



Enhancing Employability of Accounting Graduates in Uganda and Nigeria by Integrating Employability Skills into Accounting Education using a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Approach (DESIRED)



Co-funded by the European Union

Project No. 101228707

ACTIVITY REPORT

Sensitization of the 8th CFO LA Cohort on the DESIRED Project



An awareness session for the 8th Cohort of the CFO Leadership Academy, Onomo Hotel, Kampala 19th March, 2026.

A Project Implemented by:



MAT ABACUS
Business School



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1. Introduction

This report outlines the sensitization engagement conducted with the 8th Cohort of the Chief Finance Officer Leadership Academy (CFO LA) at MAT ABACUS Business School. The session, held on 19th March 2026 at Onomo Hotel, Kampala, introduced participants to the DESIRED Project and enhanced their understanding of how they can position themselves as strategic partners in its implementation.

The CFO Leadership Academy (CFO LA), a flagship program of MAT ABACUS Business School delivered in partnership with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda (ICPAU), plays a critical role within the DESIRED Project. Established in 2019 to address leadership capacity gaps in finance and accounting, the Academy brings together senior professionals from leading corporates, financial institutions, and government parastatals.

Notably, the sensitization engagement was delivered at a strategically opportune time, coinciding with the cohort's final session of the 12-module program. One of the key modules previously delivered focused on leveraging coaching within the workplace. This timing significantly enhanced the relevance and impact of the sensitization, as participants had already been equipped with coaching methodologies and leadership approaches.

As a result, the session not only introduced the DESIRED Project but also reinforced the practical application of the models the participants had previously engaged with. It provided a platform for the CFOs to contribute meaningfully to the finance profession by participating as mentors within the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) framework.

This alignment strengthened their readiness, confidence, and intentionality in supporting students and their respective teams through structured mentorship.

2. Role of CFO Leadership Academy (CFO LA)

With the above as a backdrop, the CFO Leadership Academy (CFO LA) emerges as a critical enabler within the DESIRED Project framework. Participants in the program are sponsored by their respective organizations, reflecting strong institutional commitment to leadership development and professional excellence.

This unique positioning extends the engagement beyond individual participants to their organizations, thereby creating a strategic pathway for strengthening industry-academia collaboration and expanding opportunities for Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

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Within the project, we anticipate CFO LA participants and alumni serve as mentors, coaches, and industry role models. Their involvement contributes to:

- Translating academic/ book knowledge into practical workplace application
- Demonstrating professional standards and leadership in practice
- Providing guidance and exposure to real-world business environments

This positioning enables the project to leverage both individual expertise and institutional networks to enhance the relevance, quality, and sustainability of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) interventions.

3. Sensitization Session Content and Key Discussion

3.1 Overview of the DESIRED Project

The session commenced with a presentation of the DESIRED Project, outlining its rationale, objectives, and expected outcomes. Participants were introduced to the project's overarching goal of enhancing the employability of accounting graduates through the integration of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) approaches.

Key areas covered included:

- The project's strategic focus on bridging the gap between academic training and industry expectations
- Core activities that will be implemented
- Expected impact on students, higher education institutions, and industry stakeholders
- The role of WIL pedagogy in strengthening practical and experiential learning

3.2 Role of CFOs in Mentorship and WIL Implementation

The session clearly articulated the role of the CFO Leadership Academy participants within the DESIRED Project. Participants were formally invited to take on roles as mentors and coaches for students engaged in WIL activities.

This segment covered:

- Expectations of CFOs as mentors and role models
- Practical ways of engaging with students (mentorship, coaching, guest sessions, exposure opportunities)

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- Alignment of mentorship roles with the WIL pedagogical approaches adopted under the project

The key message was built on how the Participant's involvement would contribute to strengthening the quality and relevance of accounting education.

3.3 Linking Industry Experience to Student Needs

This component of the session focused on connecting the participants' professional journeys with the realities faced by accounting students. Through guided discussion, CFOs reflected on:

- The evolving demands of the accounting and finance profession
- Skills gaps observed among graduates entering the workforce
- The importance of mentorship, exposure, and practical experience in shaping career readiness

This discussion reinforced the relevance of the DESIRED Project and highlighted the critical role of industry practitioners in supporting student development.

3.4 Reflection on Participation and Institutional Linkages

The session also encouraged participants to reflect not only on their individual roles but also on the potential contribution of their respective organizations. Given that the participants are drawn from leading corporates and government institutions, the engagement opened up discussions on:

- Creating opportunities for student placements, internships, and exposure visits
- Providing real-world environments for practical learning
- Strengthening institutional collaboration between academia and industry

This positioned the CFOs as both individual contributors and institutional connectors within the DESIRED Project ecosystem.

4. Conclusion

The sensitization of the 8th Cohort of the CFO Leadership Academy marked an important step in advancing the DESIRED Project's industry engagement agenda. The session increased participants' understanding of how they can effectively position themselves as active contributors, particularly in supporting mentorship and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) interventions.

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CFO LA 8

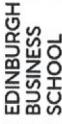
19th March 2026 Cohort 8 (Session 11)

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