



DiGiGrad Africa

Internationalisation and Digitalisation
of Graduate Training and Research for
the Attainment of African Regional
and Global Development Goals

FINAL DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE (Report)

DIGIGRAD AFRICA – ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE
DELIVERABLE 6.3



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English Version 1.0

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DIGIGRAD Africa Final Conference

From Capacity to Impact: Digitalisation and Internationalisation for Africa’s Research Future

1. INTRODUCTION

The DigiGrad Africa final conference was held virtually on 28th March 2026 and brought together project partners and the international higher education community to present and discuss the key outcomes achieved over the three years of implementation of the DigiGrad project. The online event combined high-level presentations with participatory sessions led by the project’s beneficiaries themselves — trained supervisors, internationalisation officers and young African researchers — to demonstrate the project’s real impact on partner universities. The project’s key outputs were be presented, including the Internationalisation Handbook, the digital platform for supervisors, other online resources and the new Network of Early Career Researchers on Digitalisation and Internationalisation (NECREDI). There were also discussions on the sustainability and potential for replication beyond the consortium. The seminar was held under the theme: ***From Capacity to Impact: Digitalisation and Internationalisation for Africa’s Research Future.***

The conference included African universities and higher education institutions that can benefit directly from the resources and learning generated by the project. It is also aimed at education policy-makers at national and continental level, and European donor agencies and institutions interested in North-South cooperation in research and postgraduate studies. The conference provided a comprehensive platform for consolidating evidence of impact across participating institutions while critically engaging with sustainability pathways beyond the project lifecycle.



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FINAL DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE DIGIGRAD AFRICA PROJECT

Join us to explore the future of African research:

11:00 CET / 13:00 EAT

27 MARCH

ONLINE

Co-ordinated by:



OBREAL
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ACCRA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



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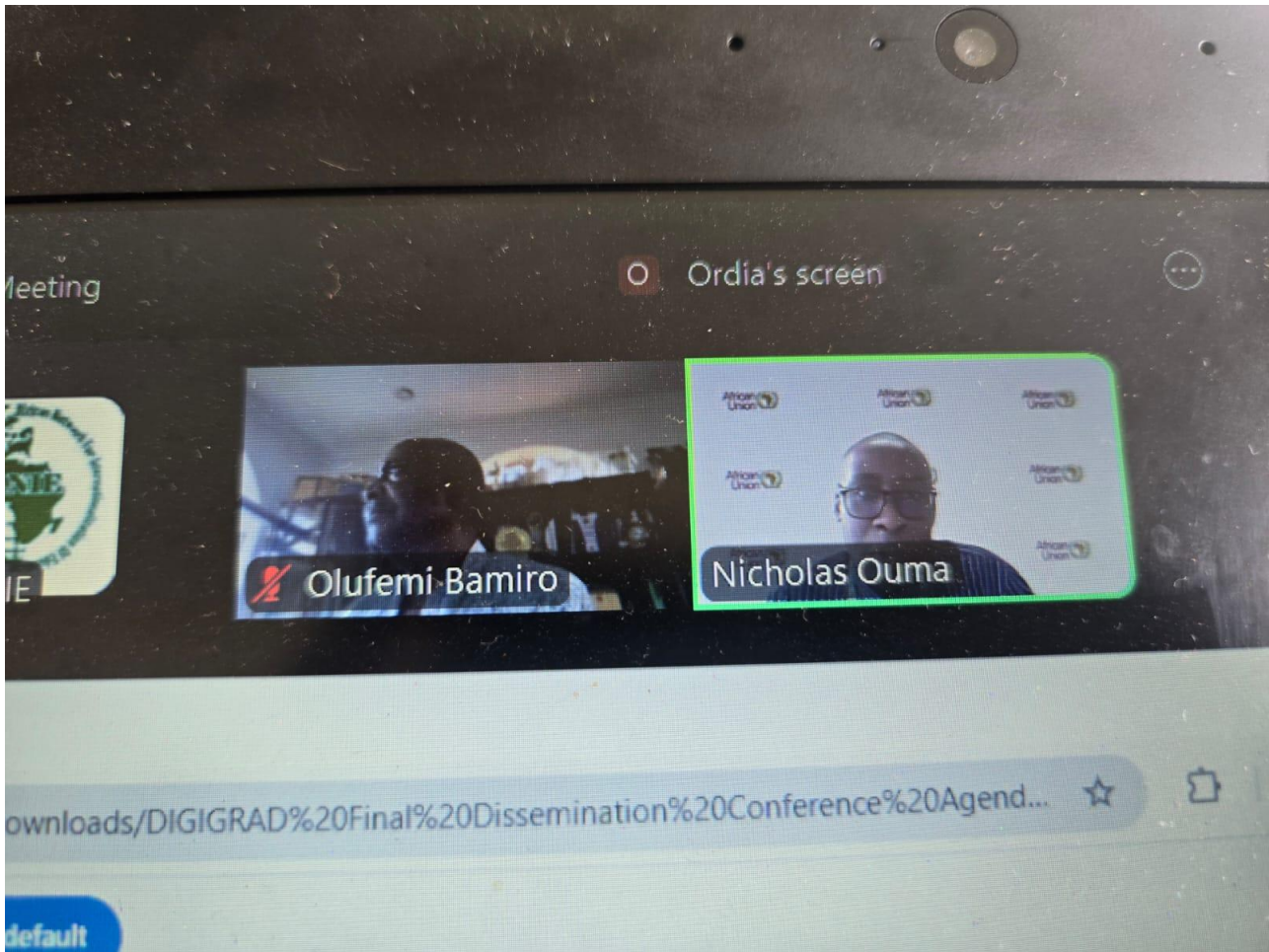
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1.1 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

The conference was held in accordance with the program presented below.

Date: Friday 27th March 2026

Time: 10:00 Ghana / 11:00 CET / 12:00 South Sudan & Burundi / 13:00 Kenya

Format: Online

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE
10:00-10:15 Ghana 11:00-11:15 CET	Opening and Welcome	Opening remarks and introduction to the event	• Dr. James Jowi- Project Coordinator



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<p>12:00-12:15 SS&B 13:00-13:15 Kenya (10 minutes)</p>		(including a 5-minute grace period to accommodate participants who are late joining)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaume Fortuny – OBREAL Global
<p>10:15-10:30 Ghana 11:15-11:30 CET 12:15-12:30 SS&B 13:15-13:30 Kenya (15 minutes)</p>	<p>Setting the Context</p>	A brief statement by the Commissioner of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the African Union, explaining why this project matters now and what it means for Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona - AU ESTI Commissioner
<p>10:30-11:10 Ghana 11:30-12:10 CET 12:30-13:10 SS&B 13:30-14:10 Kenya (40 minutes)</p>	<p>Results in the Words of the Participants</p>	Four short presentations (8 min each) led by direct participants—an internationalization coordinator, a trained supervisor, a young researcher from the network, and an institutional representative—highlighting specific changes at their universities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Daniel Aru Garang- Upper Nile University, South Sudan • Prof. C.J. Odhiambo, Moi University, Kenya • Dr. Jean Baptiste Bukuru, Bujumbura International University, Burundi • Prof. Sara Darkwa, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
<p>11:10-11:20 Ghana 12:10-12:20 CET 13:10-13:20 SS&B 14:10-14:20 Kenya (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Active break</p>	Real-time audience poll (Mentimeter or similar): Which of the project’s findings do you think has the greatest potential to make an impact in your context? The results will be used to guide the next segment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordia Akello, ANIE
<p>11:20-12:05 Ghana 12:20-13:05 CET 13:20-14:05 SS&B 14:20-15:05 Kenya (35 minutes)</p>	<p>Parallel Working Sessions</p> <p>Four simultaneous breakout rooms, each facilitated by a member of the consortium:</p>	<p>Room A: The Handbook and the Digital Platform — How to Implement Them at Your Institution?</p> <p>Room B: The Network of Early Career Researchers on Digitalisation and Internationalisation (NECREDI)—How to Join and Grow?</p> <p>Room C: Internationalization Strategies — Lessons That Can Be Replicated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. James Jowi- ANIE • Karine Hindrix- UCLL • Ochieng Obunga- Chair of NECREDI • Dr. Mindel van de Laar, Maastricht University • Prof. Orpha Ongiti- Africa Nazarene University.



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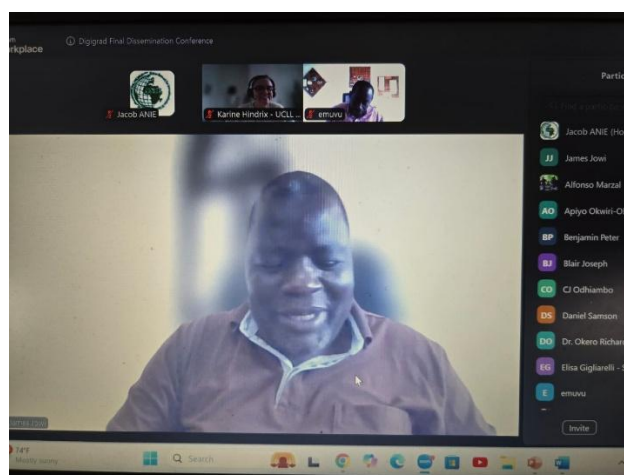
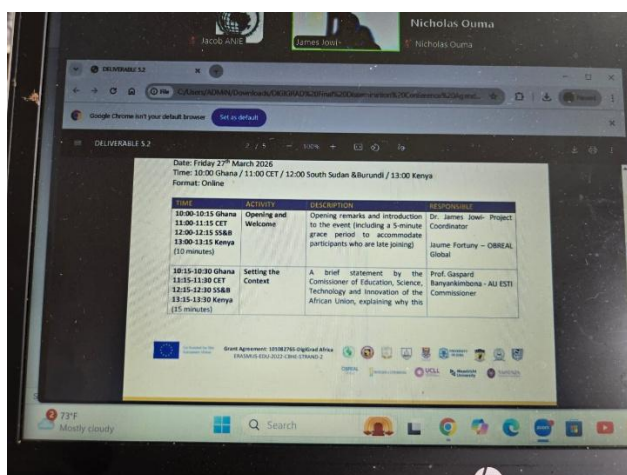


			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Goski Alabi-Accra Metropolitan University
		Room D: Capacity building seminars for Supervisors-Lessons and how to sustain this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alfonso Marzal-Extremadura University. Elisa Gigliarelli, Sapienza University.
<p>12:05-12:25 Ghana 13:05-13:25 CET 14:05-14:25 SS&B 15:05-15:25 Kenya (20 minutes)</p>	Summary and discussion	A spokesperson from each room summarises the key points. Open discussion with the full audience on sustainability and replicability.	Coordinated by ANIE
<p>12:25-12:40 Ghana 13:25-13:40 CET 14:25-14:40 SS&B 15:25-15:40 Kenya (15 minutes)</p>	Sustainability and next steps	Joint presentation on the continuity plan: the network of young researchers, the Handbook as a living resource, and avenues for future collaboration with new partners and institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Kefa Simwa- Executive Director, ANIE Apiyo Okwiri-OBREAL, Global
<p>12:40-12:50 Ghana 13:40-13:50 CET 14:40-14:50 SS&B 15:40-15:50 Kenya (10 minutes)</p>	Closing remarks	Closing remarks by the project coordinator. A call to action tailored to each audience. Information on how to access all project resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. James Jowi- Project Coordinator

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/98488796716?pwd=6hxRU0Uccy8UyPJRY2gFUJPRp0HqN1.1>

Meeting ID: 984 8879 6716

Passcode: 543679





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2. OPENING SESSION

On behalf of the African Network for Internationalisation of Education (ANIE), Dr. James Otieno Jowi- DigiGrad Project Coordinator welcomed the participants to the conference. He extended ANIEs appreciation to all the partners for all their great efforts in the implementation of the project leading to its successful completion. He took the participants through the main theme and program of the conference. He noted that the conference marked not only the culmination of months of learning, collaboration, and innovation, but also the beginning of new journeys shaped by the digital skills and insights you have gained.

He highlighted that the DigiGrad initiative had been about more than capacity building and empowerment as it led to institutional transformations and redefining education, work, and society through digitalisation and internationalisation. He appreciated all the partners for their commitment to growth and resilience which made led to the achievements being shared and celebrated in the conference. He noted that some of the key achievements of the project which included:

- Refining and developing new strategies for internationalisation for the participating African universities.
- Developing the 1st Handbook of its kind to support internationalisation practitioners in Africa.
- Capacity building and support to supervisors of postgraduate students and postgraduate students of the participating institutions.
- Lots of resources have been developed and are available within the ANIE platform for use



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- The network of early career researchers on digitalisation and internationalisation
NECREDI and the seminar for supervisors that will continue to be held with the ANIE
Conference.

He noted that the participating African universities were now better equipped to integrate digitalisation in their teaching, research, supervision and internationalisation activities. The conference was therefore to share the outcomes and impacts of the project and also discuss how to sustain some of the key outputs.

Speaking on behalf of OBREAL Global, Mr. Jaume Fortuny expressed sincere thanks to all the partners in the project for their efforts that enabled the project to attain great success. He noted that DigiGrad was a unique and challenging project but in which African and European partners worked together for a common purpose that has been finally achieved. He enumerated some of the key achievements that had been accomplished by the project. He emphasised the need to institutionalise and sustain some of the main outcomes as they would have lasting impacts for Africa's higher education sector. He noted the great work that OBREAL had with ANIE in coordinating the project and the immense contributions from the partners.



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3. REMARKS FROM - AU ESTI COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona - AU Commissioner for Education Science, Technology and Innovations was represented by Mr. Nicholas Ouma, the Principal Education Officer of the African Union Commission. He welcomed the participants to the conference and noted from the outset that the conference was not merely an academic gathering but a celebration of what is possible when Africa chooses to invest in its own people, its own institutions, and its own future. He noted that the DigiGrad project fitted well and made a contribution towards Africa's vision: the Agenda 2063 — the continental master plan to transform Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. In this context he noted that Africa must make significant investments in education with the aim of developing human and social capital, through an educational and skills revolution that places innovation, science and technology at its centre. He noted that by 2063, Africa will be the most populous continent on earth, with the largest cohort of young people in the world; the target is that no fewer than 70 per cent of them will be highly skilled. He noted that the DigiGrad Africa project has been working precisely at that gap.

He highlighted that in February 2025, the African Union adopted the new Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026–2035 and the new Continental TVET Strategy 2025–2034 which have been brought together under the African Decade of Education 2025–2034. The strategy places the central role of teachers and academic supervisors, effective institutional leadership, digitalisation, the integration of artificial intelligence, and the resilience of education systems at its core. By training postgraduate supervisors in digital and international environments, and by supporting African universities in developing their own digitalisation and internationalisation strategies, DigiGrad Africa has turned these strategic priorities into real institutional capacities. Strategic Area 4 of CESA 26-35, dedicated to Higher Education,



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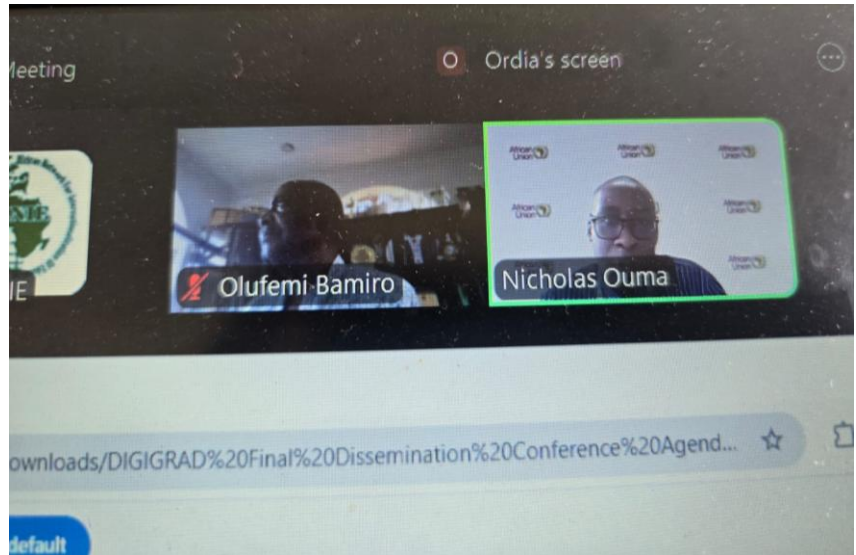
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focuses on expanding access and quality, strengthening linkages between education and the labour market, and encouraging research and innovation — especially in STEAM areas.

He informed the participants that The Continental TVET Strategy 2025–2034 represents a paradigm shift: moving from training for employment to empowerment for entrepreneurship. It is aimed at cultivating a globally competitive, innovative and inclusive African workforce, equipped with technical, entrepreneurial and sustainable competencies.



He noted that by strengthening the digital and institutional management capacity of the participating African universities in Ghana, Kenya, Burundi and South Sudan, DiGiGrad Africa lays the institutional foundations that TVET requires for its own modernisation. The Continental TVET Strategy articulates 15 categories of action, among them institutional development, technology, and digital and green transformation. DiGiGrad Africa works in precisely that direction from within higher education.

The three frameworks — Agenda 2063, CESA 26-35 and the Continental TVET Strategy focus on the premise that Africa's development depends on an educational and skills revolution anchored in science, technology and innovation. He thus noted that DiGiGrad Africa was not merely a European cooperation project with Africa: it is a practical demonstration that this revolution is possible, that our institutions can transform themselves, and that international partnerships can be built on the foundation of mutual respect and African ownership.



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He congratulated the project partners for the outputs and results of the project that he noted would endure long beyond the life of the project itself. He emphasised that such were the kind of partnerships that the African Union promotes, deserves and demands. He urged the African partners in the project to utilise the capacities and resources developed out of the project for their development.



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4. PROJECT PARTNERS EXPERIENCES

In this session African university partners from the four African countries involved in the project shared their experiences with the project. There was also a presentation from a representative of the early career researchers trained through the project. The session opened with institutional presentations highlighting the transformative effects of DigiGrad across diverse higher education contexts. A recurring theme across these presentations was the shift from fragmented or limited international engagement toward structured, policy-driven, and institutionally embedded approaches to internationalisation and digitalisation.

At Bujumbura International University, participation in DigiGrad was described as a turning point in the institution’s global positioning. The university reported significant gains in visibility, strategic orientation, and alignment with national and international higher education expectations. The development of institutional internationalisation and digitalisation strategies not only enhanced internal capacity but also attracted recognition from national authorities, including a Ministry of Education review that positively acknowledged these developments. The university further demonstrated tangible transformation through the transition from basic digital tools to a more integrated e-learning model, alongside staff training in digital pedagogy, artificial intelligence applications, and international collaboration practices. These developments were complemented by expanded partnerships across Africa, Europe, and beyond, as well as increased engagement with international organisations.

The Moi University experience demonstrated that the project played a key role in strengthening supervision capacity and quality, strengthened digital capacities and international collaborations. The project impacted soft skills and independence of undertaking research amongst postgraduate students. The institution adopted several digital tools for enhanced

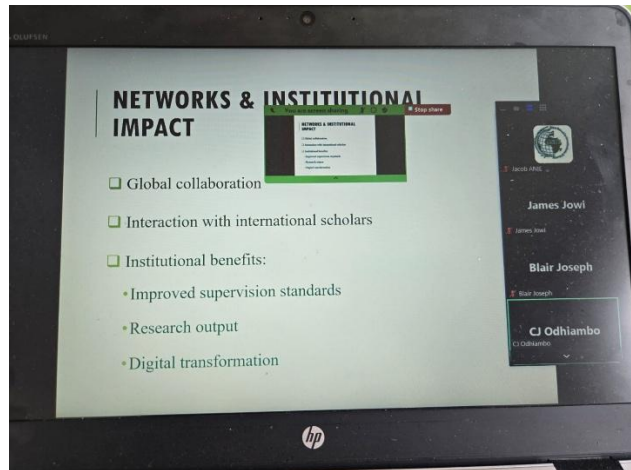
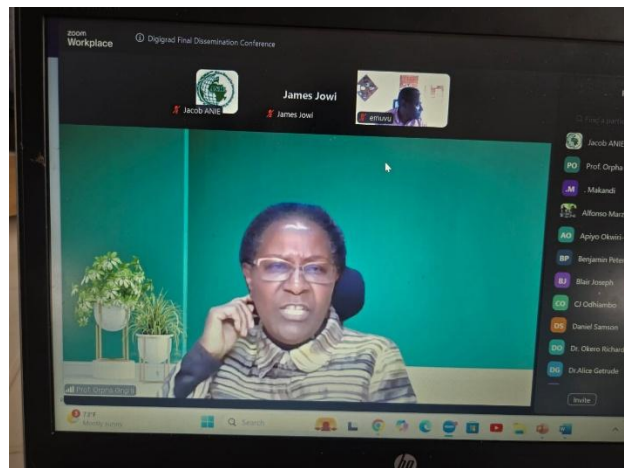
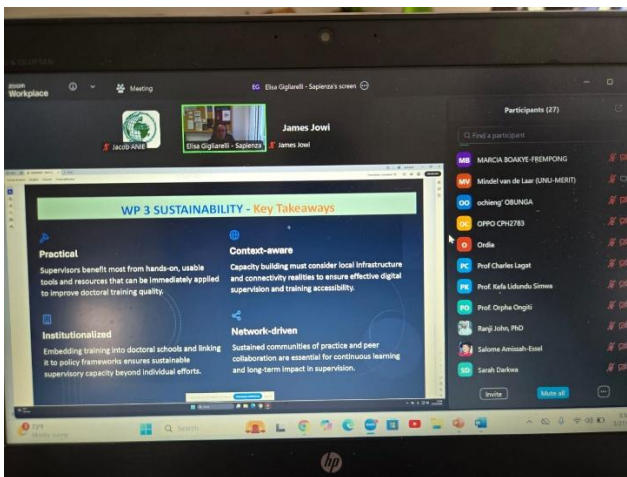


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research and supervision. There were some challenges of connectivity and skills gaps but not so much widespread. The resources developed for postgraduate students and supervisors were useful and would continue to be used by the institution. There was recommendation for further consolidation of the activities, follow ups and support even beyond the project period.



Similarly, the University of Cape Coast emphasised the project’s contribution to policy and governance transformation. Through the knowledge and collaboration fostered within DiGiGrad, the university successfully developed a formal internationalisation policy, marking a



significant institutional milestone. Beyond policy development, the project influenced core academic processes, particularly in postgraduate supervision. New mechanisms were introduced to monitor supervision effectiveness, supported by Academic Board decisions aimed at improving accountability and completion rates. These changes reflect a deeper institutionalisation of quality assurance practices, demonstrating how DiGiGrad’s interventions extended beyond training into systemic reform.

The experience of Upper Nile University offered one of the most compelling illustrations of institutional transformation. Entering the project with minimal structures for internationalisation or research coordination, the university leveraged DiGiGrad to establish multiple directorates, including those responsible for international relations, research and publication, quality assurance, and innovation. These structural developments marked a transition from a largely passive engagement with internationalisation to an active and strategic institutional posture. Capacity building efforts further strengthened this transformation, with staff and students benefiting from training in supervision, research, and digital tools. Notably, the university expanded its participation in regional and global networks, joined multiple academic consortia, and initiated new international collaborations, including participation in additional EU-funded projects. The introduction of online teaching practices, including cross-campus delivery, further illustrated how digitalisation was operationalised in contextually relevant ways.

Beyond institutional presentations, the conference deliberately incorporated the voices of early career researchers through the NECREDI network. Participants highlighted the substantial skills gained through the project, including academic writing, publishing, grant development, research ethics, and project management. At the same time, they offered critical reflections that are essential for understanding the project’s implementation dynamics. Concerns were raised regarding communication gaps, particularly the reliance on email as the primary mode of engagement, as well as the timing of training sessions and limited follow-up



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on shared materials. Participants also noted the underutilisation of the Moodle platform, largely due to insufficient training and awareness. These reflections underscore the importance of adaptive programme design, continuous feedback mechanisms, and context-sensitive delivery approaches in future initiatives.



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5. OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

The breakout sessions provided an opportunity to synthesise these experiences into actionable insights. Discussions on the digital platform and handbook emphasised the need for wider dissemination, practical usability, and continuous improvement based on user feedback. Participants highlighted the importance of positioning these resources not merely as project outputs but as institutional tools, capable of supporting long-term transformation if effectively integrated into university systems.

5.1 The Handbook and the Digital Platform — Implementation in Institutions

The session noted that the Handbook was a very important resource and reference for internationalisation practitioners in Africa. It was recommended that the Handbook be disseminated widely including developing some hard copies to for the participating institutions. It was suggested that it needs to continue being a practical guide (not theoretical) to be of immense help to practitioners. The African partner institutions in the project were encouraged to go through the handbook to recommend the changes and gaps that could be addressed in the future. It could be an important resource for the Network of Internationalisation Practitioners (NIOPA) of ANIE that is hosted at University of Cape Coast. It was agreed that the Handbook be presented to NIOPA and be further disseminated.

It was noted that many useful digital resources were developed through the project and put on the project website. It was however noted that these resources were not disseminated widely and that there were several challenges with the moodle platform. It was important to expand sharing capacities and dissemination by sharing the links with the partner institutions. It was recommended that there is need for further capacity building on the use of digital resources



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and tools. ANIE was urged to organise webinars for these trainings to further improve skills and capacities.

5.2 The Network of Early Career Researchers on Digitalisation and Internationalisation (NECREDI)— How to Join and Grow?

The session on NECREDI focused on the network’s potential as a sustainability mechanism. It was agreed that NECREDI should initially consolidate its membership among DigiGrad participants while developing a governance framework and business model to support future expansion. The network was envisioned as a platform for capacity building, collaborative research, and knowledge exchange, with the potential to evolve into a self-sustaining ecosystem supported by institutional partnerships and programme-based activities. Funding was considered important for the future success of the network and the need to enhance the capacity of the leadership of the young network. The network is to develop a plan of action in its priority areas with implementation commencing this year.

5.3 Internationalization Strategies — Lessons That Can Be Replicated.

Discussions on internationalisation strategies revealed a significant conceptual shift among participating institutions. Internationalisation was increasingly understood not as mobility alone, but as a multidimensional process involving curriculum development, research collaboration, digital learning, and policy alignment. Participants emphasised the importance of institutional commitment, strategic planning, and continuous evaluation, as well as the need to address issues of equity, ethics, and financial sustainability. The role of governments and regulatory bodies was also identified as critical in enabling a supportive policy environment. The support and commitment of institutional leadership was also considered as important. African institutions committed that they will implement the strategies developed



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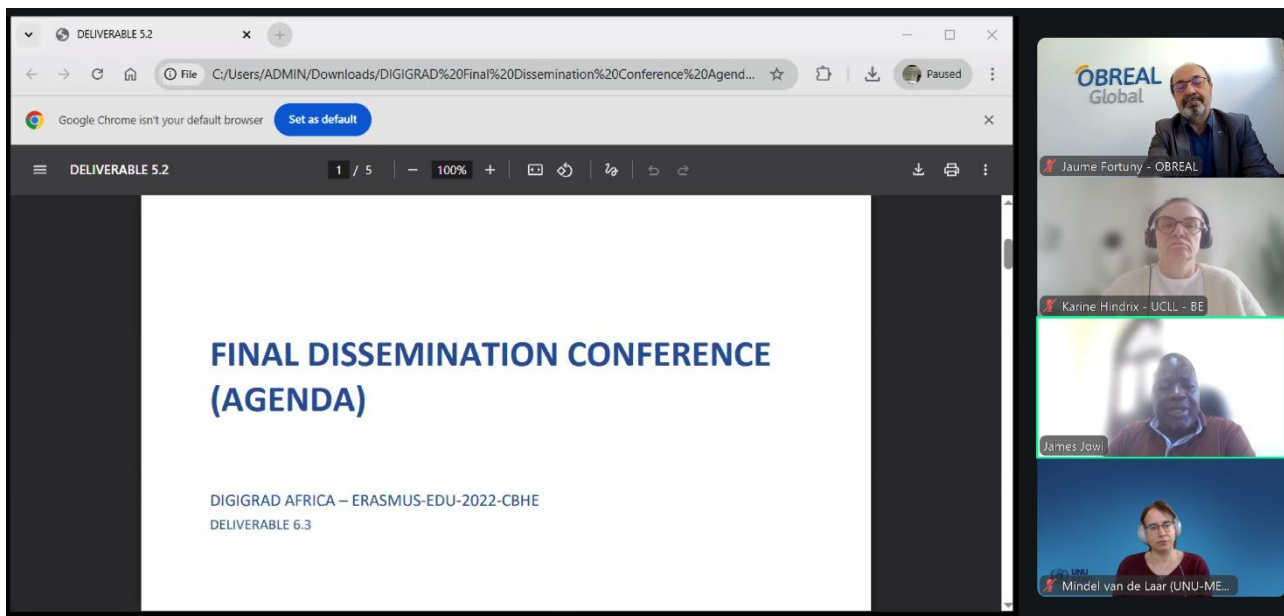
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and use their skills to support other institutions develop strategies if there are platforms to do this.

5.4 Capacity building seminars for Supervisors- Lessons and how to sustainability

The session on capacity building and digital supervision further reinforced the value of practical, hands-on training approaches. While digital tools were recognised as essential for enhancing supervision and postgraduate training, participants noted that their effectiveness depends on local infrastructure and accessibility conditions. The importance of blended models, combining digital and face-to-face approaches, was highlighted as a key strategy for ensuring inclusivity and sustainability. The discussions also underscored the need for institutionalisation, ensuring that training programmes are embedded within doctoral schools and supported by governance structures.





6. EXTERNAL EVALUATORS REFLECTIONS

The external evaluator’s reflections provided an important independent perspective, affirming the project’s relevance and impact while acknowledging the challenges encountered. The evaluator noted that DigiGrad represents a significant contribution to African higher education, particularly in its emphasis on capacity building, network formation, and institutional reform. Importantly, the project was recognised for fostering mutual learning between African and European partners, challenging traditional North–South dynamics and demonstrating the value of collaborative knowledge exchange.



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7. SUSTAINABILITY AND NEXT STEPS

The closing remarks brought the conference to a strategic conclusion, emphasising that while DiGiGrad has successfully built individual and institutional capacities, the transition to sustainable, system-level transformation remains ongoing. A central message emerging from the conference was the need to move from “project mode” to “institutionalisation.” This requires strong ownership by universities, integration of project outputs into policies and programmes, and sustained investment in resources and governance structures. The NECREDI network, the digital platform, and the internationalisation handbook were all identified as key assets whose long-term impact will depend on how effectively they are embedded within institutional ecosystems.

Prof. Kefa Simwa, Executive Director, ANIE noted in summary that the conference had confirmed that DiGiGrad has achieved significant and measurable outcomes across multiple dimensions of higher education development. It has strengthened institutional capacities, fostered new forms of collaboration, and introduced innovative approaches to postgraduate training and internationalisation. At the same time, it has highlighted the critical importance of sustainability, calling for deliberate efforts to embed these gains within institutional and continental frameworks. The conference thus marked not an endpoint, but a transition toward a new phase of consolidation, scaling, and long-term impact. Prof. Simwa noted the contribution of the project in developing new structures, inculcating best practices and institutional transformations. He called on African universities for enhanced ownership and continued implementation of the outcomes of the project and assured them that ANIE will continue to provide support and provide platforms for continuation of the sustainability actions of the project. He assured the leadership of NECREDI of continued support and collaboration from ANIE as it was one of the strategic communities of ANIE.



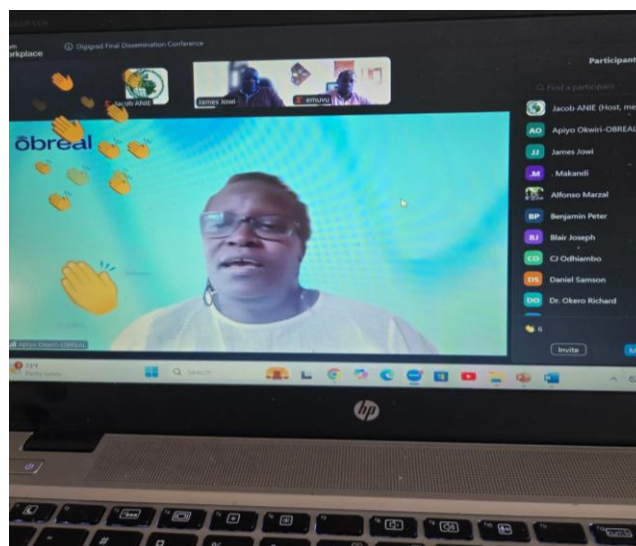
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Apiyo Okwiri, on behalf of OBREAL noted that DiGiGrad had proved that it wasn't any more a pilot project but had proven training models, tested digital resources, created partnerships and an already functional network of researchers. She emphasised the need to scale up the outcomes of the project through institutionalisation, expansion of the network and development of new projects and partnerships. She called for adoption of the Handbook as an institutional reference and support to NECREDI to grow beyond the network consortium and to be open to early career researchers from other African countries. She noted that NECREDI had an important role to play in supporting mentorship, joint research and knowledge exchanges. She noted that through the DiGiGrad project, the project partners were already developing new projects which is a strong indication that the networks would continue to flourish. She noted that even with the limited resources available, DiGiGrad managed to achieve quite a lot. She urged the African partner universities to make use of the materials and resources developed through the project. She expressed the appreciation of OBREAL of the great work relation with ANIE in coordinating the project. She further thanked all the partners for their support, collaboration and contribution to the success of the project.



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8. CLOSING REMARKS

In the closing remarks, Dr. James Jowi, the Project Coordinator, extended heartfelt appreciation to all the partners who made this project a success. He specially thanked OBREAL Global for their support to ANIE in coordinating the project. He thanked the African partners (Africa Nazarene University; Moi University; Bujumbura International University; University of Burundi; University of Cape Coast; Accra Metropolitan University; University of Juba and Upper Nile University) and the European partners (University of Maastricht, UCLL Leuven, Sapienza and Extremadura University) for the great team work and collaboration they eschewed during the implementation of the project.

He thanked the international office practitioners, supervisors and the early career researchers for their dedication, curiosity, and resilience which were the driving force behind DiGiGrad’s impact. He thanked the leads of the various work packages for their guidance and commitment that ensured that this initiative was not just a program, but a transformative experience. He thanked the European Commission for their invaluable financial support that enabled the project to reimagine postgraduate training and research in Africa through digital innovation and internationalisation. He thanked the EU Project Officer responsible for the project for the useful and continued guidance.

He assured the participants that the networks built, the skills gained, and the confidence attained will continue to be of immense use and will inspire them keep pushing boundaries, to remain curious, and to lead with purpose in the digital age. He noted that the project had shown that historic imbalances in North-South collaborations can be changed through such projects.



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ANNEX – Attendance List

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1	Jaume Fortuny	Obreal Global
2	Karine Hindrix	UCLL-BE
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