



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Following on from the highly successful Research Skills Workshops held in 2008 and 2010, the Grassland Society of Southern Africa together with the Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute are proud to host the

RESEARCH SKILLS WORKSHOP 2012

13 to 14 March 2012

Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute
Middelburg, Eastern Cape

During the two-day event, leading scientists, lecturers, researchers, and academics will give presentations on key aspects of research. A wide range of topics will be covered, from the philosophy of research, through key research skills, such as writing papers, dealing with data, community-involvement, to tips on how to make successful platform and poster presentations.

Who should attend?

The workshop will be of value to anyone involved directly or indirectly in biological, ecological, and agricultural research, including scientists, researchers, managers, technicians, teachers, mentors, and students.

Venue

The workshop will be held at the Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute on the outskirts of Middelburg in the Eastern Cape (31°28'18"S 25°01'39"E). Various types of accommodation are available in Middelburg and the surrounding district. A list is available on the website.

Rates

Type	Rate
Early bird (payment RECEIVED before 10 February 2012)	R 1 650
Normal (after 10 February 2012)	R 1 800
Airport and Grootfontein shuttle service (leaving Port Elizabeth on 12 March at 5:00pm, returning to Port Elizabeth on 15 March 07:00ams)	R 650

Cancellation fee: 75% refund before 28 February 2012, 50% before 5 March 2012, none thereafter.
Rates include registration, teas and lunches on both days. The delegate bag includes a textbook relating to science and research. Dinner and accommodation are not included.
Payments to be made to Nedbank Cheque Account 1343011299 Cascades Branch 134325.
Please fax proof of payment to 0866227576 or email to admin@grassland.org.za

Registration and Contact Details

To register for the Research Skills workshop, please go to <http://www.grassland.org.za/events/satellite-functions/RSW2012> and select "Online Registration". For further details contact Freyni du Toit (administrator of the GSSA) on admin@grassland.org.za, or visit the website.

Preliminary Programme

Speaker	Title	Description
DAY 1		
David Spurrett (Professor and Chair, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	Science and pseudo-science: the mountain and the mist	Science is the most useful thing that has happened in society. However, science has attracted pseudo-science, where principles and ideas are presented under the name of science, but violate basic scientific principles. This has led to society confusing real science and pseudo-science, often

Speaker	Title	Description
DAY 1		
Adrian Shrader (Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	Writing a project proposal – the academic aspect	with negative consequences Within academic environments, project proposals rest most fundamentally on their scientific credibility. However, project proposals, especially at undergraduate or beginner-scientist level, often suffer from irrelevant information, a lack of logical progression, and unclear objectives.
Tony Palmer (Specialist Researcher, Agricultural Research Council)	Scientific writing	Peer-reviewed articles ('papers') are the accepted means of recording and communicating ideas and findings in science. However, the process of scientific writing, especially for beginner scientists, is an arduous one, and scathing reviews of submissions often permanently discourage promising students.
Beth Forrestel (Graduate Student, Yale University)	Research collaboration	Scientists usually have specialised fields of interest and expertise. Collaboration is, therefore, a useful way to expand the scope of research projects. Despite this, collaboration is an often underused opportunity.
Bryan King (Scientific Technician, Grootfontein ADI)	Community-based research	Attempts at involving communities in research are often met with difficulties, although community involvement is often central to addressing research questions. Such involvement cannot be distilled into a set of basic rules, but successful interactions often share common principles.
Wayne Truter (Lecturer, University of Pretoria)	Finding funding	Research efforts and opportunities are often limited by the availability of funds. However, considerable monetary resources are available if searched for correctly. Additionally, funds are often renewable if appropriate performance is maintained by the researcher.
Justin du Toit (Specialist Scientist, Grootfontein ADI)	Managing data effectively	Experiment or monitoring data are often captured and stored in ways that reduce their potential, make them inaccessible, and allow them to be lost. Some simple principles and tools allow the information in even huge datasets to become easily available and pliable.
DAY 2		
David Spurrett (Professor and Chair, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	Originality and usefulness in science	Research institutions (especially governmental) often recognize the development of projects, or the production of reports, as useful returns on investment. However, this allows for stagnation in science, as old ideas can be repeatedly reworked, or projects that are of no real value can be initiated and continued. There should be an emphasis on originality and usefulness in science, recognizing that science does not need to be groundbreaking (most is not) in order to be valuable. Even small studies, such as filling-the-gap science, published as research notes, can be important.
Tony Palmer (Specialist Researcher, Agricultural Research Council)	Reviewing	The anonymous peer-review system is central to scientific research. Carefully executed reviews can substantially improve the quality of a paper, and in turn the abilities of the author. The review process can also be frightening to inexperienced authors, and the comments of reviewers need to be taken in the correct light. Reviewers who are overly interested in structure rather than content can be of disservice to authors.
Trevor Hill (Professor and Deputy Head of School, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	Research, students, and field trips – the undergraduate experience	Undergraduate students are exposed to research through reviewing published papers, and doing practicals. However, neither covers the practicalities of either the research process, or the environment in which research is conducted. Field trips that include a research component give students useful experience, and allow expose them to associated issues such as interpersonal skills, logistics, and time management
Tim O'Connor	Ecological monitoring	Environmental change, from climate to microsite

Speaker	Title	Description
DAY 1 (Observation Science Specialist, SAEON)		scales, is of considerable interest and importance to scientists and society. The information that can be gleaned from long-term monitoring is substantial, and has considerable trans-disciplinary value. The value of the information, however, is dependent on many aspects, observing these can mean the difference between invaluable information and useless datasets.
Johan van Rooyen (State Veterinarian, Grootfontein ADI)	Current issues in animal ethics	In biological research, animals are often necessary as a factor in an experiment, or the subject of the research itself. The way in which animals are treated (animal ethics) is an important consideration, from both ethical and legislative standpoints.
Wayne Truter (Lecturer, University of Pretoria)	Making platform presentations	Platform presentations are nowadays usually dependent on PowerPoint. Despite this technology, many presentations fail to effectively convey the statement the presenter is trying to make.
Adrian Shrader (Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	11 seconds – presenting a successful poster	Poster presentations are a valuable, and often the only available, way of presenting work at a congress. This results in many congresses having numerous posters, too many for an individual to read. Therefore, a poster must compete with other posters if it is to be read by the delegates.