International Journal of Innovative Information Systems & Technology Research 14(4):171-180, Oct-Dec, 2026

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.23512536

Impact of Institutional Repository Utilization On Research Output of Postgraduate Students in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The study was conducted to examine the Impact of Institutional Repository Utilization On Research Output of Postgraduate Students in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. two objectives, two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated. The population of the study was 1,272 postgraduate students from four federal universities in south-south zone. The study adopted a sample size of 408 using the Bill Golden Formula and proportionate sampling technique for distribution across the universities. A 56-item self-structured questionnaire titled: Impact of Institutional Repositories on Research Output Questionnaire (IIRROQ) designed on 4-point rating scale was used to elicit data. The instrument was validated to ascertain face, content and measurement units, and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.082. 408 questionnaires were distributed, but 355 were found valid and used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at on a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that open access policy and digital skills, had a high positive influence on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south Nigeria. It was also revealed that institutional repositories had a positive influence by promoting access to research information thereby enhancing postgraduate students' research output in the zone. The study recommended amongst others, that universities pay attention to implementing and compliance to open access policy , training and retraining of postgraduate students in skill relating to open repositories, procurement and regular maintenance of repository equipment, funding and support, provisioning technological and alternative power supply, encouragement and education of postgraduate students, improved storage systems and creation of awareness and advocacy programmes for the sustainability of institutional repositories.
Keywords: Institutional Repository, Utilization, Research output, open access policy, Digital Skill.

INTRODUCTION

The academic terrain has no doubt been challenged for some years with difficulty in disseminating research findings. This is occasioned by the ever-increasing high cost of journals, which are the traditional means of research communication within these climes. Moreover, economic constraints facing academic publishers have also added to this dilemma. Academics and other researchers have their works

stored in various digital forms not accessible to upcoming generation of scholars giving rise to myriads of undiscovered scholarly works especially in universities. In Nigeria, universities are grouped into federal and state owned. The former are institutions owned, financed and managed by the federal government, while the latter is governed by the states.

Federal universities are institutions vested with the responsibility of teaching and research and are crucial in the development of skilled professionals, generation of new knowledge and economic development. Through faculty members and students, they advance knowledge and facilitate specialization in various fields of knowledge. This is reinforced through the postgraduate school programmes.

Post graduate students are students who have further education beyond the undergraduate level (Rauf, 2025). In other words, one who is studying for a second higher degree, often referred to as a graduate of research student based on the fact that serious research work begins at this level (Ajiboye, et al, 2022). These programmes often offer opportunities to specialize train and develop new skills in a chosen subject and career path. They are research intensive and culminate in projects that contribute to knowledge. Hidadane and Khelfa, (2023) outlined three basic functions of universities as: education or training, scientific research and community services. As part of fulfilling their functions in tandem with faculty members, postgraduate students can access and create a variety of information and allied resources which universities can organize, make available and preserve. This can become one of the essential factors for enhancing academic productivity as well as improving visibility and image of universities. Succinctly, the model of scholarly communication and dissemination has changed over time. This is due to the dynamic nature of the academic community and technological advancements, infrastructure, social practices of publishing in institutions especially universities. Consequently, institutional repositories could be a new paradigm towards this shift.

An institutional repository (IR) could be defined as a base for conserving the indigenous content of an institution (Sambo, Okonoko & Akanbi, 2022). It can also be referred to as a digital archive that can centralize, preserve and make accessible the intellectual output of an institution (Canadian Association Research Libraries, 2022). By its nature, an institutional repository is a digital archive of an institution like a university that can store and make publicly accessible its scholarly output (Symulevich & Boczar, 2025).In a nutshell, it is a hub for collecting, preserving and disseminating an institution's research teaching materials as well as intellectual property. Institutional repositories seem to have gained ground in developed countries, but are relatively new in developing countries like Nigeria. The Centre for World University in its 2018-2019 ranking of top universities based its assessment on some factors such as quality of teaching, alumni employment, equality of faculty research output, quantity of publications, influence and citations. Research came at the top with a 70% score (Centre for World University Ranking, 2020). These rankings were made possible as a result of visible institutional repositories (Anene, Ozor & Baro, 2020).

In the same vein, it was not until a few years ago that the National Universities Commission made a call that encouraged academic libraries to provide access to information resources in other to increase access and visibility (NUC 2007, cited in Anene, Ozor & Baro, 2020). These repositories are very pivotal and play a crucial role through: open access policy and digital skills.

Open Access Policy in institutional repositories is designed to ensure anyone is given freedom to access or download its digital content without any barriers or fees (Kodua-Ntim, 2025). By making research freely available, IR archive and preserve intellectual output ultimately to secure its accessibility for future generations. Moreover, it increases the number of citations, downloads and readers, leading to greater impact for the authors (Fujita et al, 2025), facilitation or collaboration and wider audience for knowledge sharing. Open access policies are one of the features that make IR play an imperative role in the academic and research landscape. They are mechanisms used by institutions in managing and preserving digital content with the aim of making them discoverable, accessible and usable by other researchers globally;

Digital skills are a set of skills for operating environment (Enweani and Nwankwo, 2024). Nwankwo and Okeke (2024) view IR as centralized digital collections that provide access to scholarly resources. As a result, there is need for acquisition of skills for effective "IR" use and management for content

acquisition, selection, loading of research output. It refers to the ability to find, evaluate, use and create digital content efficiently in the repository system. Digital skills allow individuals to navigate and make sense of the digital world (Diseiye, Ukebeinje, Oladokun & Kakwagh, 2024). They include several abilities that promote the access, use, management and creation of digital information and digital tools (Bashir, et al, 2021). An institutional repository is a digital technology. Therefore, there is need for users to be digitally competent and literate to reap the dividends. These skills make it easier to use the IR and enhance access to digital content and opportunities, enabling students collaborate with peers and authors globally. In other words, digital skills ensure adaptability to using such platforms;

Availability of Facilities refers to the acquisition of technical infrastructure for keeping repositories functional and secure (Roth Fritz et al, 2025). These include technical support, internet gadgets, service providers, software solutions, stable network supply and other services and tools that make IR viable. These facilities include computer hardware and software, CD ROMs, memory cards, networks, satellite resources, telecommunication facilities, adequate bandwidth size, internet connectivity are imperative for IRs to function as they remain largely the wheel on which the IRs revolve. Conversely, digital repositories cannot exist effectively without them. The availability of ICT and other infrastructures is essential to the adoption, development, sustainability of IR because they determine the way, flexibility and effectiveness, sorting, digitization and storage of information resources in a repository will be carried out (Ugwunwa & Yacob, 2023). The IT infrastructure enables IRs to make research output visible and accessible globally, specialized storage ensures that digital content is preserved for posterity preventing loss of institutional intellectual asset, software, servers and hard drives make centralization of content otherwise fragmented in departmental servers easier to manage. Furthermore, robust, fast and stable network infrastructure enable users find content easily thereby increasing download counts and citation rates. They are therefore viewed as critical for transforming research into accessible, visible and sustainable assets. In essence, postgraduate students and other researchers may face challenges that may impede the progress and overall quality of their output;

Networking infrastructure connotes adequate internet connectivity Usman & Kiran, 2021). Institutional repositories are digital archives for research output. Therefore, there must be a robust bandwidth, reliable network to enhance use and updating of content. Njoku, Njoku, Chukwuwa and Rivichandran, 2023 define networking infrastructure as hardware and software protocols and architectural systems that link, store and disseminate digital scholarly outputs. It is the connection between local campus assets and global research networks which makes accessibility to data long term preservation and secure interoperability possible. A functional IR is dependent on highly available local or cloud-based servers equipped with robust storage for managing large files, data sets and multimedia objects. It therefore connotes that there should be high speed internet connectivity for rapid uploads, downloads and seamless users access. Software are also installed to be accessed by the hardware which in turn determined by the type of repository the institution would like to build (Imoro & Saurombe, 2024). IRs should also have backing or contingency plan in times of disasters such as fire outbreaks, floods or serve clash. This is to reduce exposure of IR to cyber-attacks as a result of poor performance of network firewall (Chisita & Sparausha, 2021; cited in Njoku, Njoku, Chukwu & Rivichandran, 2023). Basically, networking infrastructure serves as the backbone connecting an institutions digital research output to the global research ecosystem. It enables universities to safely store, index and share same;

Frequency of accessibility relates to level of usage in terms of deposit and downloads from open access institutional repositories in universities. It also involves user experience interface, archiving services, policy and automatic harvesting (Kodua-Ntim, 2025). They are the features for usage crucial to its sustainability. It is therefore referred to as frequency of use (Jabban, Rehman & Hashmi, 2020). It connotes how often users interface with repositories and the rate at which contents, user accessibility and utilization. It also describes how often contents are downloadable and discoverable using search engines. In the functionality of IR, user satisfaction and acceptance is proportional to improved interface. In other words, when an IR is user friendly, there will be increase in utilization (Gonzalez - Perez, Ramirez - Montoya & Garcia - Penalvo, 2021). Usability is the benchmark for evaluating the essence and benefits of

digital scholarship. It is a metric for assessing how often and by whom scholarly assets are viewed thus providing assessment for repository's growth, research impact and ROI (Return on Investment). They are therefore key performance indicators (PI's) of the repository. ROI is a financial means of evaluating the profitability or efficiency of IR as well as justifying its investment decisions;

Period of accessibility is the role of IR in ensuring long term access and usability of digital content necessary for promoting scientific knowledge and advancing collaboration among researchers; invariably facilitating structured metadata, controlled access and compliance using the principles of FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (Tinyiko, 2025). This mechanism manages the research data cycle form the point of generation, collection analysis, documentation, preservation and sharing. It also enhances effective management of data, promotes transparency, reproducibility and creativity in research. It also refers to the lifecycle of deposited works which are categorized into permanent or long-term and delayed or short term (Central European University Library, 2026). The essence of this mechanism is to ensure that knowledge generated is not lost over time and that research information is preserved for future generations. Institutional repositories are digital archives for creating, disseminating and storage of research outputs. This feature ensures that this cycle is sustained. There is no gain saying on the vital role played by institutional repositories in open access movement, scholarly communication, preservation of knowledge, promotion of interdisciplinary collaborations, long-term accessibility of outputs, advancing the frontiers of knowledge innovation and enhancing societal impact of research also known as research output.

Research output has been defined as the process whereby educators and others within the academic community, willingly tender their works for publishing (Akporhonor & Allanah, 2020). These could take the form of peer reviews, digital published books, theses and dissertations

Research outputs are any form of research productivity that enters into public domain as a result of research activities including publications, presentations and other forms of dissemination. All over the world, educational institutions place a high premium on the quality (content) and quantity (consistency) of research to fulfil their mission. However, this is determined by access to available information. Oladeji and Adeyeye, (2025) stated that the vehicle to research productivity is the accessibility of subscribed online scholarly databases through the library. Mole and Edewor, (2021) reiterate that quality research output is a colossus of the integration of relevant scholarly information resources (print and non-print). Invariably, research output or productivity is the result of research activities enhanced through the accessibility and use of information resources. Since research is at the core of university education (Akai, Ufod & Udoh, 2025), postgraduate students remain one of the pillars of creating information resources that are kept in the institutional repositories.

Statement of the Problem

Digital technology or institutional repository has reshaped the management of information resources in today's knowledge driven society. Globally, it is now common place for universities to engage in gathering, storage and dissemination of intellectual output. Research is at the core of universities functions, and indeed for postgraduate students, because it is an integral part of the graduate school curriculum. However, despite the benefits digital technology bring to the table, postgraduate students are still meeting a brick-wall in accessing research information to carry out their work within these climes and there is a serious need to checkmate this challenge so students can access information for carrying out qualitative and quantitative research as well as meet stipulated deadlines.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the influence of institutional repositories with reference to same. Against this backdrop, this study examined the influence of institutional repositories on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of institutional repositories on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities south-south, Nigeria specifically, the study sight to:

1. To determine the impact of open access policy on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria;

2. To investigate the impact of digital skills on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria;

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of open access policy on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of digital skills on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of open access polices on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of digital skills on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of institutional repositories on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria**.** The population of the study was 1,272. It comprised of postgraduate students admitted in 2025/2026 session in the Faculty of Education from four federal universities in South-South. They are: University of Port Harcourt (348), University of Uyo (340), University of Calabar (318) and University of Benin (266).

the sample size of the study was 408 postgraduate students. this was derived by the application of the statistical formula of William Bill Golden (2004) . The study employed a structured questionnaire titled: "Influence of Institutional Repositories on Research Output Questionnaire" (IRROQ) for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two sections: Section A was used to elicit biodata, while Section B consists of eight (8) clusters conveying the research questions derived from the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was structured based on the modified 4-point likert scale (ranging from 4-1) The respondents indicated either: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to the items on the questionnaire. nThe instrument was subject to face and content validation. The instrument was validated by researcher's supervisors and two experts from the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University. The study adopted Cronbach Alpha to establish the reliability of the instrument which stood at 0.88

Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The expected mean criterion for each item was 2.50. All items below the expected mean criterion were rejected and accepted if above. The hypotheses were tested using ANOVA and multiple regression statistics on a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the impact of open access policy on research output of federal universities in south-south, Nigeria?*

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of open access policy on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Uniport N = 110			Unical N = 96			Uniuyo N = 76			Uniben N = 73		
		$\bar{x}$	Std	Rmk	$\bar{x}$	Std	Rmk	$\bar{x}$	Std	Rmk	$\bar{x}$	Std	Rmk
1	Use of research information in open access is not restricted at anytime	3.61	.73	Agree	3.61	.66	Agree	3.63	.59	Agree	3.64	.65	Agree
2	Open Access enables research reach a wider audience	3.41	.68	Agree	3.52	.56	Agree	3.25	.66	Agree	3.59	.57	Agree
3	Open Access has minimal or no financial costs in publishing research	3.18	.87	Agree	3.16	.87	Agree	3.28	.76	Agree	3.29	.74	Agree
4	Open access enhances research collaborations	3.31	.65	Agree	3.35	.74	Agree	3.24	.69	Agree	3.52	.63	Agree
5	Open access promotes authorship in open journals	3.31	.75	Agree	3.32	.77	Agree	3.18	.81	Agree	3.51	.63	Agree
6	Allows in-depth coverage of subject for publishing of papers and creative works	3.26	.73	Agree	3.23	.75	Agree	3.25	.64	Agree	3.47	.65	Agree
7	Open Access protects authorship rights, privileges/plagiarism concerns in research	3.24	.89	Agree	3.09	.86	Agree	3.20	.82	Agree	3.53	.65	Agree
	Aggregate Mean	**3.33**	**.76**	**Agreed**	**3.33**	**.74**	**Agreed**	**3.29**	**.71**	**Agreed**	**3.51**	**.65**	**Agreed**

Table 1 shows the result on the influence of open access policy on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. The aggregate means and standard deviations of post graduate students in the Federal Universities shows that Uniport has (M = 3.33, Sd = .76), Unical (M

= 3.33, Sd = .74), Uniuyo (M = 3.29, Sd = .71) and Uniben (M = 3.51, Sd = .65) which implies that all the post graduate students agreed that open access policies has a high positive influence on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: *What is the impact of digital skills on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria?*

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation on the influence of digital skills on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Uniport N = 110			Unical N = 96			Uniuyo N = 76			Uniben N = 73		
		$\bar{x}$	*Std*	*Rmk*	$\bar{x}$	*Std*	*Rmk*	$\bar{x}$	*Std*	*Rmk*	$\bar{x}$	*Std*	*Rmk*
1	Enables me use search engines to find research information	3.36	.70	Agree	3.38	.81	Agree	3.60	.52	Agree	3.16	.88	Agree
2	I can download research content for use	3.40	.69	Agree	3.32	.66	Agree	3.47	.58	Agree	3.09	.87	Agree
3	I can create research content with ease	3.29	.68	Agree	3.26	.71	Agree	3.42	.64	Agree	3.20	.80	Agree
4	I can track usage and impact of content for qualitative and quantitative research	3.27	.81	Agree	3.28	.74	Agree	3.34	.61	Agree	3.11	.86	Agree
5	I can use the software packages for research	3.32	.65	Agree	3.25	.75	Agree	3.30	.59	Agree	3.32	.88	Agree
6	I am able to search and locate content in open access journals	3.28	.77	Agree	3.18	.87	Agree	3.45	.65	Agree	3.20	.86	Agree
7	I can upload content which creates visibility for my research works	3.30	.74	Agree	3.19	.84	Agree	3.41	.70	Agree	3.24	.75	Agree
	Aggregate Mean	**3.32**	**.72**	**Agreed**	**3.27**	**.77**	**Agreed**	**3.43**	**.61**	**Agreed**	**3.19**	**.84**	**Agreed**

Table 2 shows the result on the influence of digital skills on research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. The aggregate means and standard deviations of post graduate students in the Federal Universities shows that Uniport has (M = 3.32, Sd = .72), Unical (M = 3.27, Sd = .77), Uniuyo (M = 3.43, Sd = .61) and Uniben (M = 3.19, Sd = .84) which implies that all the post graduate students agreed that digital skills has a high positive influence on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Testing

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of open access polices on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA results on mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of open access polices on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	105.671	3	35.224	3.877	.009
Within Groups	3189.061	351	9.086		
Total	**3294.732**	**354**			

Table 3 shows a one-way ANOVA between subjects conducted to determine if there was any significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of open access polices on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. The results show that; F(3, 351) = 3.877, p = .009. Since the p-value of .009 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the influence of open access on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria was therefore rejected.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of digital skills on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA results on mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of digital skills on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	114.977	3	38.326	3.740	.011
Within Groups	3597.316	351	10.249		
Total	**3712.293**	**354**			

Table 4 shows a one-way ANOVA between subjects conducted to determine if there was any significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of digital skills on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. The results show that; F(3, 351) = 4.740, p = .011. Since the p-value of .011 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of postgraduate students on the impact of digital skills on research output in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria was therefore rejected, which implies that; there was a significant difference.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Impact of Open Access Policy on Research Output of Postgraduate Students

The findings revealed that open access policy has a high positive influence on research output of postgraduate students. They highlighted the benefits of open access policy such as unlimited and unrestricted use of research information at any time, use of research from a wider audience, minimal financial costs, enhanced research collaboration amongst others. This is in alignment with the assertions of Umahi, Wonu and David (2023) that postgraduate students recognize the benefits of open access for academic research. In the same vein, Oyediran and Okone (2024) asserted that open access resources cannot be quantified as it enhances the conduct of a qualified and error-free research.

Furthermore, Uriewhe, Nina-Okpousung and Udoh (2025) collaborate that the implementation of open access guideline due to situational factors and inadequate training hinder the dissemination of research output and knowledge of scholarly outputs contrary to the core objectives of open access policy aimed at removing the barriers to knowledge, stating that this deficiency not only hampers the expansion knowledge but also limits its potential contribution to the broader community. This is further buttressed by Otolo and Saibakumo (2021) that open access resource improves research productivity in comparison to subscription-based journals thereby promoting open access principles. Also in a study, Onyebinama, Anunobi and Onyebinama (2021) articulate open access resources as determinants of research output submission, while Huang et al (2020) also assert high performance in universities in Latin America and Africa and the use of open access to research output is becoming increasingly important to the global research community and society.

This is also corroborated by Udochukwu and Shidi (2026 that a high level of productivity by postgraduate students is enhanced by open access repositories. They also emphasized that other factors may be influencing research output which could also enhance its implementation. These factors in their assertion include awareness, improved user engagement strategies and integration of repositories in academic workflows to fully harness its benefits. Summarily, open access significantly contributes to the enrichment of postgraduate students' research by providing qualitative and quantitative research

information, in-depth coverage, collaborative research and alleviating financial barriers thereby promoting access to improved research.

Impact of Digital Skills on Research Output of Postgraduate Students

The findings revealed that being digitally proficient has a high positive influence on research output of postgraduate students, which enhances their ability to search, download, create, track, locate and upload content. These skills are necessary to enhance capacity to search and retrieve relevant information to carry out research activities. This is in tandem with a study by Ukaegbu and Ig-Worlu (2025) that information retrieval literacy, digital communication digital content creation enhances academic performance of postgraduate students. Igyuve (2026) also corroborates that students with high information, literacy skills demonstrated through search strategies needs assessments who actively apply them in research and writing boosts their performance.

Onivehu, Ahmed and Oserada (2024) assert that without information searching skills in accessing Electronic Information Resources (EIRs), there would not be effective use of online databases for research output of postgraduate students. The outcome of this study digital resonates with Suleiman et al (2025) that digital literacy strengths and improvement skills is a determinant and has a substantial impact in facilitating accessibility to research information and presentation of institutional repositories and by extension scholarly output. Invariably, this study maintains that the possession of digital skills is vital for accessing online resources for research among postgraduate students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the research concludes that open access policy, environment, networking infrastructure, frequency and period of accessibility in institutional repositories positively influence research output of postgraduate students in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. This transcends to the fact that IR is a veritable digital mechanism in accessing information resources by postgraduate students within the zone under study. As a result of this, difficulty and frustration in accessing research information is reduced to a great extent leading to improved qualitative and quantitative research output by postgraduate students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Universities should not only make policies but ensure implementation and encouragement of open access by creating advocacy and awareness of open access repositories organizing seminars, workshop, conferences, inculcating open access in academic workflow. There should also be monitoring enhanced also by National University Commission (NUC) as part of accreditation procedures on all aspects of repositories to ensure strict compliance in order to foster student's motivation and research engagement;
2. There should be training and retraining of graduate students in mastering of skills relating to repositories. This should be integrated in the curriculum, seminars, workshops organized for graduate students to promote open access repositories and its benefits;

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