently it has been opened up to more fields based on the gap areas and priorities of member universities.
3. **Strengthening university-led research.** Universities are part of national innovation systems- an ecosystem of multiple actors (technical and institutional), in a country, engaged in innovation. According to the [OECD](#), effectiveness and efficiency of national innovation systems requires that the flow of technology and information among people, enterprises and institutions be technically apt, well managed, inclusive and relevant to development needs and processes. Innovation itself is a process (Figure 2), with few ideas reaching the market as mature products. For the most part therefore, an innovation industry must establish well-structured systems for generating technologies. Universities tend to have many short-lived projects that are student centered, that generate papers and that is usually the end of the story. However, for Africa to be the “master of its destiny” it must have productive R&D industry.



The Secretariat would like to support its members transition to science and innovation programmatic operations in which all training and research is embedded as is commonly used in industry R4D stage gated processes<sup>3</sup> (Figure 3).

4. **New RUFORUM Operational Plan:** RUFORUM’s current operations are anchored in its continental strategy, ‘RUFORUM Vision 2030. The first Operation Plan (OP) of Vision 2030 ended in 2023 and has been refreshed for the period 2024-2028. This OP development involved an iterative consultative process between the RUFORUM Secretariat and some stakeholders.. The refreshed OP leverages on the successes of the old one, and is cognisant of new realities in Africa’s education ecosystem. The Principals and Deans are a key constituency whose voice must be expressed in the OP.

<sup>3</sup>Högman, U and H. Johannesson, H. 2010. Technology Development And Normative Process Models. International Design Conference - Design 2010 Dubrovnik - Croatia, May 17 - 20, 2010.



**Figure 3.** Stage gate processes for technology development (Högman and Johannesson, H. 2010)

These topics are crucial for our future as a Network because they embody our collective aspirations to address contemporary development challenges by becoming equal opportunity actors in development processes on the continent.

### Overall Objective

The overall objective of the meeting is to seek guidance on scaling up of key RUFORUM initiatives across the member universities in Africa. Given that Principals and Deans are the key implementers of RUFORUM actions in member universities, it is imperative that their voice be heard and their guidance given due consideration. Accordingly, this AGM meeting aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Receive and approve strategic directions from the previous meeting
2. Discuss key lessons and provide guidance and or approval for suggested proposals on scalable actions for addressing inclusion, diversity and safe guards among RUFORUM member universities.
3. Discuss and approve the proposed road map for evaluating the GTA programme.
4. Discuss and approve suggested strategies to be considered/adapted by universities for creation of programme-based research agenda.

### Participants

The participants to the Principals and Deans' Committee and RUFORUM Secretariat and invited guests.

### Date and venue

The 2023 AGM PDC meeting will take place on Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 virtually from 08:30 – 10:30 GMT+1). **Zoom Registration Link:** <https://bit.ly/3OVBccg>

### Methodology

The Principals and Deans Committee supported by the Secretariat will provide reports for discussion, guidance and approval by the August Assembly. The Chair of the Principals and Deans Committee will subsequently present approved recommendations to the Board Executive Committee.



### Expected outcomes

1. Approved scalable actions that address inclusion and diversity among RUFORUM member universities.
2. Approved road map for evaluating the GTA programme.
3. Approved suggested strategies for establishing research programmes in RUFORUM member universities.

### Draft Agenda

Time (GMTT)	Agenda Item	Responsible
08:00-08:15	Introduction and Adoption of the Agenda	PDC, Chair
08:15-08:30	Communication from the Chair	Chair
08:30-09:00	Presentation of the RUFORUM Operational Plan	Secretariat
09:00-09:15	<b>Session 1:</b> Receive and approve strategic directions from the previous meeting	Chair
09:15-09:30	<b>Session 2:</b> Discussion on key lessons and provide guidance and or approval for suggested proposals on scalable actions for addressing inclusion, diversity and safe guards among RUFORUM member universities	Secretariat
09:30-09:45	<b>Session 3:</b> Discussion and approval of the proposed road map for evaluating the GTA programme	Secretariat
09:45-10:00	<b>Session 4:</b> Discussion and approval of suggested strategies to be considered/adapted by universities for creation of programme-based research agenda	Secretariat
10:00-10:20	Any other Business	Chair
10:20-10:20	Closing remarks	Chair