



## SCIENTIFIC WRITING TRAINING



# Dealing with peer reviews/ reviewers and journal selection



**Godfrey Asea, PhD**

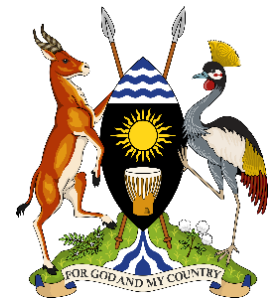
**19 JUNE, 2026  
10 AM – 12 PM**

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# Dealing with Peer Review/Reviewers and Journal Selection

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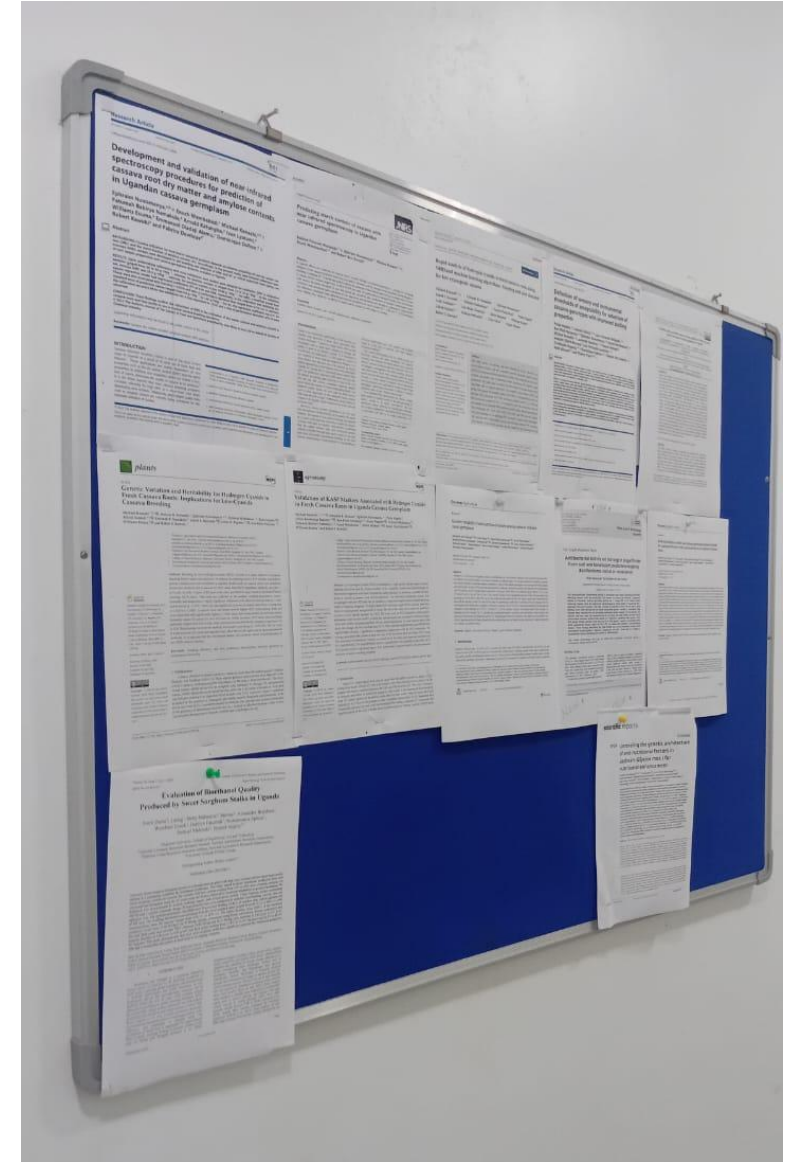
National Crops Resources Research Institute  
National Agricultural Research Organization

UJAS Scientific Writing Training, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026



# Publications!

- Main medium through which we communicate our research findings
- An archive that documents what research has been done and others can build on
- We also publish to advance our careers
- Publications are our *scientific currency*
- *Therefore, it has to undergo rigorous checks through review process*

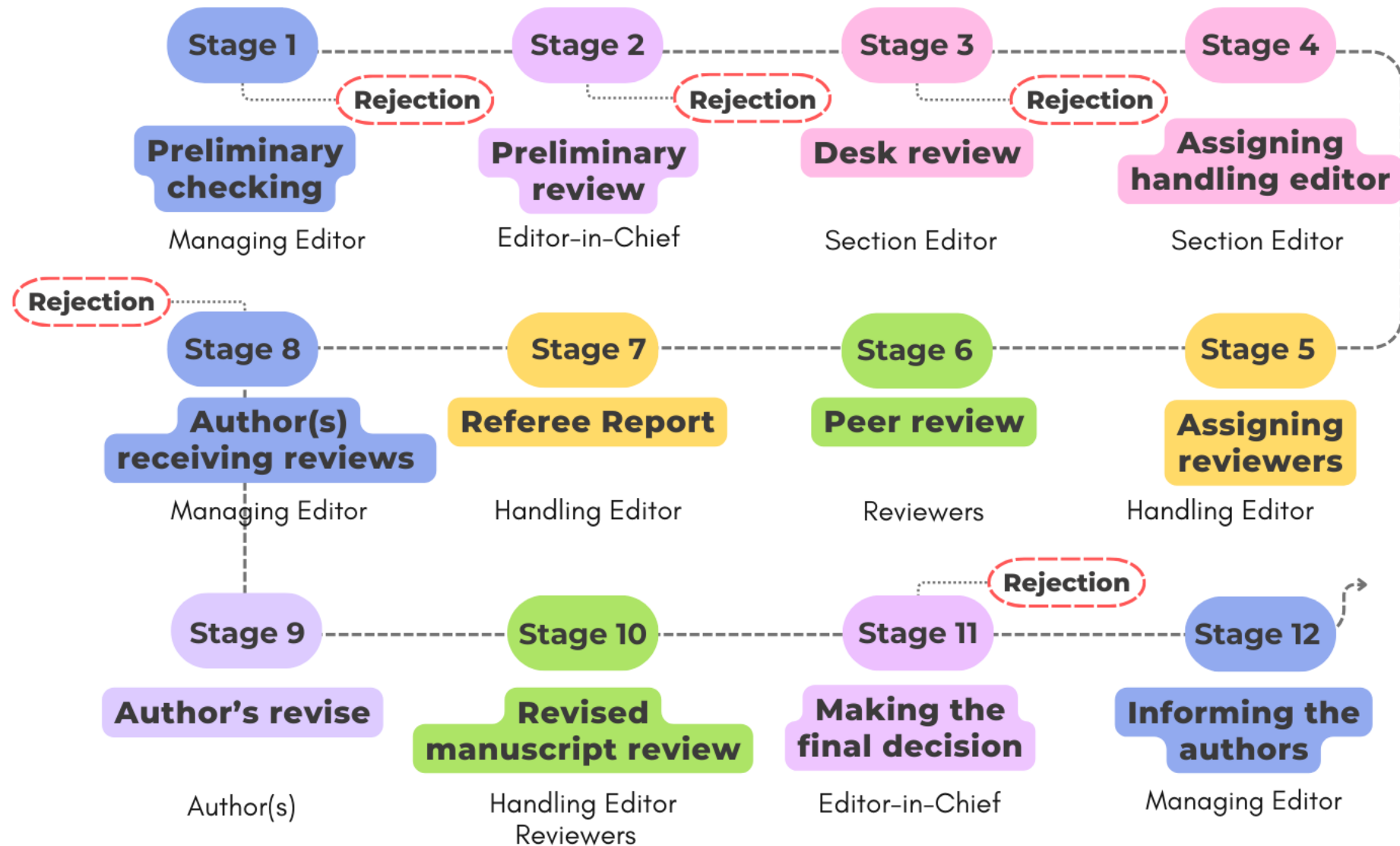




# Review management

- Review is a critical process between manuscript submission and publication of the article
- Review process is important in improving manuscript quality by providing constructive feedback
- Reviewers should be perceived as **consultants rather than adversaries**
- Starting point is to learn to edit – *good writing is thorough editing*
- It is good to understand what reviewers are looking for

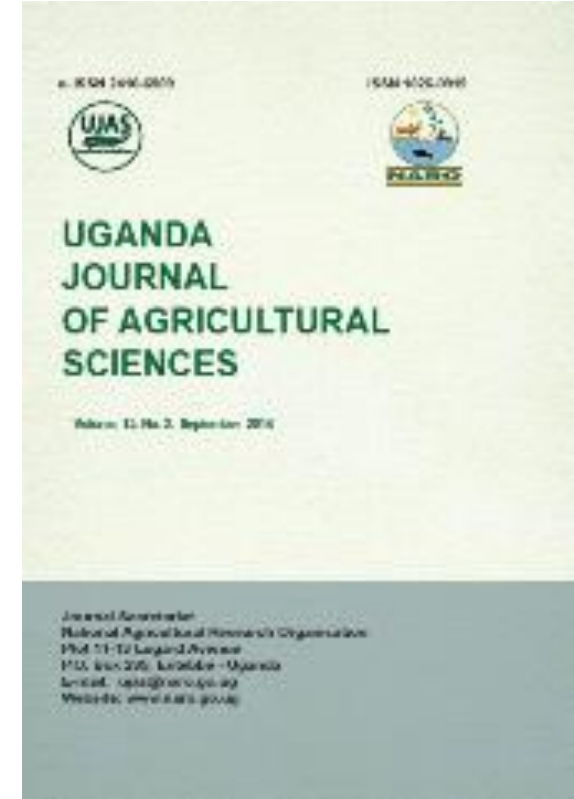
# PEER REVIEW PROCESS



# Types of Peer Review

Journals use different levels of anonymity for review:

- **Double-Blind:** Neither the reviewers nor the authors know each other's identities.
- **Single-Blind:** The reviewers know the authors' names, but the authors remain anonymous.
- **Open Review:** The identities of both the authors and reviewers are fully transparent.





## Classes of review report decisions

- *Accept*: to accept the manuscript for publishing in its original form
- *Minor revision*: the manuscript requires minor corrections
- *Major revision*: substantial review of the manuscript is needed
- *Reject*: to reject the manuscript on the basis stated in the review.

# Dealing with reviewers comments

- Your papers can be rejected so be calm!
- Rejections come with reasons and comments
- Rejections can also be appealed
- Always address reviews VERY seriously using scientific and logical arguments (even when you are resubmitting to a different journal!)
- *If you make a rational case, you may have a shot at convincing the editor that you have a good point*





# Some keys reasons for rejections....

- Incomplete data due to a limited sample size, missing or falsified data
- Improper statistical tests or a complete lack of statistics
- Inappropriate methodology for hypothesis testing
- When the hypothesis is unclear or not based on science, or when the data does not address the research topic
- False conclusions drawn from the data
- The manuscript is out of the journal scope
- Poor language quality

# Rejections – Let's discuss



*The US and Iran nuclear negotiations in 2015*



*The US and Iran deal signed yesterday, June, 2026*

- Even difficult situations are negotiated....



# Dealing and responding to reviewer comments

| TIPS                                             | GUIDE                                                                                                    | KEY POINTS                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Receive and accept reviewer' comments            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Value feedback</li><li>• Avoid personalizing critiques</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treat feedback as opportunity for improvement and clarity</li><li>• Evaluate comments objectively</li></ul> |
| Read carefully and understand<br>Review comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thoroughly examine comments</li></ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Break down comments into separate points</li><li>• Address all points and number them accordingly</li></ul> |
| Consult and seek opinion                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek guidance, and perspectives from co-authors</li></ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consult with peers for feedback</li><li>• Brainstorm with co-authors</li></ul>                              |



# Dealing and responding to reviewer comments

| TIPS                                  | GUIDE                                                                                                      | KEY POINTS                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Be polite and respectful to reviewers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain professionalism and gratitude towards reviewers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treat comments as constructive</li><li>• Express gratitude</li><li>• Avoid confrontational or defensive tones</li></ul>     |
| Respond to every point raised         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure all points raised by reviewers are addressed</li></ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be specific in responses</li><li>• Include additional information if needed</li></ul>                                       |
| Be thorough and plan responses        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organize and systematically respond to each comment</li></ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide detailed responses</li><li>• Address each point individually</li><li>• Ensure clarity and professionalism</li></ul> |



# Difference between a diplomat and an editor

- A diplomat says yes when they mean may be, may be when they mean no, and never says no.
- An editor says no when they mean may be, may be when they mean yes, and never says yes (*Sophien Kamoun*)



## Bottom line: good writing skills are learned and developed

- Improve on your writing skills; *read, read, read!*
- Read literature critically; when you like some text highlight it, read it again, and even save it
- Read high quality material (minimize tabloids, social media)
- Read widely and frequently



# Journal selection - where to publish?

- Aim as “high” as you reasonably can but don't become obsessed
- *Is your work relevant to a broad readership or is it more appropriate to specialists?*
- Consider “fit” not just journal prestige
- Do you like what you read in the journal?
- Beware of predatory journals

# Journal selection criteria – Growing journals makes it difficult to assess choice

- Define research scope and audience
- Use check-list criteria
- Use journal selection tools
- Verify journal legitimacy
- Research journal reputation and metrics
- Explore article processing charges (APCs)
- Make it a collective and collaborative decision





# Define your research scope and audience

- Your research discipline
- Your target audience – research, policy makers etc
- Geographical scope of your finding
- Know whether your work is theoretical, empirical or applied



# Check-list criteria

- Impact factor
- Open source or not
- Publication timelines (submission-review- publication)
- Articles processing charges and your budget
- Scope alignment with your research

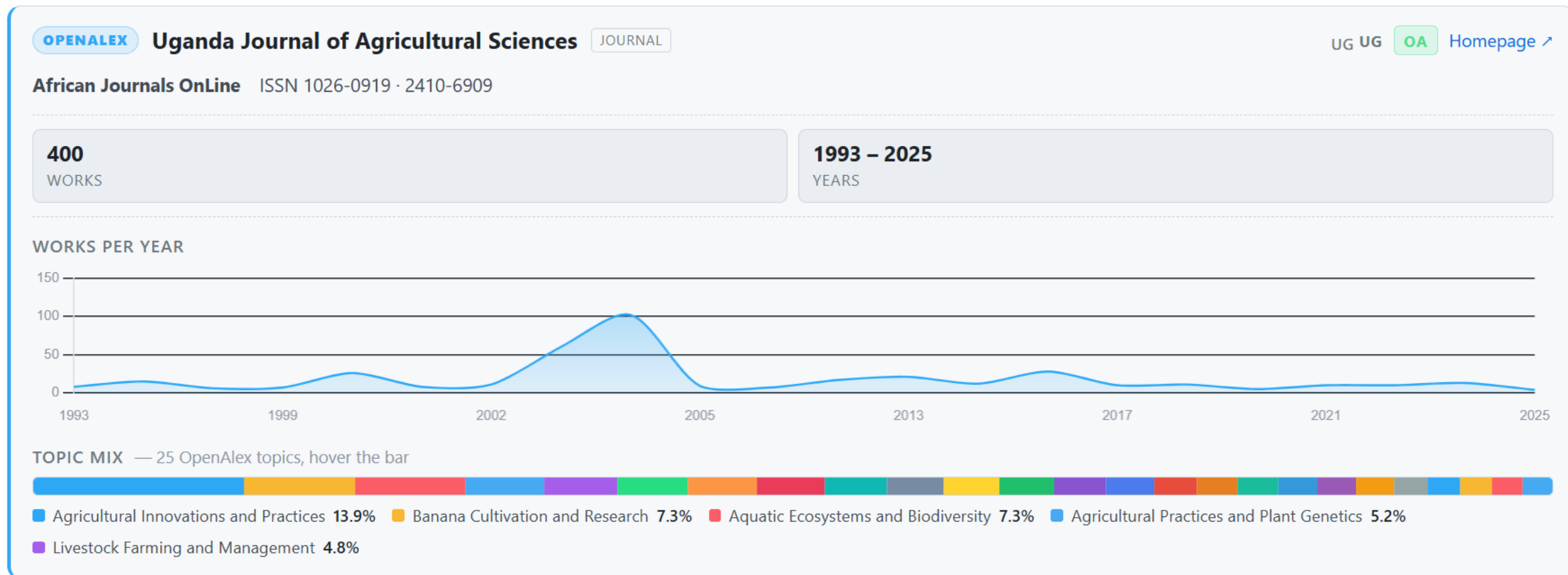


# Journal selection tools

- Published reference lists
- Journal finders
  - Elsevier journal finder
  - Wiley journal finder
  - Springer journal suggester
  - Taylor and Francis suggester
- Other tools to flag suspicious journals – Journal Trend (combines OpenAlex and Problematic Paper Screener)



# Publication trends of UJAS



2,953 journals containing 21,914,206 papers analyzed using Journal Trends.



# Journal legitimacy verification

- Red flags to watch out for:
  - Excessive solicitation emails with flattery language
  - Unclear or missing review process
  - Questionable editorial boards and their expertise
  - Unrealistic promises of rapid publication
  - Poor website quality
  - huge increase in publication volume
  - heavy concentration of papers from a few countries, institutions or authors
  - Unclear contact information

*Verification – Journal Indexing*



# Journal reputation and metrics

- Impact factor
- Cite Score
- Rankings
- Assess editorial board quality
  - Board composition and expertise
  - Recent publication quality
  - Author publication guideline clarity and comprehensiveness



# Explore APCs

- First option: open access without APCs
- Before committing to pay APC
  - Check budget
  - Institutional agreements
  - Waiver options
- Make a collaborative and collective decision with other authors where to publish



THANK YOU



[www.naro.go.ug](http://www.naro.go.ug)



+256 414320512



[info@naro.go.ug](mailto:info@naro.go.ug)