

**WEST AFRICAN CENTRE FOR CELL BIOLOGY OF INFECTIOUS PATHOGENS (WACCBIP)
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
21st DECEMBER, 2022 IN THE WACCBIP BOARD ROOM AT 10:00A.M.**

Present

Prof. Gordon Awandare	-	Director, WACCBIP (Chairman)
Dr. Lydia Mosi	-	Deputy Director (Administration)
Dr. Peter Quashie	-	Deputy Director (Research)
Prof. David Dodoo-Arhin	-	Appointed by the Vice-Chancellor
Prof. (Rev.) W.S.K Gbewonyo	-	Mentorship Coordinator
Mr. Francis K. Boachie	-	Chief Information Technology Officer, UGCS
Dr. Yaw Bediako	-	Head of Advancement
Dr. Lucas Amenga-Etego	-	Representative of Research Fellows
Dr. Theresa Manful Gwira	-	Head of Research Training
Dr. Anastasia R. Aikins	-	Coordinator of Graduate Admissions and Examinations
Dr. Yaw Aniweh	-	Head of Technology
Dr. Yaw Bediako	-	Head of Advancement
Mr. Christopher Abana	-	Representative of Postgraduate Student
Ms. Henrietta Ashiabor	-	Assistant Registrar/Secretary

Absent:

Prof. Anderson Mon*	-	Appointed by the Provost, College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS),
Prof. Osbourne Quaye	-	Head, Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology
Prof. Neils Ben Quashie*	-	Representative, College of Health Sciences
Prof. Kwadwo Koram	-	Member, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research
Mr. Anthony Hofe	-	Accountant, ORID

***Apologies**

In Attendance

Ms. Sika Menka	-	Grants Manager
Mr. Michael Abogro	-	Procurement Manager
Ms. Emefa Adzadu	-	Senior Accounts Officer
Ms. Marian Nanor	-	Accounts Officer
Ms. Sarah Ntim	-	Procurement Officer
Mr. Felix Kyei	-	Snr. Administrative Assistant
Mr. Eric Afful	-	Laboratory Technician
Mr. Francis Dzabeng	-	Data Manager
Mr. Andrew Nantogmah	-	Communications Manager

Mr. Stefan Danquah - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
 Mr. Srinivasan Balapangu - Laboratory Technician
 Mr. Alfred Kazaaresam - ICT Technician
 Ms. Kyerewaa A. Boateng - Public Engagement Officer

1.0 Opening

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

2.0 Confirmation and Adoption of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of 22nd September 2022, was considered for adoption on a motion by Prof. Dodoo Arhin, seconded by Dr. Anastasia Aikins.

NEW BUSINESS

3.0 Update on Laboratory Renovations - Deputy Director, Administration

The Chairman invited Dr. Mosi to give an update on the ongoing renovation in the Laboratories. She gave a background to the renovation work which was initiated in 2019 but had to be suspended.

She added that the original plan was to renovate three laboratories, but it was modified to include the COVID-19 Laboratory, Dark Room and Protein Expression Laboratory under the new contract at the cost of One hundred and forty-thousand Ghana Cedis (Ghs145,000). 30% of the contract sum was to be paid to the contractor before start of work and the remaining 70% upon completion.

Status of work:

Laboratory	Work
Virology	Epoxy floors, benchwork completed, doors replaced, and bench sockets installed.
Protein Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The floor is completed and Laboratory functional. However, the door will be fixed after equipment belonging to other laboratories have been taken out. • Benchwork outstanding (another contract will have to be awarded)
Molecular Biology and Malaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor and spraying of woodwork completed. • Extensive benchwork in the inner Laboratory. to replace existing ones which can accommodate more people ongoing. • Repartitioning of Malaria Laboratory done. • Darkroom completed and ready for use.

General	Plumbing works and electrical wiring to all the laboratories. done. Internet cabling works to benches were being done by ICT team.
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She reported that the initial completion date of 22nd December, 2022 would not be met.

Comments/Concerns

- a) It was noted that the initial plan included demolition works, repainting, removal of partition in the Malaria Laboratory, fixing of doors, lighting, and shelves. However, the ongoing renovation varied considerably.
- b) There were stains and scratches on the floor of the Virology Laboratory and the Contractor must work on these before handing over.
- c) The final coating of the floor of the Virology Laboratory needed to be resurfaced with a different colour other than white, which is prone to attract a lot of dirt.
- d) Insects were trapped in the floor work which has to be fixed.
- e) The metal grates are slightly wider than the drain area and appeared to be heavy. These, according to Dr. Mosi would be properly fitted, and angle bars used to offset the weight.
- f) It was suggested that a new Laboratory culture should be adopted for the laboratories to ensure that the floor is always clean. Also, a maintenance schedule should be in place to resurface the floors every 3-4 years.
- g) The crack on the floor in front of the Protein Expression Laboratory is due to the earth tremor that had occurred and not the movement of equipment as suggested.
- h) Graduate students were not informed of the ongoing renovation works. This was noted for future communications.
- i) All the deficiencies were noted for the attention of the contractor for correction before paying the retention.

Dr. Mosi informed members that the entire cost of renovation works was being paid from the Centre’s share of overhead funds at ORID.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

4.1 Grants Management - CMC5(1)2021-2022

ACE Impact Project

Ms. Sika Menka reported on activities carried out over the quarter.

The Centre received an amount of USD 44,563 under the project.

A team led by the Director attended a workshop at Banjul from November 14 to 18, 2022.

Feedback received from Deltas Science for Africa Foundation team was that the grant would be set up in the first quarter of 2023, and an inception meeting would be held at the end of the same quarter.

Scholarships

The deadline for applications for the DAAD scholarships was 9th December, 2022. DAAD would screen and submit the names of qualified applicants to be shortlisted by WACCBIP. The scholarships would be awarded by July, 2023 and the funds managed by the Centre.

Seventeen MPhil Part 2 students applied for the ACE Scholarships.

Five (5) scholarships were awarded under the NIHR project on Digital Diagnostics for African Health Systems (DIDA) to students in the Departments of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology, Computer Science and School of Public Health. The fellowships would be managed by WACCBIP.

Overall status

The status of the ACE Impact project stood at 73%. Meeting the target for internship was still the main challenge. The difficulty is that the Centre had a limited number of students, who were also not long-term students as required by the World Bank. Moreover, verification is done a year after completion of their service, making it difficult to reach the interns. There are twenty (20) internship reports outstanding for verification.

The Grants Manager was to generate a list of master's students who have not done their internship or submitted their reports and get them to do so.

The following were agreed on:

- a) To send a call for Innovative projects in partnership with Yemaachi
- b) To engage an Enterprise Development Coordinator
- c) Discuss with UG Business School and the Institute for Applied Science and Technology, to develop a scheme to identify students and faculty with innovative ideas. The Deputy Director of Research was tasked to facilitate the programme.
- d) Deputy Director, Administration should collaborate with the Business School to organize a Workshop in preparation towards developing a new master's programme.

4.2 Research Training - CMC5(2)2021-2022

Dr. Gwira gave an update on the status of each cohort. A scheduled viva was suspended due to the strike action by UTAG members.

The case of one student who had challenges in completing his thesis despite various interventions put in place to help him was discussed. Indications were that his studentship might have lapsed.

Progress reports were not forthcoming, especially from students who were not WACCBIP fellows. The online submission of progress reports had lagged on the part of both students and

supervisors. It was noted that all postgraduate students are required to submit a progress report on their academic work irrespective of whether they are on fellowship or not.

It was decided that:

- a) For the fellows, submission must be tied to payment of stipends while other means of enforcement are explored to get the rest to submit their reports.
- b) The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer should send reminders to all students.
- c) The online system should be relooked at to make it more functional.
- d) The Senior Accounts Officer should liaise with the Coordinator for Research Training to get students to submit their reports.

4.3 Logistics and Procurement - CMC5(3)2021-2022

Mr. Abogro reported on activities for the last quarter of 2022.

He said orders were placed and received for reagents and consumables under the Framework Contract Agreement. Reagents, consumables, and samples from and to some partner universities, were shipped to various students and Fellows of the Centre.

Overall status of implementation

- a) The PPA has granted permission to single source the procurement of 8 units of Class II B2 Biosafety cabinets and 10 units of -80°C freezers to CHAG under the FCDO project, directly from the manufacturer has been awarded to Biobase Make Co. Ltd. of China.
- b) Contract awarded to BD International for Service contract of BD LSR Fortessa X20 flow cytometer and accessories. The first preventive maintenance has been carried out on the equipment.
- c) Contract awarded to Prime Biolab for the purchase of Adobe software license package. The license has been activated for use by the various end users.
- d) Completion of the construction of stairs for the storage containers.
- e) Completion of the renovation of the COVID-19 Laboratory
- f) Advertised the Expression of interests for engagement of an accounting software development firm has been advertised. Deadline for submission and opening of tenders was on 15th December 2022.
- g) The expression of interest documents tendered by the firms are under review by the accounts team. Shortlisted firms will be contacted to submit Financial and Technical proposals on Monday, 19th December, 2022.
- h) Tenders have been submitted for the supply and installation of pedagogical tools and conversion of lecture theatres into smart classrooms at the College of Health Sciences. Deadline for submission and opening of tenders is on the 20th of December 2022.
- i) PPA has granted approval for Excelsior Global Ltd to single source the procurement of laboratory equipment to CK Tadam University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Navrongo, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WACCBIP. The award and contract documents have been submitted to the Logistics Directorate for submission to the Vice-Chancellor for approval.

The Procurement Manager recommended that:

Threshold allocation approved by the Logistics Director and Vice-Chancellor should be increased, based on the regulations on donor funds and not on that of the government of Ghana, in order to minimize delays in the procurement cycle. In his opinion, since the grants are not government funds, there should be some flexibility in increasing the threshold for the approving officers. Increasing the threshold will also enable the creation of a pool of suppliers, instead of regularly writing to PPA to grant approval to single source.

Invoices for the procurement of various goods and services submitted are printed, signed and stamped by the potential supplier rather than handwritten ones. Three invoices must be submitted as required by financial management and procurement laws. Also, Unit heads and individuals should write a memo and sign when making a request to help streamline the procurement process.

Develop a comprehensive database of potential suppliers in addition to the existing ones from January 2023.

Discussions

In response to the request to increase the various thresholds, it was noted that the decision rests with senior management of the university. The Chairman also indicated that the World Bank grants are strictly guided by the national procurement procedures and therefore would not be possible to increase the thresholds. The DELTAS grants, on the other hand, are flexible and can accommodate specific procurement guidelines in negotiation. The Grants Manager was to take note of this when engaging with them in future.

It was mentioned that the decision to source for and engage additional local suppliers under a framework agreement had earlier been taken by management. The Procurement Manager was to make the list of suppliers available at the next management committee.

The following arrangements were pending:

- Arrangements for a letter of credit to Biobase as part payment for the needed equipment. It was decided that other options should be explored to get the equipment supplied.
- Procurement of screens and projectors for the classrooms.

4.3 Accounts/Finance - CMC5(4)2021-2022

Highlights of financial status reported are as follows:

- a) Project disbursements amounted to \$1,020,304.86.
- b) Internally generated funds received were \$4,445.74.
- c) There were no reported issues of non-compliance.

- d) Reports were submitted for the following projects and queries were addressed: NIHR, PAMGEN, H3A-HI-GENE, PUBGEM, CAN and FCDO.
- e) A draft Internal Audit Report for the ACE Impact project from January to June, 2022 has been issued and responses to queries provided.
- f) Total bank balance as of 14th December was \$3,136,887.57

Reasons for the deficits were explained below by the Snr. Accounts Officer.

OSWD PhD Fellowships (RBG4)	-	Funds were yet to be received.
Royal Society grant	-	Their accounting system was being upgraded after which funds would be paid.

Decisions:

- The Chairman directed that the issue of staff salary recovery which was stopped should be revisited with the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Development.
- Students should pay facility user fees from their fellowship grants, for the use of equipment. The rates payable should be posted on the website and communicated to all students, supervisors as well as faculty.
- Students granted amnesty should show evidence of approval to use equipment by the Director.

For the ensuing quarter the Unit will continue to provide the necessary support for grants and other agencies within the University.

It will also evaluate tenders for accounting software, set up accounts on the ITS, update the risk register and close the accounts for the year.

4.5 Communication and Public Engagement - CMC5(5)2021-2022

4.5.1 Various activities were carried out under website development, social media management, publicity, visibility and brand management for the quarter. Major ones are:

- a) An upgrade of the website structure and general updates of staff profiles and publications.
- b) Compilation of abstracts of WACCBIP research publications in high-impact journals, under various themes.
- c) Completion of design for the 2023 WACCBIP calendar, which is ready for print by the UG Press.
- d) Assisted the Association of African Universities with the design of an ACE Centre's factsheet.

4.5.2 In the area of public engagement, the Unit supported the organization and coordination of NUFU festival, World AIDS Day celebration, media engagement activities on Starr FM and GTV.

There were outreach events within selected communities as part of data collection activities under WACCBIP's continued surveillance of COVID-19 exposure in Ghana and to Ghanata Senior High School, Dodowa,

In addition, the Unit provided logistical support for the SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid point-of-care test in Ghana project, led by Dr. Charles Narh.

The Unit will continue the activities indicated above and kick-start activities for the Public Engagement to Strengthen COVID-19 Genomics Research in Africa project.

Tasks to be performed under the following projects are:

- a) Public Understanding of Big Data and Genomic Medicine (PUBGEM)
 - Receive ethical clearance.
 - Training of field assistants.
- b) Public Engagement to Strengthen COVID-19 Genomics Research in Africa.
 - develop a comprehensive workplan to begin the project.
- c) Public Engagement on the Genetics of Hearing Impairment (PEGHI)
 - Completed baseline of end studies pending the procurement of a license to analyse the data.

The Communications Manager requested that information on activities/events should be made available to the Unit on time. It was also requested that high-impact publications should be highlighted on the website.

4.6 Technology - CMC5(6)2021-2022

Dr. Aniweh, Head of Technology, updated members on the statuses of some key equipment.

Construction work for container stores is completed. The Facility Manager from PDMSD inspected the work and approved payment. He, however, recommended that the stairs should be reinforced at certain joints.

The Contractor was yet to submit material estimates for shelves, lining of interior and spraying of the container.

He added that a West African Microscopy and Bio-Imaging Analysis Network (WAMBIAN) has been formed to provide financial support for running workshops in Ghana. The group will promote free facilitation among the community of imaging experts in subsequent imaging workshops. A website was being developed to facilitate communication and information sharing, which will be integrated into the WACCBIP website.

The technology team was contacted by officials of CZI to submit a grant which was being worked on to make WACCBIP Imaging Platform (WIP) a Hub for West Africa.

Planned workshops for 2023 are:

- a) In-house Flow Cytometry competence training
- b) Protein expression workshop for Postdoctoral fellows, PhD students and early
- c) Advanced Microscopy and Bioimaging Analysis Workshop in discussion with Head of imaging facility (CZI)

Hopefully all renovation and construction works, pending repairs and servicing of equipment under service contracts would have been completed by the next quarter.

4.7 Data Management - CMC5(7)2021-2022

Mr. Francis Dzabeng, Data Manager, enumerated the following programmes and activities undertaken:

- i. Co-facilitated Bioinformatics workshop
- ii. Trained participants in statistical analysis using R/Rstudio.
- iii. Data management training using REDCap
- iv. Provided routine data management and analytics support to students and researchers in the Centre
- v. Completed the installation and configuration for virtual Laboratory.

He attended the 2nd Data Science Initiative and was exposed to data harmonization and standards that conform to Findable, Accessibility, Interoperability, Reusable (FAIR) principles. He also learnt about some data science toolkits for data management, and machine learning/Artificial Intelligence.

For the next quarter, there would be another Bioinformatics Workshop to be held in March 2023. Outdated UPS and Servers would be replaced.

The Chairman also directed that the Data Management Policy should be tabled before the next management meeting for approval.

4.8 Administration - CMC5(8)2021-2022

The Administrator reported that appointments were made into various grades and projects.

Workshops held were:

- i. 2nd WABIAN Microscopy & Image Analysis Workshop from September 26 to October 7, 2022
- ii. FCDO – CHAG Sequencing and Bioinformatics Workshop from October 10-21, 2022.
- iii. The Centre hosted the Empowering Female Minds in STEM (EFEMS) bootcamp from November 17 – 19, 2022.

Planned activities for 1st quarter of 2023

- i. NIHR Global Health Research Group on Digital Diagnostics for African Health Systems Workshop from February 6 – 8, 2023
- ii. Fire Training for staff when renovation works are completed.

- iii. HCA Computational and Experimental Design Workshop from March 7 – 10, 2023.
- iv. WANIDA Symposium from March 8 – 10, 2023

Challenges

There was a water shortage due to a fault with the pumping machine and needed to be replaced. Due to the difficulty faced in getting funds, it was suggested that there should always be a reserved imprest for use in such emergencies. A proposal was to be made to ORID for consideration.

It was also proposed that hand and toilet tissues should be procured to avert frequent shortages, instead of buying from imprest account which was not enough.

A maintenance schedule for servicing and the replacement of tyres for all vehicles was to be drawn.

4.9 Mentorship - CMC5(9)2021-2022

It was reported at the last management meeting that international students were not given the needed orientation to help them settle down for studies. The mentorship coordinator therefore contacted the International Programme Office (IPO) and a schedule for orientation of international students was made available.

The Mentorship Coordinator recommended that:

- i. Fresh international students should be encouraged to register with the International Programmes Office (IPO) in order to benefit from the programmes organized for them.
- ii. The IPO should be invited as one of the facilitators to address some of the concerns of international students during WACCBIP orientation for fresh students.
- iii. WACCBIP should consider a tour of Accra in the evening in addition to the campus tour previously discussed.
- iv. An information session should be held before arrival in Ghana.

4.10 Monitoring and Evaluation - CMC5(10)2021-2022

The M&E Officer briefed members that he deployed a survey to gather data on faculty publications and what influenced those publications, but the responses were low. He therefore entreated faculty members to cooperate in getting the work done. Dr. Gwira was to assist in getting the faculty to respond. There should also be a brief description of what the survey is all about.

Links to the following were provided in the M&E Report

- i. 2022 Annual M&E Report
- ii. 2022 Course evaluation Report for PhD but the masters did not do so.
- iii. WACCBIP Centre Advancement Plan developed with Dr. Bediako.

The unit also conducted and produced evaluation reports for short courses organized within the quarter. These included the WAMBIAN Bioimaging Workshop, the Sequencing and Bioinformatics Workshop, and the CHAG Paediatric emergency and COVID-19 Workshops.

The report presented on the *Impact Evaluation Study/Brain Drain Study* at the last management meeting (how WACCBIP is mitigating brain-drain) was being updated for publication. In this regard, a thorough literature review had been conducted, questionnaires prepared and deployed to gather additional data for the study. He intends to conduct a comparative study with other non-WACCBIP trained students in Africa to examine the outcomes.

All activities have been successfully implemented.

Planned activities for the next quarter

To complete draft of the paper on brain-drain and submit for publication.

To conduct another special report for the next MC meeting.

It was suggested that the number of grants written and won by individuals be reported.

4.11 Graduate Admissions and Examinations

The Coordinator, Dr. Anastasia Aikins, reported that one hundred and one (101) applications were received for the 2022/2023 academic year, representing a shortfall in the figures recorded over the past 2 years.

Seventy-two (72) Ghanaian applicants participated in the selection examinations and 46 applicants were invited for the interview.

Number Admitted

PhDs -	Eleven (8 Ghanaians and 3 international students)
MPhil -	Twenty-seven (27)
MSc -	Four (4)

Twelve (12) proposals were submitted for the Doctoral qualifying examinations. Oral examinations will be held at the beginning of the next semester.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Shortage of Funds

The issue of shortage of funds was brought up again. It was noted that monies disbursed had not been retired, leading to the accrual of outstanding payments.

The Accounts Unit was to always ensure financial discipline. Persons who have not retired imprest received should not be given additional monies until they have done so. Also, what constitutes an emergency should also be made clear.

The Chairman stressed that where an activity is not budgeted for, and prior approval received, no disbursements should be made.

5.2 Teaching

Dr. Amenga-Etego raised the challenge of unavailability of visiting lecturers to teach some courses since 2021 and have had to take on that responsibility of completing their modules.

The Chairman advised that persons from cognate institutions should be identified and contacted to take up the responsibility before the next semester begins. The courses can also be taught remotely.

Another challenge mentioned was the difficulty in assigning grades for PhD courses which are non-examinable. It was proposed that assignments or other ways of assessment should be given and graded for such courses.

The students' representative also reported that most of their grades are not recorded on the MIS web.

5.3 New Building

The Deputy Director for Research announced plans to put up a new Centre building. This will meet the increasing demand for office and laboratory space as the Centre is growing and its activities expanding. He mentioned that the plan of an existing research building had been adopted for modification and use.

A team would be put together to design a package for fund raising. To begin with, the Centre's reserve funds would be used to start the project.

The design for the building will be presented at the next Committee meeting, and University management contacted for the plot of land to start the project.

6.0 Closing

Dr. Anastasia Aikins moved for the meeting to be adjourned seconded by Dr. Lydia Mosi, bringing the meeting to an end at 3:08 p.m.



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Professor Gordon Awandare
Chairman



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Henrietta Ashiabor (Ms.)
Secretary