

Assistance in the Preparation of Research Grant Proposals for STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

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Lecturers have the main task in carrying out the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, namely Education, Research, and Community Service. Through research, they contribute to the development of useful new theories and discoveries in various fields. However, until 2023, only 10.6% of STAI Ihyaul Ulum lecturers are actively involved in research and community service programs. The method used for the implementation of this service is Participatory Research for Action (PAR). The main obstacle faced is the limitations in formulating problems and preparing proposals by standards. To overcome this, an intensive training and mentoring program was held using the Participatory Research Action (PAR) method for 10 permanent lecturers. The conclusion is that PAT increases the knowledge and understanding of participants, but further assistance is needed so that participants are more proficient in compiling credible research and critical literature reviews. Specifically, this activity succeeded in increasing the knowledge and understanding of participants, continuous assistance is needed to ensure that all participants have a deep and consistent understanding in compiling previous research, critical literature review, and credible research methods.



Introduction

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 49 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Higher Education explains that lecturers are professional educators and scientists with the main task of transforming, developing, and disseminating science, technology, and art through education, research, and community service. (Zulkifli et al., 2019). The regulation also regulates national standards that must be met by universities, including the duties of lecturers in carrying out the Tri Dharma of Higher Education which consists of Education, Research, and Community Service. (Johnson et al., 2024).

In the field of education, lecturers are responsible for transforming science, technology, and art to students through the teaching and learning process. This includes

the preparation of effective curriculum, teaching, and evaluation as well as the use of innovative learning methods. Meanwhile, lecturers are also expected to research to develop and deepen science, technology, art, and sports. This research not only enriches the nation's culture and identity but also increases competitiveness in the global arena. Through research, lecturers contribute to discoveries and the development of theories that can be applied in various fields (Rahmat & Mirnawati, 2020). In Community Service, lecturers play a role in disseminating the results of research and science to the community. This can be done through various service programs that aim to improve community welfare and provide solutions to problems faced by the community (Jobling & Naldi, 2014).

In addition to fulfilling the obligations contained in the Tri Dharma, research and publication activities also play an important role in the development of lecturers' academic careers. (Darmalaksana, 2020). Through the publication of research results in scientific journals, lecturers can gain recognition for their scientific contributions, which in turn can support their promotion to functional positions. These functional positions, ranging from Expert Assistant to Professor (Professor), not only reflect academic achievement but also determine the position and role of lecturers in academic decision-making at the institution where they work. (Noor, 2010). Lecturers who are active in research and publications also have the potential to obtain research grants, both domestically and internationally, which can further support their research activities. These grants often include funding for research equipment, publication costs, and costs for attending scientific conferences, all of which contribute to the scientific development of lecturers. Therefore, lecturers need to continue to deepen their knowledge, innovate in learning methods, and be active in scientific research and publications. All of this is not only to fulfill the obligations of the profession but also to contribute to the advancement of science and technology as well as the welfare of the wider community. (Carrión-Mero et al., 2021).

To support the career development of lecturers, foundations and the government provide various research grants. One of the strategic forms of this effort is through research assistance programs, scientific publications, and community service (Litapdimas) held by the Directorate of Islamic Religious Higher Education (Diktis) of the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag). The Litapdimas program aims to improve the quality of research and community service within Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI). In the 2023 fiscal year, Diktis will provide a larger assistance quota for private PTKI lecturers. This step aims to provide more space and opportunities for lecturers at private PTKI so that they can develop their research, publish research results, and carry out community service. With this support, it is hoped that the academic quality and lecturers' contribution to the development of science and technology can be further improved. (Retnowati et al., 2018).

According to Zulkifli et al., basic writing skills are very important for lecturers who want to participate in competitive grants, because research proposals and community service require a good ability to convey ideas and arguments in writing. It seems that the

efforts that have been made to improve the competence of lecturers in the preparation of research grant proposals and community service have been quite diverse and inclusive such as seminars, trainings, workshops, and assistance in the preparation of research proposals with online and offline (face-to-face) approaches have been used to ensure that lecturers can access the necessary training and resources according to their preferences and availability (Lalu Zulkifli, 2019). With these various methods, educational institutions can effectively support lecturers in developing their skills in drafting competitive grant proposals. This not only improves their academic abilities but also prepares them to succeed in competing for grants that support research and community service.

The Islamic College (STAI) Ihyaul Ulum is a private Islamic higher education institution under the auspices of the Ihyaul Ulum Dukun Gresik Islamic boarding school. This institution was established in 2002 and obtained an operating permit from the Director General of Islamic Institutions of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in 2003. STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik manages two undergraduate (S1) study programs, namely Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Economics. In 2023, STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik will have 16 permanent lecturers and 17 non-permanent lecturers who play an active role in developing the institution. As of 2023, only 10.6% of STAI Ihyaul Ulum lecturers have been actively involved in research assistance and community service programs, both financed by the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) and by other agencies. Meanwhile, the other 89.4% have not and/or missed the opportunity to participate in the assistance program, both as chairmen and members. One of the main obstacles faced by lecturers in active involvement in research assistance programs is their limited ability to formulate problems and strategies for preparing proposals by the established template. This resulted in their proposals not being approved and funded.

The very limited participation rate of lecturers in national grants has a significant impact on the self-development of lecturers and the progress of institutions and universities as a whole. In Indonesia, as in many developing countries, national grants are one of the main sources of support for scientific research and academic development. However, the limited number of lecturers who manage to obtain these grants is often a major obstacle to improving the quality of higher education and research contributions. Among the impacts of limited lecturer participation in national grants are (a) low self-development of lecturers. Lecturers who do not have access to or opportunities to participate in national grants tend to have more limited opportunities to develop research and scientific publication skills. This can hinder their ability to generate new knowledge, innovate, and update curricula and teaching methods. And (b) limitations in the development of institutions and universities. National grants are not only important for the development of individual lecturers but also the progress of the institution as a whole. Institutions that support their lecturers in obtaining grants usually have a competitive advantage in research and publication, which in turn increases the institution's reputation and attractiveness for students and researchers.

Method

The method used for the implementation of this service is Participatory Research for Action (PAR). The cycle of steps to implement PAR includes several main stages, which can be adapted in the context of improving the ability to prepare research grant proposals, namely problem identification, action planning, implementation of actions, evaluation and reflection, revision actions, and dissemination of results and implementation. The mentoring activity aims to improve both the quantity and quality of research grant proposals prepared by STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik lecturers. The target of this mentoring program is 10 permanent lecturers from the Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Economics Study Program at STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik. (Sugiyono, 2013).

Results and Discussion

Assistance in the Preparation of Research Grant Proposals for STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik Lecturers using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method in this service activity using the sharing-session, training, clinic, and evaluation methods. This method does not wait until the completion of the nine materials to do exercises and clinics, but all problem-solving strategies are applied simultaneously along with the learning of each material. The nine materials in question are (1) Understanding Grant Requirements, (2) Identification of Research Problems, (3) Formulating Research Titles, (4) Background Preparation, (5) Preparation of Previous Research, (6) Preparation of Literature Review, (7) Research Methodology, (8) Budgeting and Work Plan, and (9) Preparation of Bibliography.

Sharing-Session

This activity aims to improve the ability of STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik lecturers to prepare research grant proposals, focusing on the practical experience of resource persons who have successfully obtained grants from various clusters. Discussions between participants and resource persons refer to existing research guidelines and emphasize strategies that are not explicitly stated in the guidelines. Some of the key points discussed included an understanding of grant criteria and requirements, as well as best practices in drafting proposals. The speakers highlighted common mistakes and provided tips for meeting grant requirements, especially for lecturers who have a great chance of becoming the leader of the proposing team in the interdisciplinary cluster. However, only a few lecturers took advantage of this opportunity, with only one proposal successfully passing funding out of several submitted. Proposers are required to pay attention to aspects such as the number of team members, college clusters, relevance of disciplines, as well as academic degrees and functional positions. The importance of formulating a short, concise, and clear research title is also emphasized, as well as how to design a strong, evidence-based background. In the literature review, the proposer is encouraged to use references from scientific journals published in the last ten years and compile a research roadmap. The preparation of research methods must include approaches, methods, data sources, instruments, and analysis techniques, arranged in detail but concisely. In

budgeting and work plans, the resource persons emphasized the importance of realistic and detailed budgeting and the preparation of a structured work plan. Proposers are also reminded to ensure the references used come from credible sources and list the bibliography completely and consistently, using reference management applications such as Mendeley or Zotero.



Figure 1 Sharing-Session between Resource Person and Participants Exercise

In this training method, the training process is carried out gradually per session. The first to third sessions are focused on refreshing the material and affirming concepts that will be applied in the hands-on exercises in the following sessions. Starting from the fourth session, participants began to engage in hands-on exercises, such as drafting an effective and persuasive research background. In the fourth session, after the speakers explained the material, participants were asked to immediately practice the preparation of the background based on the title they had determined. This method allows participants to understand and master the material through hands-on application so that their ability to construct an effective background can be improved.

Participants are directed to compile paragraphs by following certain indicators that have been explained in the sharing session. These indicators include (1) Usefulness of the Problem: Explain the importance of the problem raised and the benefits that can be obtained from its solution. (2) Problem Exploration: Dig deeper into the problem, including the causes, impacts, and who is affected. (3) Results of Previous Research: Refer to relevant previous research to provide context and a strong theoretical basis. (4) Problem Solving Solutions: Propose concrete solutions to solve problems based on previous analysis and research results (Yuliastini et al., 2024).

By following these indicators, participants are expected to be able to construct coherent and comprehensive paragraphs, which not only describe the problem clearly, but also demonstrate relevance, and usefulness, and offer solutions that are data-driven and reference-based.

Clinic

The implementation of the clinic is almost the same as training. After the exercise, the results of the participants' work were immediately reviewed by the resource persons who provided notes on the participants' Word documents. During the clinic session, some sentences were replaced because they were less assertive or too long, to ensure a dense redaction and make room for other indicators in the background. Participants often have not been critical in determining the position of the indicators, so the development of the background is less convincing of the importance of the research. Participants have reached the problem-solving solution stage, and resource persons help find digital references to complete the study. In conclusion, the clinic session is a process of diagnosing the participant's negligence in preparing a proposal, as well as providing recommendations and improvements to improve the participant's work results.



Figure 2
Resource persons are clicking the results of the participants' work.

Evaluation

The evaluation in this service activity is only focused on increasing the knowledge of the participants, by the material provided, and is more exploratory to the participants' answers after participating in all the materials from the first to the ninth session. This aims to ensure that participants understand the concepts and information conveyed during the training. Regarding the skills aspect, the evaluation showed that some participants had completed a simple draft of their proposals. This indicates that there has been progress in their ability to apply the knowledge gained into practice. In addition, one proposal is ready to be submitted, indicating that the participant has reached the expected level of readiness.

However, given the time constraints that existed, many participants have not been able to fully complete their draft proposals. Therefore, mentoring continues to help them refine their proposals. This mentoring aims to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to develop proposals that are ready to be submitted for the 2025 Litapdimas research grant. With continuous guidance, it is hoped that all participants can improve their skills in writing quality research proposals and meet the set grant requirements.

Table 1
Results of evaluation of service activities

NO.	Criterion	Assessment Results				Std. Deviation
		Min	Max	Sum	Mean	
1.	What is the Litapdimas research cluster along with the requirements for the proposer and the outcome of each cluster?	2	4	33	3,30	0,823
2.	What are the ways to identify research problems	2	4	32	3,20	0,789
3.	What are the steps in compiling a good and appropriate research title?	2	4	35	3,50	0,707
4.	What are the indicators to consider in formulating the research background?	2	4	34	3,40	0,699
5.	What are the effective strategies for developing previous research?	2	4	30	3,00	0,816
6.	How to compile a critical and in-depth literature review	2	4	32	3,20	0,789
7.	How to concoct credible and credible research methods?	2	4	32	3,20	0,632
8.	What are the right strategies for drafting budgeting and effective research work plans	2	4	32	3,20	0,789
9.	How to compile a bibliography by the applicable rules	2	4	34	3,40	0,699

All criteria get a good average score, ranging from 3.00 to 3.50. This shows that in general, participants have a fairly good understanding of the various aspects of the research assessed. Criterion 3 (preparation of research titles) and Criterion 9 (preparation of bibliography), both have the highest average values (3.50 and 3.40) with the lowest standard deviation (0.707 and 0.699). This shows that the participant's understanding of the preparation of titles and bibliographies is very good and consistent. Participants demonstrated a strong understanding and a positive assessment of these two aspects, which are important components of structured research. Criterion 5 (strategies for structuring previous studies) This criterion obtained the lowest mean score (3.00) and a larger standard deviation (0.816), indicating a greater variation in assessment among

participants. This indicates that participants may have difficulties or have a mixed understanding of strategies for structuring previous research. As a result, this activity succeeded in increasing the knowledge and understanding of participants, specifically in the preparation of previous research, literature review, and research methods. Although the mean scores for literature review and research methods were also quite good (3.20), the variation in assessment (standard deviation of 0.789 for both criteria) suggests that some participants may need more guidance. Thus, continuous assistance is needed to ensure that all participants have a deep and consistent understanding of compiling previous research, critical literature review, and credible research methods.

Follow-up

Based on the agreement between the service team and lecturers who participated in the assistance activities for the preparation of research grant proposals at STAI Ihyaul Ulum Gresik, to continue to support the improvement of lecturer qualifications, a discussion forum and study group, as well as a mentorship program, were formed that are members of the WhatsApp group. This establishment aims to facilitate communication and collaboration between participants so that the proposal preparation process can run more effectively and directionally. Here's the explanation:

1. Discussion forums and study groups

Bi-weekly during/online discussions that discuss various research methodologies with case studies and experience sharing. In addition, discussions about tutorials on the use of research databases, access to scientific literature, and other resources.

2. Program Mentorship

Tri-weekly mentoring sessions during/online by experienced mentors who provide direct feedback and guidance. With these steps, it is hoped that STAI Hyaul Ulum Gresik lecturers can improve their ability to prepare quality research grant proposals so that more proposals succeed in obtaining funding.

Conclusion

This training succeeded in increasing participants' knowledge about strategies for drafting research grant proposals. However, participants must remain proactive in seeking up-to-date information related to various changes, especially in the requirements for preparing research grant proposals such as Litapdimas. Specifically, this activity succeeded in increasing the knowledge and understanding of participants, continuous assistance is needed to ensure that all participants have a deep and consistent understanding in compiling previous research, critical literature review, and credible research methods.

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