

COST BESTPRAC Training School

Engaging Stakeholders throughout the Project Lifecycle – Personal Communication Skills for European Research Administrators

May 29 – June 1, 2015

Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg Simon Ohm, Germany

Objectives

Delivering research administration support for European-funded research projects can put communications skills to the test. Administration of intercultural and often virtual research teams in this context is highly characterized by facilitating interactions amongst diverse partners - while at the same time functioning as a gateway that defines the quality and efficiency of a project's lifecycle.

It is therefore paramount for Research Administrators to build trust and respect in order to maintain effective long-term working relationships. This holds true for the relationship with Principal Investigators (PIs) as well as for all other stakeholders involved in the project, such as project officers, internal service partners like Finance, HR and PR departments, and the general public.

To be a successful Research Administrator, one has to have excellent communication skills to work effectively, while maintaining their work-life-balance in this highly dynamic work environment.

Training School concept at a glance

The Training School on "Engaging Stakeholders throughout the Project Lifecycle – Personal Communication Skills for European Research Administrators" will equip Research Administrators with hands-on knowledge and personal strategies in order to be able to act as an effective communicator and facilitator for large European funded projects and their stakeholders.

This Training School is a blended learning training program. That means - in addition to the onsite training in Nuremberg – the participants will benefit from 4 preparatory **online modules** (for further details please see page 2), offered via an online learning platform. Participation at the online phase is obligatory for participants of the training school. The online phase starts at April 20th and lasts until May 24th. Potential candidates are asked to make sure before applying, that they will be able to spend a minimum of 4 hours per week (5 weeks!) engaging themselves in group activities and processing tasks during the online phase. Log-In details will be distributed with the notification of acceptance.

Both, online and onsite trainings modules, contain shared information from the trainer team, group activities, simulations, and role plays that refer to European Research Administrator's specific work situations. The participants will receive in-depth individual feedback. Personal reflection time as well as fostering of knowledge exchange between participants.

Trainers

Anne-Katrin Werenskiold (PhD), Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, Germany
Ellen Schenk (PhD), ERASMUS University Medical Center Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Rebekka Steinmann, Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg Simon Ohm, Germany
Alice Murschall, M.A. - Sprachraum LMU München, Germany
Yvonne Zips, M.A. - Sprachraum LMU München, Germany

+ **Guests!**

Program

Online Phase (April 20 – May 24, 2015)

Module 1 (April 20-26, 2015): Planning for ground-breaking—initial contact with your stakeholders

In module 1, participants will enter in a dialogue about systematic ways in adapting specific communication strategies to their stakeholders' needs. By the end of the first week, participants will be able to create a short communications plan for their chosen stakeholder.

Module 2 (April 27 – May 3, 2015): Giving constructive (written) feedback on the writing process

The structure of providing written feedback is different to that of a verbal feedback. In this module, participants will offer one another feedback on their stakeholder communications plans. Participants will be expected to use the insights they have gained in Module 2 from the Applied Science of Writing Research about effective ways to support writing processes with written feedback.

Module 3 (May 4-10, 2015): Supporting effective communications strategies within large consortia

Module 3 invites the participants to discover and reflect findings from social psychology, including a simulation that highlights unique communications issues within a large consortium including dealing with difficult situations.

Module 4 (May 11-24, 2015): Preparing for 'difficult communication issues' as a team

In Module 4 the participants will get to experience in teams of 6 (based on a self-defined case), how they can tap into team resources with the help of a method originating from systemic coaching to get prepared for complex and difficult communication situations. The teams will present their cases, reflect on their collaboration, and get feedback on their work from the trainer at the first onsite training day.

Onsite Training School Program (May 29 - June 1, 2015)

Arrival Day – Thursday, May 28, 2015

Early Registration

17.00 – 19.00

Day 1 – Friday, May 29, 2015

9.00 – 17.00

- Introduction & Agenda
- Introduction of participants

- Group presentation and feedback on the results from Group Activity/Cases from Module 4
- Input "Managing Virtual Teams"
- Input "Communication Culture"
- Short Summary & Outlook to Day 2 / Day 3

Guided City Tour & Dinner at local Micro Brewery "Schanzenbräu"

Day 2 – Saturday, May 30, 2015

9.00 – 17.00

Communication skills

On day two the participants are going to have a look at their communication and rhetoric skills in different situations like working with different hierarchies. These techniques include solution-oriented questions and solution-oriented dialogue techniques. Additionally, they improve their self-confidence in difficult communication situations and learn how to communicate personal limits and stay calm under pressure.

My effect on others - making an impact

During the workshop the participants are going to have a deeper look on how our communication styles affect others and they reflect possible options for actions. Feedback will be the useful tool to do that.

Reception (19.00 h)

Day 3 – Sunday, May 31, 2015

10.00 – 17.00

Understanding and defining conflicts

On day three the participants have a deep dive on the question how to deal with conflicts and which communication techniques in conflict situations will support them to find solutions.

Handling stressful situations

In the afternoon the participants will learn the meaning of resilience and stress. They will recognize individual resources and strengths. Additionally the participants will work on personal strategies to deal professionally with stressful situations.

Science Communication Slam – Barbecue at TH Nürnberg

Day 4 – Monday, June 1, 2015

9.00 – 14.00

- Review of "Open Questions"
- World Cafe - Perspectives and needs for further training in "Communication Skills for Research Administrators"
- Summary, agreement on further actions and closing of the Training School on Communication in Nuremberg

Lunch at the German National Museum

Call for Applications

Target group:

Research administrators involved in the administration and management of European projects; Early stage administrators and applicants from institutions in so-called COST inclusiveness countries are especially encouraged to apply.

Number of TS participants: Up to 24 trainees

TS learning phases:

Phase 1: 4 preparatory on-line modules from April 20 to May 24, 2015 and

Phase 2: The on-site training in Nuernberg from May 29 to June 1, 2015

Participation in both TS learning phases is necessary for the successful completion of the Training School.

Financial support to the trainees toward the costs of participations in the TS:

A lump sum of 900 Euros towards their travel and accommodation expenses. No additional financial support is available from COST.

The completed application form must be submitted by e-mail to Ms. Martina Pöll by **Friday, March 20, 2015**. No deadline extensions will be granted and late comers can, unfortunately, not be accepted. Applicants will be notified of acceptance or rejection by April 10, 2015.

Please do not buy tickets or make hotel reservations before you have received the official invitation through the e-COST system to attend the Training School. Only after having received this official invitation are you entitled to receive reimbursement.

Contact details

Local organizer: Rebekka Steinmann (rebekka.steinmann@th-nuernberg.de)

Transversal-Task-Force Manager Training (for questions on the COST Training School program): Anne-Kathrin Werenskiold (kwerensk@biochem.mpg.de)

Grant Holder (for questions on registration and reimbursement): Martina Pöll (Martina.Poell@tuwien.ac.at)