

Proposal for the RESCON 2022 Pre-Conference Workshop on International Collaborative Research

Annual Research Congress of the Postgraduate Institute of Science (PGIS RESCON 2022)

PGIS-RESCON 2022, the annual research congress of the Postgraduate Institute of Science, is an annual research conference that features postgraduate research from across Sri Lanka. Initiated as a platform for the students of PGIS to showcase their work, RESCON is now open to all universities and research institutes and has become one of the leading science conferences in Sri Lanka. The abstracts submitted to RESCON undergo a double-blind review by two peer reviewers, and accepted abstracts are published in the Congress Proceedings book. In addition, the authors present their work in the Technical Sessions of RESCON, chaired by eminent Sri Lankan scientists in the field.

RESCON 2022 is the ninth instalment of the conference, and 295 abstracts were submitted by authors spanning all Sri Lankan public and private Universities and Scientific Research Institutes. The Inauguration Ceremony of RESCON 2022 will be held on the 28th of October, followed by online Technical Sessions on the 29th and 30th of October. The Technical Sessions are subdivided into five themes;

1. Earth and Environmental Sciences
2. ICT, Mathematics, and Statistics
3. Life Sciences
4. Physical Sciences
5. Science Education

This year's keynote address will feature Science Education, as it is a relevant topic in the current context of Sri Lanka.

Pre-Conference Workshop on Encouraging International Collaborative Research.

RESCON was originally a physical conference, meaning that the authors were supposed to be physically present at the PGIS to deliver their presentations. However, the conference was moved online due to health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, this was challenging, and the Organizing Committee had to endure technological challenges. Now, having done the conference twice online, the Organizing Committee and the PGIS staff is well equipped with the experience to manage the technical sessions, and the feedback we receive from the participants indicates that they prefer the concept of an online conference. RESCON 2022 was planned as a hybrid conference, but the Organizing Committee decided that the conference would be entirely online again due to the country's situation.

Moving the conference online has presented the organizers with new opportunities, notably opening the conference to the international community. Last year, we got submissions from authors in Australia, Canada, Japan, and the USA. The authors presented their work online. This year, we plan to go even further and connect the researchers in Sri Lanka with international researchers by organizing the Pre-Conference workshop.

The workshop will be titled "*Encouraging International Collaborative Research*". It will feature Sri Lankan expatriates who are eminent research scientists outside Sri Lanka and institutions that do international collaborative research. The workshop is planned to be held on the 22nd of October, and the Organizing Committee expects just below 500 participants to attend the event. All the registered participants will be

invited to the workshop, together with all the other students of the PGIS who are not presenting at this time. Most of the Sri Lankan participants will be young researchers with bachelor's degrees in Science.

The pre-conference workshop aims to

1. Educate young researchers in Sri Lanka about collaborative research opportunities in other countries.
2. Explain the basic setup of international collaborative research and guide the participants on setting up international research.
3. Discuss the importance of collaborative international research in the country's current context and how such research can help.
4. Organize a setting where international researchers and RESCON participants can interact freely and easily.
5. Introduce the agencies/entities that administer collaborative research via an expo mode.

The intended outcome of the pre-conference workshop is to enable young researchers in Sri Lanka to collaborate on a research project with an international researcher or a research group. To achieve this objective, the organizers think that having a platform where participants can move freely with the international community would be more productive, rather than just having sessions.

The Proposed Plan for the Pre-Conference Workshop

The event will be hosted via the Zoom-EVENTS™ platform or another platform that enables interactive communication and Expo mode. The expo mode is similar to breakout rooms but has a more realistic feeling and can enhance the event's effectiveness.

There will be two categories of members in the pre-conference workshop.

Participants: Consisting of registered authors presenting at RESCON 2022 and students of the Postgraduate Institute of Science. We assume that the participants are interested in starting an international collaboration but have little knowledge about starting one.

Resource Persons: Consisting of International researchers (PostDoc/ Academics) and representatives of research institutes.

The workshop is divided into three sections

Section 1 – Formalities and Introduction to various entities that do collaborative research.

This section will start with a brief welcome by the RESCON 2022 chairperson, Prof. Sumedha Madawala. Then, each partner institute/entity will get 15 minutes sessions followed by a 5-minute Q&A to introduce their work to the participants. During that time, they can touch on the following topics.

- What is the institute/entity/community, and how was it established?
- What kind of research is your focus?
- What are examples of collaborative projects/research/programmes done with the Sri Lankan community?
- How can a participant know more information about you?

These entities will get booths in section 3 – Expo so that they can connect with the participants more personally.

Section 2 – Sharing Experiences on International Collaborative Research.

Section 2 will consist of parallel sessions participants can move in and out. The number of resource persons would determine the number of sessions. Each session will be 15 minutes long, followed by 10 minutes of Q&A. In a single session, the resource person is supposed to mention their personal experience in collaborative research. It can be subject-specific but should be accessible to a slightly broader audience.

The resource person can decide what to include in the session. Here are some topics the resource person can touch on in the talk. There is no requirement to touch all the topics; this is up to the resource person. For example, the resource person can talk about her/his personal experiences as a collaborative researcher/ supervisor. The purpose is to motivate prospective researchers and to give them a personal touch with your experiences.

Topic	Questions that can be touched
How does International Collaborative Research work?	How did you set up the collaborative research? What roles were played by each party in the collaboration? How did you manage the communication and monitoring parts?
Existing Infrastructure of International Collaborative Research.	Through which entities did you do the research? How did those entities help?
Established Policies and Practices in International Collaborative Research.	What were the policy matters that you had to keep in mind? Looking back, can you tell us some good practices that would help collaboration succeed?
Availability of Grants and Acquiring International Research Grants	How do grants work when one does a collaboration? How were you able to secure grants?
How can International Collaborative Research help Sri Lankan researchers?	What impact did the international collaboration have on your students/collaborators? What did your collaborators do afterwards from the training/ experience they got from you?
How can International Collaborative Research help the Sri Lankan community?	Keeping the current context of Sri Lanka in mind, how can international collaborative research help the Sri Lankan community?

The participants will be able to join the sessions via the main lobby of the event. They can ask questions directly or via chat. There is also a chance for the participants to meet you in section 3 of the workshop.

Section 2 will end with a speech by the Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Science. He will mention the current infrastructure at the PGIS that would encourage international collaborative research.

Section 3 - Expo

The second part of the pre-conference workshop will be the Expo. Here, the participants can freely move with the resource persons and network with them. This will be done using the Expo feature in the Zoom Events software. First, we will make virtual booths for institutes/entities where the students can attend, and then there will be some more booths for individual resource persons, divided into themes.

The participants can click on booths or click on individual resource persons to meet them. Furthermore, they can share interests, ideas and contact information if they like. The event will go on for one hour and 30 minutes. The Expo event would make the pre-conference workshop different from others.

Invitation to Partner Institutes/communities

Many institutes/entities/communities would benefit from such collaboration while helping the researchers in the Sri Lankan community. The Postgraduate Institute of Science, especially the Organizing Committee of RESCON 2022, will assume the burden of organizing the event and getting enough participants with a common purpose. We can discuss with the partner institutes whether to open up to more participants, have different sessions, etc. If a partner institute/community wants to join us, the Organizers are willing to meet and discuss each party's contribution.

The partner institutes/entities/communities can help us find resource persons for the event. Also, they can introduce themselves to the participants in stage 1 of the workshop. The event is free to attend to everyone, and the partners and individuals will be invited and formally acknowledged by the Postgraduate Institute of Science.

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Convener – RESCON 2022 International Relations Subcommittee.