ACE2 EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
Applied Connected Entrepreneurial & Engaged

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D3.2 Researcher Capacity Building Program Curriculum: ACE-SCHOLAR

*(**S**turctured **C**urriculum for **H**olistic **O**pen **L**earning in **A**pplied **R**esearch)*

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Please cite this publication as:

ACE²-EU. (2026). D3.2 *Researcher Capacity Building Program Curriculum : ACE-SCHOLAR (Final Version).*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

This document describes the guidelines and procedures for the Researcher Capacity Building Programme Curriculum of ACE²-EU **ACE-SCHOLAR: S**turctured **C**urriculum for **H**olistic **O**pen Science **L**earning in **A**pplied **R**esearch, offered to early career research students and researchers withing the ACE²-EU Alliance.

The proposed initiative aims to establish a comprehensive curriculum for a structured training programme aligned with the European Competence Framework for Researchers[1]. The programme aims to support the continuous professional development of researchers at all career stages, from early-career researchers to senior academics.

The curriculum will focus on the development of transferable and interdisciplinary competences that strengthen researchers' capacity, including research and development and innovation (RDI) initiation, EU project design and management, open science practices, dissemination and communication strategies, exploitation of research results, and structured career mentoring.

This document contains information for relevant ACE2-EU staff teams of the partner universities to design and coordinate the training and workshops. The information presented in this document was designed by a task force (with representatives from CUAS, IPS, and UFV) representing the Central Coordination & Support Office of the Applied Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support (ARIES) Incubator (WP3). In coordination with:

- WP1 – Coordination and Management;
- WP2 – ACE2-EU Applied Programmes and Pedagogy Factory (APP Factory;
- WP3 – ACE2-EU Applied Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support Incubator (ARIES - Incubator);
- WP5 – ACE2-EU e-Campus;
- WP8 – Communication, Dissemination and Impact.

The ACE-SCHOLAR programme consists of 2 key elements:

1- Massive Open Online Courses (Foundation MOOC and Advanced MOOC);
2- In-person Workshop

Each partner university will contribute to the development of online training and host one in-person workshop with a minimum 36 participants which will include 32 incoming mobilities.

[1] **European Commission** (14th Feb 2025) *ResearchComp: European Competence Framework for Researchers*. Available at: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/north-america/news/researchcomp-european-competence-framework-researchers

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The online course is designed for early career researchers, mainly student researchers in the ACE²-EU Alliance.

1.2. Vision

To **foster a structured, competence-based researcher development program** for researchers in the ACE²-EU Alliance to ensure they are:

- Equipped with transferrable and interdisciplinary skills relevant to the European Competency Framework for Researchers;
- Capable of initiating and managing high-quality research and innovation projects;
- Equipped with an understanding of how to advance open science practices, and the translation of knowledge into sustainable societal and economic value.

1.3. Mission

Our mission is to design and implement a structured, modular training curriculum aligned with the European Competence Framework for Researchers that:

- Strengthens transferable and interdisciplinary competences across all career stages;
- Enhances capacity for RDI initiation, EU project development and management;
- Promotes open science, responsible research practices, and effective dissemination;
- Supports the exploitation and valorisation of research outcomes;
- Provides structured career mentoring and professional growth pathways;

Through a flexible and inclusive educational approach, the training programme will foster excellence, collaboration, and long-term career sustainability within the European research and innovation ecosystem.

1.4. Objectives

The Researcher Capacity Building Program Curriculum (ACE-SCHOLAR) aims to:

- Support the professional development of ACE²-EU researchers at all stages;

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- Align its online training components with the European Competency Framework for Researchers;
- Provide a structured training program focusing on transferrable and interdisciplinary skills;

1.5. Expected Impact

1.5.1. Impact for Early Career Student Researchers

The ACE-SCHOLAR program is designed to empower student researchers by providing foundational skills, mentorship, and networking opportunities to accelerate their careers in areas such as:

- **Skill Development:** Gain transferable, interdisciplinary competencies (e.g., project management, open science, EU funding landscape) aligned with the European Competence Framework for Researchers, boosting confidence and employability.
- **Career Launchpad:** Access ECTS credits and certificates to strengthen CVs and applications for PhD programs, postdoc positions, or industry roles.
- **Mentorship and Networking:** Connect with senior researchers, industry experts, and policymakers through workshops and virtual coffee sessions, fostering collaborations and career guidance.
- **Funding Readiness:** Receive hands-on training through the ARIES Incubator Knowledge Creation Team Workshops in crafting competitive proposals for Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, and national grants, increasing chances of securing early-career involvement in interdisciplinary projects.
- **Open Science Advocacy:** Learn to publish, share, and disseminate research ethically and effectively, enhancing visibility and impact.

1.5.2. Impact for Mid-Career Researchers

The impact for Mid-Career Researchers transitioning to independence (e.g., postdocs, junior faculty), the program offers:

- **Leadership Growth:** Develop project leadership and team management skills, preparing for principal investigator (PI) roles, lab directorships, or research group leadership;
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Engage in cross-sector projects (e.g., with industry or NGOs) to expand research horizons and broaden funding opportunities;
- **Career Diversification:** Explore non-academic career paths (e.g., science communication, policy, entrepreneurship) through tailored workshops and alumni networking.

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1.5.3. Impact for Senior Researchers

The impact for Senior Researchers will leverage the program to mentor the next generation while advancing their own leadership and impact:

- **Mentorship Roles:** Serve as workshop facilitators, MOOC instructors, or project advisors, strengthening their academic legacy, institutional influence and visibility within the ACE²-EU Alliance;
- **Strategic Networking:** Expand collaborative networks with peers across Europe, unlocking large-scale funding opportunities (e.g., Horizon Europe consortia);
- **Policy and Advocacy:** Contribute to EU research policy discussions and open science initiatives, shaping the future of European R&D;
- **Innovation Leadership:** Lead interdisciplinary projects that address grand challenges (e.g., digital sovereignty, climate resilience), positioning their institutions as hubs of excellence.

1.5.4. Impact for ACE²-EU Institutions

The impact for ACE²-EU Institutions and research institutions will benefit in the following areas:

- **Talent Retention and Development:** A structured pipeline for nurturing student researchers into independent researchers and future leaders, reducing brain drain;
- **Enhanced Reputation:** Recognition as centers of research excellence, attracting top talent, funding, and partnerships;
- **Collaborative Culture:** Strengthened interdisciplinary and cross-border collaborations, fostering innovative, high-impact research.

2. ACE-SCHOLAR Curriculum

The ACE-SCHOLAR program consists of two different types of offers: two progressive **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation; ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced** and **in-person workshops**.

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Each partner university within the ACE²-EU Alliance will contribute to one module of each.



Figure 1: ACE-SCHOLAR Progressive Curriculum

MOOCs and host one in-person workshop, with a minimum target of 36 participants per workshop including 32 or more incoming mobilities per workshop

The MOOCs are designed primarily for early-career researchers (particularly student researchers) in the Alliance but can be opened to a broader audience if required. The workshops creates an interdisciplinary space for hands-on work in scientific dissemination such as proposal writing and publications generarion methodologies targeted towards a variety of career stages.

2.1. ACE-SCHOLAR MOOCs

The ACE-SCHOLAR MOOCs (Foundational and Advanced) curriculums includes 10 modules organized into progressive offering a structured learning approach that builds from basics to advanced concepts. These modules cover 7 core topics from the EU Researcher Competency Framework, complemented by 3 additional topics chosen by the curriculum team. The focus is on open science, collaboration, and real-world research skills. and research practices.

The ACE-SCHOLAR Foundational modules are designed to establish a strong foundational knowledge base for early-stage researchers, aligning with the Foundation and Intermediate levels of the EU Researcher Competency Framework.

The ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced modules build upon the foundational knowledge from the Foundation course, deepening understanding across all 10 topics and aligning with the Advanced and Expert levels of the EU Researcher Competency Framework. Both MOOCs are designed primarily for research students but can also be opened to anyone in academia across the alliance in the ACE²-EU Alliance.

The content of the both courses is based on the core 10 topics summarized in Table 1 below.

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Table 1: ACE-SCHOLAR MOOCs learning modules and core focus areas

Module	Focus Areas	Learning Outcomes	Lead University
1. Managing Research	Project management, resource allocation, and open access publication strategies.	Plan and execute research projects with efficiency and transparency.	Goce Delcev University - STIP, North Macedonia
2. Making an Impact	Dissemination strategies, science-policy-society engagement, and knowledge transfer.	Design impactful dissemination plans for diverse audiences.	Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, Portugal
3. Self Management	Stress management, entrepreneurial mindset, self-organisation, and ADHD-inclusive strategies.	Develop personalised strategies for productivity and well-being in research.	Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt, Germany
4. Cognitive Abilities	Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic planning.	Apply cognitive skills to tackle complex research challenges.	Lietuvos inžinerijos kolegija, Lithuania
5. Working with Others	Teamwork, conflict resolution, diversity/inclusion, mentorship, and professional networking.	Build inclusive, collaborative teams and mentor-mentee relationships.	University Francisco de Vitoria UFV, Spain
6. Managing Research Tools	Research data management, citizen science, open-source software, and AI tools.	Utilise cutting-edge tools for ethical and efficient research.	Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia
7. Doing Research	Disciplinary expertise, scientific writing, and leveraging AI for research.	Conduct rigorous, innovative research with disciplinary and technological integration.	University Constantin Brâncusi Târgu - Roménia
8. Research Ethics	Ethical principles, data protection, AI challenges, and equity/inclusion in research.	Navigate ethical dilemmas and promote equity in research practices.	Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Austria
9. Research Funding	Funding sources, resource management, consortium-building, and strategic planning.	Secure and manage research funding through strong proposals and consortia.	Medical University of Gdansk, Poland
10. EU Funding Landscape	EU funding calls, proposal drafting, and alignment with societal challenges.	Craft competitive, impact-driven funding proposals.	External expert to be identified

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2.1.1. Module Descriptions

Within the framework of the ACE²-EU, the following tables present the structure of the MOOC modules, organised into two levels: Foundation and Advanced.

For each level, the session overview, learning objectives, and focus areas are outlined, providing a clear view of the progression of competencies and the differentiation in complexity between levels.

1. Managing Research

Table 2: Managing Research Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session equips participants with the skills to plan, execute, and monitor research projects with efficiency and transparency. It covers project management techniques, resource allocation, and open access publication strategies to ensure research outputs are accessible, reproducible, and impactful.	**Session Overview:** This session deepens participants' ability to lead complex research projects, focusing on advanced project management, risk mitigation, and strategic resource optimization. Participants will explore consortium leadership, cross-disciplinary coordination, and high-impact publication strategies.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Plan and execute research projects using project management tools (e.g., Gantt charts, Agile methodologies); • Allocate resources (human, financial, and technical) effectively to meet project goals; • Implement open access publication strategies to maximize the reach and impact of research outputs; • Monitor progress and adjust strategies to ensure timely and high-quality deliverables.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Design and manage multiple projects with synergies and conflict resolution; • Lead consortiums in major grant applications and international collaborations; • Develop advanced strategies for resource mobilization and budget optimization; • Create project management frameworks for prestigious research initiatives; • Make strategic decisions in complex, high-stakes research environments. •
Focus Areas: • Project management; • Resource allocation; • Open access publication strategies.	**Focus Areas:** • Advanced project management; • Consortium leadership; • Strategic resource optimization; • High-impact publication strategies.

2. Making an Impact

Table 3: Makin Impact Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session focuses on disseminating research findings and engaging with diverse audiences, including policymakers, industry, and the public. Participants will learn how to design impactful dissemination plans and align their research with societal, educational, and policy priorities.	**Session Overview:** This session empowers participants to amplify the societal and policy impact of their research. It covers strategic communication, science-policy engagement, and knowledge transfer frameworks to ensure research influences decision-making and public discourse.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Develop dissemination strategies tailored to different audiences (academic, industry, public); • Engage with policymakers and stakeholders to increase the societal impact of research; • Create knowledge transfer plans to ensure research findings are accessible and actionable; • Align research outputs with societal challenges and policy priorities.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Lead major public engagement projects to shape perceptions of research; • Develop science-for-policy outputs cited or used by policymakers; • Build networks to inform policy-making with evidence-based research; • Design strategic communication campaigns for broad public and stakeholder engagement; • Influence political priorities by presenting compelling research evidence.
Focus Areas: • Dissemination strategies; • Science-policy-society engagement; • Knowledge transfer.	**Focus Areas:** • Strategic communication; • Science-policy engagement; • Knowledge transfer frameworks; • Public engagement campaigns.

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3. *Self-Management*

Table 4: Self-Management Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session helps participants develop personal and professional strategies to boost productivity, manage stress, and maintain work-life balance. It includes ADHD-inclusive strategies, time management techniques, and entrepreneurial mindset development to support long-term career sustainability.	**Session Overview:** This session focuses on advanced self-management techniques, including leadership in personal development, coaching others, and creating sustainable work environments. Participants will learn to mentor peers, design career pathways, and promote well-being at institutional levels.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Develop personalized strategies for productivity and well-being in research; • Manage time and priorities effectively to meet deadlines and reduce stress; • Adopt an entrepreneurial mindset to identify and pursue opportunities; • Plan self-organization to maintain a sustainable work-life balance; • Implement ADHD-inclusive strategies to enhance focus and efficiency.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Coach others in academic career development and lifelong learning; • Use networks to further the careers of peers and colleagues; • Design policies for work-life balance and well-being in organizations; • Pave the way for successors in research priority areas; • Serve as a reference point for professional development and continuous learning.
Focus Areas: • Stress management; • Entrepreneurial mindset; • Self-organization; • ADHD-inclusive strategies.	**Focus Areas:** • Leadership in personal development; • Coaching and mentoring; • Sustainable work environments; • Institutional well-being policies.

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4. *Cognitive Abilities*

Table 5: Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session strengthens critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic planning skills. Participants will engage in interactive exercises to enhance their ability to analyze complex problems, think creatively, and develop strategic research plans.	**Session Overview:** This session advances participants' cognitive abilities to tackle complex, interdisciplinary challenges. It focuses on systemic thinking, innovative problem-solving, and strategic visioning to drive research excellence and policy influence.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Apply critical thinking to evaluate research problems and solutions; • Use analytical thinking to assess data, trends, and patterns; • Develop strategic plans to achieve long-term research goals; • Solve complex problems using creative and innovative approaches; • Connect ideas across disciplines to foster interdisciplinary insights.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Connect unrelated ideas to elaborate new theories and insights; • Develop visionary research projects that push the frontiers of knowledge; • Build research environments where critical thinking is central; • Stimulate critical thinking at discipline and policy levels; • Challenge traditional viewpoints to drive innovation.
Focus Areas: • Creativity; • Critical thinking; • Problem-solving; • Strategic planning.	**Focus Areas:** • Systemic thinking; • Innovative problem-solving; • Strategic visioning; • Interdisciplinary insights.

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5. Working with Others

Table 6: Working with Others Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session focuses on collaboration, teamwork, and inclusive practices in research. Participants will learn how to build and lead teams, resolve conflicts, and promote diversity and inclusion to create a productive and supportive research environment.	**Session Overview:** This session elevates participants' ability to lead and inspire teams in complex, interdisciplinary settings. It covers advanced team dynamics, strategic networking, and inclusive leadership to foster high-performing research collaborations.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Interact professionally with colleagues, stakeholders, and external partners; • Develop networks and partnerships to enhance research collaboration; • Work effectively in teams, leveraging diverse strengths and perspectives; • Ensure well-being at work by fostering a supportive and inclusive environment; • Build mentor-mentee relationships to support personal and professional growth.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Lead large international consortia with academic and non-academic partners; • Build and sustain collaboration partnerships within and outside their institutions; • Enhance the transformative capacity of their organization by recruiting, training, and building teams; • Manage team dynamics and resolve conflicts to optimize collaboration; • Modulate leadership styles to best serve the interests of the team and project goals.
Focus Areas: • Teamwork; • Conflict resolution; • Diversity and inclusion; • Mentorship; • Professional networking.	**Focus Areas:** • Advanced team leadership; • Strategic networking; • Inclusive leadership; • Cross-sector collaboration; • Team dynamics and conflict management.

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6. Managing Research Tools

Table 7: Manging Research Tools Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session introduces participants to cutting-edge tools and technologies for research, including data management, citizen science, open-source software, and AI. Participants will learn how to use these tools ethically and efficiently to enhance their research processes.	**Session Overview:** This session focuses on advanced applications of research tools, including FAIR data principles, open-source project leadership, and AI-driven research innovation. Participants will explore how to design data management plans, lead open-source initiatives, and integrate AI responsibly into research workflows.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Manage research data using FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable); • Promote citizen science by engaging non-academic stakeholders in research; • Operate open-source software and understand licensing and coding practices; • Leverage AI tools for data analysis, literature reviews, and automation; • Protect intellectual property rights and navigate copyright and licensing issues.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Develop novel data management methods to improve research comprehensibility; • Propose new processes for managing data, information, and digital content in structured environments; • Lead large-scale open-source projects and advocate for FAIR principles; • Design AI solutions for complex research challenges while ensuring ethical and legal compliance; • Advise institutions on best practices for research tools and digital infrastructure.
Focus Areas: • Research data management; • Citizen science; • Open-source software; • AI tools.	**Focus Areas:** • Advanced data management; • Open-source project leadership; • AI integration in research; • Ethical and legal compliance for research tools.

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7. Doing Research

Table 8: Doing Research Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session covers the fundamentals of conducting rigorous, ethical, and interdisciplinary research. Participants will learn how to design studies, collect and analyze data, and write research documents that meet high academic standards. **Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Demonstrate disciplinary expertise in their research area; • Perform scientific research using appropriate methods and techniques; • Conduct interdisciplinary research to address complex problems; • Write research documents (e.g., papers, reports) clearly and effectively; • Leverage AI for research to enhance data analysis and literature reviews. **Focus Areas:** • Disciplinary expertise; • Scientific writing; • Leveraging AI for research.	**Session Overview:** This session advances participants' ability to lead interdisciplinary research and innovate methodologies. It focuses on developing new research tools, coordinating cross-disciplinary networks, and setting research agendas to address complex societal challenges. **Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Introduce new research tools and methods in their field; • Coordinate interdisciplinary research networks at national and international levels; • Advise less experienced colleagues on research approaches and methodologies; • Set the research agenda in their research area; • Design guidelines and educational materials for performing high-quality research. **Focus Areas:** • Interdisciplinary research leadership; • Research methodology innovation; • Research agenda setting; • Mentoring in research practices.

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8. Research Ethics

Table 9: Research Ethics Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session explores the ethical principles and challenges in research, including data protection, AI ethics, equity, and inclusion. Participants will learn how to navigate ethical dilemmas and ensure their research adheres to legal and societal standards.	**Session Overview:** This session delves into advanced ethical leadership, focusing on developing ethical guidelines, advising policymakers, and promoting responsible research practices at institutional and policy levels. Participants will engage in discussions on emerging ethical challenges in AI, data use, and research integrity.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Understand ethical principles and their application in research; • Address challenges related to data protection, AI bias, and research integrity; • Promote equity and inclusion in research practices; • Apply ethical guidelines to avoid misconduct (e.g., fabrication, falsification, plagiarism); • Advise peers on ethical issues and best practices.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Develop ethical guidelines and systems to ensure responsible research conduct; • Advise policymakers on ethical policies and procedures in research; • Engage in ethical committees and shape institutional ethical frameworks; • Promote public understanding of ethical issues in research; • Lead by example in upholding the highest standards of research integrity.
Focus Areas: • Ethical principles; • Data protection; • AI challenges; • Equity and inclusion in research.	**Focus Areas:** • Ethical guideline development; • Policy advising on research ethics; • Institutional ethical frameworks; • Public engagement on research ethics.

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9. Research Funding

Table 10: Research Funding Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session provides practical training on how to secure and manage research funding. Participants will learn how to identify funding sources, write competitive proposals, and build strong consortia to support their research projects.	**Session Overview:** This session focuses on strategic funding leadership, including leading large-scale grant applications, influencing funding policies, and managing international consortia. Participants will develop skills to navigate complex funding landscapes and align research with societal and policy priorities.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Identify relevant funding sources (EU, national, private); • Write compelling funding proposals aligned with call requirements; • Build and manage consortia for collaborative projects; • Develop budget and resource plans for research initiatives; • Evaluate funding success and adapt strategies for future applications.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Lead large and prestigious funding applications of international and interdisciplinary character; • Influence funding policies within their research area; • Play a crucial role in the funding of their own institution; • Design project management and reporting structures for high-stakes research projects; • Take strategic decisions in complex funding environments.
Focus Areas: • Funding sources; • Resource management; • Consortium-building; • Strategic planning.	**Focus Areas:** • Large-scale funding leadership; • Funding policy influence; • International consortium management; • Strategic decision-making in funding.

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10. EU Funding Landscape

Table 11: EU Funding Landscape Modules in Foundation and Advanced MOOCs Content Overview, Learning Objectives and Focus Areas of Study

ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation	ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced
Session Overview: This session introduces participants to cutting-edge tools and technologies for research, including data management, citizen science, open-source software, and AI. Participants will learn how to use these tools ethically and efficiently to enhance their research processes.	**Session Overview:** This session empowers participants to strategically engage with the EU funding landscape, focusing on shaping funding agendas, leading high-impact consortia, and advising on EU research policies. Participants will explore how to influence EU funding priorities and design innovative projects that address societal challenges.
Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Understand the EU funding landscape and key programs (e.g., Horizon Europe); • Align research proposals with EU priorities and societal challenges; • Draft competitive proposals for EU funding calls; • Leverage EU networks to build collaborations and consortia; • Stay updated on emerging EU funding opportunities and policies.	**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to: • Influence political priorities by presenting compelling evidence of research challenges; • Act as a knowledge broker in urgent or crisis situations; • Work directly with high-level policymakers to shape EU research agendas; • Lead international consortia with academic and non-academic partners; • Design innovative projects that align with EU's strategic goals and societal needs.
Focus Areas: • EU funding calls; • Proposal drafting; • Alignment with societal challenges.	**Focus Areas:** • EU funding policy influence; • High-level policymaker engagement; • International consortium leadership; • Strategic project design for EU priorities.

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2.2. ACE-SCHOLAR Workshop Series

The ACE-SCHOLAR onsite workshop series is the second core component of the program, designed to complement the MOOCs by providing hands-on, collaborative, and interdisciplinary learning experiences. Executed from June 2026 to October 2028, these workshops are hosted by each alliance partner and scheduled at intervals throughout the project duration. The ACE-SCHOLAR workshops are primarily designed for Master's and PhD students, as well as early-career researchers and follow a structured format, designed to help participants develop practical skills in two critical areas of research practice:

1. **Funding Proposal Writing:**

   Target group: PhD researchers and above

   Participants will learn how to craft compelling and competitive funding proposals, focusing on clarity, alignment with funding priorities, and effective communication of research impact. This includes understanding call requirements, structuring proposals, and avoiding common pitfalls to increase success rates.

2. **Scientific Writing:**

   Target group: for student researchers at all stages

   This component emphasizes writing clear, concise, and impactful scientific manuscripts and reports. Participants will explore best practices for structuring papers, improving readability, and effectively communicating research findings to both academic and broader audiences.

During this workshop participants will engage in:

- **Practical teamwork** and **hands-on strategies** to address real-world research challenges, working in **interdisciplinary groups**.
- **Networking and mentorship opportunities**, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange within the **ACE^2-EU community**.

This structure ensures active engagement, skill application, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, reinforcing the practical and community-driven goals of the ACE-SCHOLAR program.

Workshop Structure:

- **Duration:** Each workshop spans 4 days, allowing for in-depth exploration and practical application of key concepts.

- **Format:**
  - **Teaching Sessions:** Expert-led lectures and case studies to ground participants in theoretical and applied knowledge.
  - **Workshop Activities:** Group work, peer reviews, and role-playing exercises to encourage active learning and skill application.

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- **Knowledge-Sharing Opportunities:** Tailored sessions to accommodate participants at all academic stages, from early-career to senior researchers.

Participants in the workshop are required to submit their Self-Evaluation Results from the EU Research Competence Self-Assessment prior to the event.

The workshop is structured over four days, each with a specific focus and goal:

- **Day 1 (Ideation):** Participants will engage in challenge discussions, solution ideation, teaching sessions, and group work to explore innovative approaches to research problems.
- **Day 2 (Knowledge Sharing & Teamwork):** This day is dedicated to preparation and collaboration. Participants will read example papers, prepare presentations, and be assigned mentors (from the host institution or other partner organizations).
- **Day 3 (Scientific Presentations):** Participants will learn about different types of presentations for researchers, including their purpose and best practices for delivery.
- **Day 4 (Presentation & Peer Feedback):** Participants will present their work and receive peer feedback. They will also revise their EU Research Competence Self-Assessment based on insights gained during the workshop.

This structure ensures a collaborative, engaging, and outcome-focused learning experience, aligning with the ACE-SCHOLAR program's goals of fostering interdisciplinary research excellence.

3. Development and Execution Plan

This section provides a clear, structured roadmap for the design, development, and delivery of the ACE-SCHOLAR MOOCs and the workshop series, ensuring timely execution, adaptability, and quality. Past experiences have shown that undefined timelines and roles can lead to delays and miscommunication. To mitigate this, we've adopted an Agile Execution Method, dividing the process into two distinct phases from 2026 to 2028.

Key Features of the Agile Approach:

- **Iterative Development:** Annual cycles (2026–2028) allow for continuous improvement based on participant feedback and emerging needs.
- **Participant-Centered:** Incorporates surveys, retrospective reviews, and cross-functional teams (MOOC developers, workshop facilitators, researchers) to refine content and delivery.
- **Flexible and Adaptive:** Adjusts content, timelines, and resources to align with open science principles and interdisciplinary collaboration.

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The ACE-SCHOLAR MOOCs restructured to execute in two progressive phases, ensuring accessibility, flexibility, and rigorous learning outcomes, while the workshops are executed parallel to the execution of Foundation and Advanced Courses spread throughout the project duration of 2026 till 2028.

Table 12: ACE-SCHOLAR Curriculum Development Plan, Key Activities and Their Outcomes

Element	Year	Key Activities	Outcomes
1: Foundation	2026	- Launch the ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation MOOC as an online intensive training program during the summer semester. The program timeline is in table 3 below; - Develop and assess learning modules by instructors nominated by each partner institution; - Peer-review by the ACE-SCHOLAR task force and refining the content into a MOOC format with contact hours (refined lesson videos) and independent study content for the next cycle available on the ACE²-EU E-Campus (WP5) Learning Management System (Moodle); - Provide on-demand access to recorded training sessions from Phase 1, available every summer semester; - Validation: The MOOC Coordinator verifies completion of all modules.	- 10 live online sessions delivered. - Modules available for free registration and access to all ACE²-EU alliance members. - Participants will earn 2 ECTS credits upon completing assessments by specified deadlines.
2: Advanced	2027-2028	- Develop the ACE-SCHOLAR Advanced MOOC, building on Phase 1 resources and instructor expertise. - Update the Foundational MOOC based on participant feedback and evolving needs. - Introduce self-study modules and assessments for flexible, self-paced learning.	- Advanced MOOC available on the Moodle platform for on-demand training. - Enhanced modules with improved content and delivery.
3: Workshops	2026-2028	- Host in-person workshops (3-4 days) at each partner university, targeting a minimum of 36 participants per workshop, including 32 incoming mobilities. - Executed parallel to the - Focus on two core open science outputs: - Funding Proposal Writing: Crafting competitive proposals aligned with EU and national funding priorities. - Scientific Writing: Improving clarity, structure, and impact of manuscripts and reports. - Provide interdisciplinary challenges and networking opportunities reflecting host institution priorities. - Include practical teamwork, peer reviews, and role-playing exercises to encourage active learning. - Collect participant feedback, attendance records, and output documentation (e.g., project ideas, colloquium submissions). - Submit post-workshop reports (attendance, outputs, feedback) to the Central Coordination Office within 10 working days.	- 36+ participants per workshop, including cross-border mobilities. - Hands-on skills in funding proposals and scientific writing. - Interdisciplinary collaborations and networking opportunities. - Post-workshop outputs (e.g., project proposals, colloquium submissions). - 1 ECTS credits awarded for workshop participation.

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Table 13: Phase 1 ACE-SCHOLAR Foundation Course Intensive Online Training Schedule 2026

Module	Date & Time	Instructor(s)
1. Making an Impact	24th April 2026	Maria Barbas (IPS, Portugal)
2. Research Ethics	27th April 2026	Daniela Krainer; Christine Dulling-Pichler (CUAS, Austria)
3. Managing Research	30th April 2026	Biljana Balabanova (UGD, North Macedonia)
4. Doing Research	30th April 2026	Catalin Chimerel (UCB, Romania)
5. Working with Others	TBD	Vicente Ruiz (UFV, Spain)
6. Self-Management	12th May 2026	Ganesh Ramakrishna Babu Jai (THI, Germany)
7. Managing Research Tools	15th May 2026	Ance Kristāla; Sabīne Ozola (LAC, Latvia)
8. Research Funding	20th May 2026	Mateusz Kirjak (MUG, Poland)
9. Cognitive Abilities	29th June 2026	Giedrė Adomavičienė (LIK, Lithuania)
10. EU Funding Landscape	TBD	External expert to be identified

3.2. Governance and Management

The ARIES Incubator's Central Coordination & Support Office (WP3) serves as the primary governance and management hub for the ACE-SCHOLAR program, ensuring consistency, quality, and alignment with the alliance's strategic goals.

This office is responsible for:

3.2.1. MOOC Governance and Maintenance

The MOOC Coordinator (based at ARIES the Central Coordination Office) oversees the development, execution, and continuous improvement of the MOOC curriculum, including:

- **Module content** (alignment with EU Competency Framework, accessibility, and content relevance).
- **Technical maintenance** of the Moodle platform, including updates, troubleshooting, and participant support.
- **Progress tracking** (enrollment, completion rates, and participant feedback).
- **Annual reporting** to the Management Board and Strategy Steering Group of ACE²-EU documenting outcomes, challenges, and improvements.

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3.2.2. Workshop Implementation and Performance

The Head of the ARIES Incubator (in collaboration with the MOOC Coordinator) ensures that each host institution adheres to the quality standards outlined in this document, including:

- **Pre-event coordination:** Verification of workshop agendas, instructor qualifications, and participant prerequisites.
- **During-event support:** Monitoring of workshop delivery, participant engagement, and adherence to ACE^2-EU's inclusive and ethical guidelines.
- **Post-event evaluation:** Collection of participant feedback, attendance records, and output documentation (e.g., project ideas, colloquium submissions).

3.2.3. Institutional Compliance and Reporting

- All pre-event, during-event, and post-event records (e.g., registration lists, assessment results, certificates) must follow the ACE^2-EU Central Reporting Guidelines.
- The Central Coordination Office compiles and submits aggregated data to WP8 (Communication & Dissemination) for alliance-wide reporting and to the European Commission for compliance and impact assessment.

3.2.4. Institutional Roles and Responsibilities

Each host institution within the ACE^2-EU is responsible for the design, delivery, and monitoring of its assigned modules and workshops under the ACE-SCHOLAR programme.

This includes the development of learning content, definition of learning outcomes, and implementation of teaching and assessment activities. These responsibilities are carried out in close coordination with the ARIES Incubator Central Coordination Office, which ensures overall alignment, quality assurance, and consistency across the programme.

The detailed distribution of roles and responsibilities between host institutions and the Central Coordination Office is presented in Table 14 below.

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Table 14: Governance and quality assurance structure for each Instituion, their role, responsibilities and the Accountability

Role	Responsibilities	Accountability
Host Institution Module Lead	- Develop and deliver each MOOC modules aligned with the EU Researcher Competency Framework and the thematic focus of their institution.	- Head of ARIES Incubator and MOOCs Coordinator review module content for quality and alignment.
	- Ensure instructor availability for live sessions, recordings, and participant Q&A.	- Central Coordination Office tracks module completion rates and participant feedback.
	- Update module content annually based on participant feedback and evolving research trends.	-
Host Institution Workshop Lead	- Plan and execute one in-person workshop (4 days), targeting a minimum of 36 participants (including 32 incoming mobilities).	- Head of ARIES Incubator approves workshop agendas and logistics.
	- Define workshop objectives, including scientific outcomes (e.g., joint project proposals, policy briefs) and participant deliverables (e.g., presentations, colloquium submissions).	- Central Coordination Office monitors workshop evaluations and follow-up collaborations.
	- Provide interdisciplinary challenges and networking opportunities, reflecting the host institution's research priorities.	-
	- Submit post-workshop reports (attendance, outputs, and participant feedback) to the Central Coordination Office within 10 working days.	-
Local Institutional Representative of WP3	- Act as the primary liaison between the host institution and the Central Coordination Office.	- Head of ARIES Incubator ensures compliance with alliance guidelines.
	- Support participant recruitment, including mobility logistics (in coordination with WP6).	-
	- Facilitate pre-workshop preparations (e.g., module completion verification, travel arrangements).	-
	- Collect and submit participant data (e.g., ECTS credit requests, certificate issuance) to the Central Coordination Office.	-

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4. Recognition and Awards

The ACE-SCHOLAR program offers a flexible system, allowing participants to earn ECTS credits through a combination of MOOC modules and capacity building workshops. This system recognizes progressive learning achievements and encourages continuous engagement with the program.

4.1. Types of Recognition

1. **ACE-SCHOLAR Digital Skill Badges:**
   - Awarded for completing each MOOC module, recognizing comprehensive mastery of the curriculum.
   - Digitally Issued through MOODLE.

2. **Learning Opportunity ECTS Recognition:**
   - Up to 5 ECTS can be collected by completing the full program
   - ECTS are awarded as a form of a certificate, at the completion of each MOOC and workshop participation.
   - MOOC Completion certificates are issued by ACE²-EU

3. **Course Completion Certificate:**
   - A certificate is issued to confirm the completion of both Foundation and Advanced Courses including a workshop, highlighting commitment to open science and interdisciplinary research.
   - Certificate can be shared on professional platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, academic portfolios).
   - The certificates are created by the ACE²-EU WP8 (Communication and Dissemination) and signed by the rectors of each host institute.

4.2. ECTS Credits Award Structure

Table 15: ACE-SCHOLAR Skill badges, certification and credits awarding details

Achievement	ECTS Credits Awarded	Recognition
Completion of each MOOC Module	-	ACE-SCHOLAR Digital Skill Badges
Completion of a MOOC (Foundation and Advanced)	2 ECTS	Learning Opportunity ECTS Recognition Certificate
Participation in 1 workshop	1 ECTS	Learning Opportunity ECTS Recognition Certificate
All MOOC Stages (Foundation + Advanced) completed	4 ECTS	-
Full Program Completion (Foundation MOOC + Advanced MOOC + 1 Workshop)	5 ECTS	Course Completion Certificate

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5. Sustainability and Future Uptake

The ACE-SCHOLAR program is designed not just as a short-term initiative but as a sustainable ecosystem for researcher development within the ACE^2-EU Alliance and beyond. To ensure its long-term viability and impact, the following strategies are proposed to be implemented:

1. Institutional Integration:

- **Curriculum Adoption:** It is proposed partner universities will embed ACE-SCHOLAR modules into their local training programs, ensuring continuity beyond the initial project timeline.
- **Credit Recognition:** Partners will seek to implement ECTS credit transferability across EU universities, leveraging the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to formalize recognition.

2. Financial Sustainability:

- **Co-Funding Models:** Pursue blended financing from EU programs (e.g., Horizon Europe, Digital Europe), national research councils, and industry partnerships to diversify funding sources to enhance and increase the number of workshops and mobilities.

3. Partnership Expansion:

- **New Alliances:** Extend the program to other European University Alliances (e.g., EUT+, UNICA) through memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to broaden reach and impact.
- **Industry Collaboration:** Partner with SMEs, startups, and corporates to co-develop applied research projects, internships, and funding opportunities.

4. Digital Infrastructure:

- **Open-Access Repository:** Host MOOC materials, workshop toolkits, and best practices on a dedicated ACE^2-EU platform for global reuse and adaptation.
- **Scalable Platforms:** Use interoperable systems (e.g., Moodle, OpenEdX) to support mass participation, automated credentialing, and long-term accessibility.
- **Predictive Curriculum Development:** Use data analytics and participant feedback to identify emerging research trends (e.g., AI ethics, green technologies) and adapt the curriculum accordingly.

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6. Conclusion

The ACE-SCHOLAR program represents a strategic investment in the future of the competencies of European researchers. By offering a structured, progressive curriculum, spanning MOOCs, interactive workshops, and collaborative practice, it equips researchers at all career stages with the research and open science competencies demanded by today's academic landscape, while providing formal recognition through ECTS credits aligned with the European Researcher Framework.

Beyond skills development, ACE-SCHOLAR cultivates a community of practice grounded in collaboration, integrity, and innovation. Its participant, centered design ensures continuous responsiveness to evolving research realities, positioning graduates not merely as skilled professionals, but as active contributors to a more open, transparent, and impactful scientific ecosystem.

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