

Terms of Reference: Compliance, Risk, and MEAL Officer for the Developing Research Excellence and Mentorship in Southeast Asia (SEA DREAM) Programme

Location:	Bangkok, Thailand
Organisation:	SEAMEO Secretariat
Department:	Programme and Development
Duration:	01.04.2025 – 31.01.2028 <i>The initial contract is set for a duration of three years, with the option to be extended for the full programme duration until September 2031.</i>
Benefits:	Competitive salary commensurate with experience; relocation package; health insurance; professional development opportunities.

Background:

About the Developing Research Excellence and Mentorship in Southeast Asia (SEA DREAM) Programme

Southeast Asia (SEA), a region composed of 11 nations and over 670 million individuals, shares a disproportionate burden of disease and mortality, with an estimated 5.6 million lives lost per year to endemic and emerging communicable diseases and even more to non-communicable diseases. Additionally, given the high population density and geographic location, SEA faces a significant healthcare burden and is vulnerable to natural disasters, putting it at high risk of the negative effects of climate change. As a result, there is a significant need to enable scientific collaboration and develop research leadership to tackle the region's emerging health threats.

The SEA DREAM programme, running from November 2024 until September 2031, will fund regional consortia through grants to produce excellent and outcome-focused discovery and translational research that addresses existing national and regional health priorities as well as emerging issues. SEA DREAM will enable the development of research excellence through generating impactful research that is translated into real-world solutions, policies and interventions, nurturing research leaders, fostering networks that enable regional collaboration, and strengthening equitable research ecosystems. A successful programme will see at least 8 regionally led consortia funded over an initial duration of 5 years to produce high quality scientific research on priority health themes for Southeast Asia. Anticipated themes include infectious diseases, climate change and health, mental health, and strengthening health systems and access to care.

About SEAMEO, Wellcome, and FCDO

The **Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization** (SEAMEO) strives to accelerate the use of science and technology solutions to address social, health, and environmental issues. SEAMEO works towards these results by generating evidence to inform policy making, implementing on-the-ground

projects, creating platforms for regional collaboration and mutual learning, fostering partnerships between stakeholders, and by enhancing the capacity of key personnel in ministries, institutions, and organisations. Within its mandate given by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education, SEAMEO places specific focus on enhancing research on health and climate priority themes. Therefore, SEAMEO aims to act as a regional partner to **Wellcome Trust** and the **UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)** to implement the SEA DREAM programme.

Wellcome, as a global charitable foundation established in 1936, supports science to solve urgent global health issues. Wellcome has proposed to work in collaboration with regional partners and the FCDO to fund, develop, and implement a programme focused on health research excellence and research leadership development particularly in low and middle income (LMIC) settings in Southeast Asia. The goal is to fund thematic research consortia to respond to shared strategic priorities where these align with national and regional priorities.

With the UK government's strategy for international development 2022, the UK has made a commitment to leadership on climate change and global health. The **FCDO** oversees cross-government efforts to deliver the strategy and aims to partner with LMIC and cooperate with sovereign wealth funds, international organisations and civil society to ensure LMIC can access the funding and support needed for them to deliver on their climate ambitions and to invest in the research and innovations needed to tackle national, regional, and global health challenges.

Position Overview:

The Compliance, Risk, and MEAL Officer serves as the principal focal point for risk management, regulatory compliance, and performance evaluation within the SEA DREAM Programme. This role is critical to maintaining programme integrity, ensuring the effective implementation of sub-award funding mechanisms, and enhancing accountability across the programme and funded research consortia.

The Officer will lead the design and execution of compliance frameworks, risk mitigation strategies, and MEAL methodologies that align with international donor requirements, including those set by FCDO and Wellcome Trust. This includes overseeing structured risk assessments, managing compliance audits, and ensuring adherence to programme governance structures. The role also involves training programme teams and research grantees in compliance protocols, risk mitigation planning, and MEAL best practices to strengthen programme oversight and impact measurement.

Additionally, the Compliance, Risk, and MEAL Officer will be responsible for ensuring that risks are continuously monitored, escalated when necessary, and mitigated in alignment with SEA DREAM's strategic objectives. Through proactive engagement with programme leadership, stakeholders, and donors, the Officer will facilitate knowledge-sharing and adaptive learning approaches to refine programme operations and enhance its long-term sustainability.

This role demands a high level of analytical skills, strategic thinking, and the ability to coordinate across various teams, including finance, grants management, and external partners. By embedding compliance, risk management, and MEAL into the programme's core functions, the Officer will ensure that SEA DREAM maintains its credibility, operational efficiency, and impact within the Southeast Asian research ecosystem.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Compliance and Risk Management

- Ensure SEA DREAM programme activities comply with SEAMEO Secretariat, FCDO, Wellcome Trust, and other donor requirements.
- Implement the SEA DREAM Risk Management Framework to systematically identify, assess, and manage risks across the programme.
- Develop and maintain a compliance framework, including policies, guidelines, and tools to support adherence to regulatory and funding requirements.
- Lead and coordinate due diligence checks for grant applicants. You will work closely with the Grants Manager, Grants Officer, as well as consultants for this.
- Conduct routine risk assessments using SEA DREAM's structured risk evaluation methodologies, documenting risks in the programme risk register, and tracking ownership.
- Establish and monitor key risk indicators to provide early warnings of changes in risk levels and potential threats to programme implementation.
- Conduct compliance audits and spot checks to ensure adherence to funding agreements and organisational policies.
- Work closely with the Finance Officer and Grants Team to ensure that financial transactions and grant management practices align with compliance policies.
- Provide guidance on dispute resolution related to non-compliance or funding irregularities.
- Support SEA DREAM Head of Programme in liaising with key stakeholders, including donors, to discuss escalated risk priorities and mitigation strategies.

2. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

- Lead the development and implementation, including management of consultants, of the SEA DREAM MEAL framework, ensuring it aligns with programme objectives, funding agreements, and best practices.
- Define and track key performance indicators (KPIs) related to programme implementation, financial management, and research outputs.
- Oversee the collection, management, and analysis of programme performance data, using established MEAL software and visualisation tools.
- Develop and implement structured proactive accountability processes that ensure accessible and timely updates on compliance, programme performance, risks, and corrective actions.
- Design and facilitate after-action reviews, risk mitigation workshops, and strategic learning sessions to improve programme effectiveness.

- Oversee and conduct baseline, midline, and endline evaluations of programme performance as well as research consortia.
- Implement adaptive learning processes, integrating insights from evaluations into future programme design and decision-making.

3. Reporting and Stakeholder Engagement

- Prepare detailed compliance, risk, and MEAL reports for internal and external stakeholders, including donors, governance bodies, and grantees, ensuring accountability and programme impact are clearly documented.
- Develop real-time risk dashboards and MEAL reports for review during monthly and quarterly meetings.
- Establish and manage a transparent complaint and feedback mechanism to allow stakeholders, including grantees and beneficiaries, to report concerns, provide input, and receive responses in a timely manner.
- Collaborate with research consortia and regional partners to strengthen impact evaluation and reporting accuracy.
- Serve as the primary focal point for MEAL-related queries, supporting programme staff and grantees in meeting reporting requirements.
- Support annual consortia learning forums, sharing findings, best practices, and recommendations for strategic programme enhancements.

4. Capacity Building and Advisory Support

- Design and deliver training programmes on compliance, risk management, and MEAL to SEA DREAM staff, grantees, and partners.
- Develop user-friendly compliance, risk assessment, and MEAL toolkits to standardise reporting across consortia.
- Provide advisory support to research teams, ensuring compliance with SEA DREAM's sub-award funding policies and ethical research standards.
- Assist in harmonising risk mitigation strategies across SEA DREAM's research consortia to improve programme resilience.
- Advise the SEA DREAM leadership and Steering Committee on risk trends, compliance issues, and recommendations for strengthening programme governance.

5. Other Duties

- Undertake other tasks as assigned by the Head of Programme to support the effective delivery of the SEA DREAM initiative.

Qualifications:

Education:

- Master's degree in International Development, Public Health, Social Sciences, Risk Management, or a related field.

Experience:

- Minimum five (5) years of experience in compliance, risk management, or MEAL roles within international development programmes.
- Strong knowledge of international development compliance frameworks. Knowledge of Wellcome Trust and FCDO policies is a strong advantage.
- Demonstrated expertise in risk assessment, internal auditing, and regulatory compliance within international grant management.
- Experience in designing and implementing MEAL frameworks and logic models for multi-stakeholder programmes.
- Experience conducting financial and operational risk audits, due diligence processes, and fraud prevention assessments.
- Experience working within the Southeast Asian context is a plus.

Skills:

- Proficiency in MEAL software, data visualization tools, and risk management systems.
- Proven ability to train and build the capacity of programme teams and research partners in compliance and MEAL methodologies.
- Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to coordinate complex schedules, prioritise and multitask effectively.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.

Attributes:

- Strong proactive problem-solving abilities, sound decision-making, and interpersonal skills, with the ability to build relationships and collaborate with stakeholders at all levels.
- Detailed knowledge of ethical standards, regulatory requirements, and best practices in research governance, and familiarity with global professional protocols.
- Highly organised, with attention to detail in record-keeping and reporting, and with the ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Culturally sensitive and able to work effectively in diverse environments.

HOW TO APPLY:

Applicants are required to submit their CV and cover letter to job@seameo.org by **7 March 2025**.