# RESEARCH PRESENTATION: BRIDGING AI AND REAL WORK

**Ubuntu Philosophy as a Bridge Between AI Capabilities and Organizational Reality**  
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**Supervisor:** Jemini Matiya  
**Meeting Date:** October 2025  
**Status:** Research Design Complete - Requesting Approval to Proceed

# THE RESEARCH QUESTION

## What Are We Actually Studying?

**The Core Question:**

**“Can Ubuntu philosophy bridge the gap between AI capabilities and real-world organizational work?”**

**What This Means:** - AI systems are technically impressive BUT often fail in real organizations - They don’t understand real workflows, hierarchies, or human collaboration - **Our research:** Can Ubuntu philosophy (African collaborative values) make AI systems that actually FIT how people work?

## Why This Matters

**The Problem We’re Investigating:**

Organizations worldwide struggle with AI integration: - ❌ AI tools ignore organizational hierarchies - ❌ AI doesn’t understand team collaboration - ❌ AI optimizes individuals, not teams - ❌ AI feels “alien” to organizational culture

**Research shows:** 35% productivity LOST because AI doesn’t align with how people actually work together.

**Our Research Question:** Can Ubuntu philosophy—which emphasizes “I am because we are”—provide the cultural framework that makes AI systems collaborate naturally with human teams?

# OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

## How Do You Study This Question?

**You can’t just theorize. You need to TEST it.**

**Our Approach:** 1. **Design:** Create an AI system explicitly based on Ubuntu principles 2. **Implement:** Deploy it in a real IT department 3. **Validate:** Interview staff to see if it actually bridges the gap 4. **Analyze:** Determine what works, what doesn’t, and why

**This is ACTION RESEARCH** - we’re not just studying theory, we’re testing whether Ubuntu-driven AI actually improves real collaboration.

## The Research Instrument: UGENTIC

**UGENTIC = Our Experimental Tool**

Think of this like: - **Medical Research:** You design a drug (tool) to test if it cures disease (question) - **Our Research:** We designed UGENTIC (tool) to test if Ubuntu bridges AI-workplace gaps (question)

**UGENTIC stands for:** Ubuntu-Driven Departmental Collective Intelligence

**What It Is:** - 6 AI agents representing IT department roles - Designed using Ubuntu philosophy principles - Deliberately built to test our research question

**Critical Point:** ✅ UGENTIC is our **research method**, not our research subject  
✅ The research asks: “Does this approach actually work?”  
✅ Interviews will tell us the answer

# UGENTIC AS RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

## Why We Needed to Build It

**The Challenge:** You can’t study “whether Ubuntu bridges AI-workplace gaps” without actually TRYING it.

**What We Built:** A test case - 6 AI agents for Sun International GrandWest IT department: - IT Manager (strategic) - Service Desk Manager (coordination) - IT Support, App Support, Network Support, Infrastructure (operational)

**Ubuntu Integration:** - Agents acknowledge each other’s expertise - Agents prioritize collective outcomes - Agents use collaborative language - Agents share knowledge openly

**Purpose:** Create a working example we can STUDY through interviews and observation.

## System Status (Tool Readiness)

**Current State:** ✅ Operational

**What This Means:** - ✅ The research tool is built and functional - ✅ We CAN conduct the actual research now - ⏳ But research isn’t COMPLETE until we validate with interviews

**Analogy:** - Building UGENTIC = Building the microscope - Running interviews = Actually using the microscope to study cells - We have the microscope ready. We need approval to study the cells.

# THE ACTUAL RESEARCH (What We Need Approval For)

## What the Research Actually Studies

**NOT:** - “Look at this cool system we built” - “Does UGENTIC work technically?” - “Aren’t AI agents amazing?”

**YES:** - “Does Ubuntu philosophy help AI integrate with real work?” - “Do IT staff experience UGENTIC differently than traditional AI?” - “Does collaborative AI actually improve departmental collaboration?” - “What factors make Ubuntu-driven AI succeed or fail?”

**The Research Subject:** Whether Ubuntu bridges AI-workplace gaps  
**The Research Tool:** UGENTIC (the thing we built to test this)  
**The Research Evidence:** Interviews + observations

## Research Questions (What Interviews Will Answer)

**Primary Research Question:** Can Ubuntu philosophy bridge the gap between AI capabilities and real organizational work?

**Secondary Questions (Interviews Will Address):**

1. **Do people notice Ubuntu principles in agent behavior?**
   * Do staff perceive collaborative AI as different from traditional AI?
   * What specific Ubuntu behaviors do they recognize?
2. **Does this improve collaboration?**
   * Do departments share knowledge more?
   * Do problems get solved faster?
   * Do teams coordinate better?
3. **What makes it work or not work?**
   * What organizational factors support Ubuntu-driven AI?
   * What barriers exist?
   * What would make it succeed in other organizations?

**Critical:** The system being operational means we CAN study these questions. Interviews provide the ANSWERS.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Mixed Methods Design

**Why Mixed Methods?** Because our question requires both understanding (qualitative) and measurement (quantitative).

**Qualitative Component (Primary):** - **What:** Semi-structured interviews with 10-14 GrandWest IT staff - **Why:** Understand HUMAN EXPERIENCE of working with Ubuntu-driven AI - **Questions Like:** - “How does UGENTIC compare to other AI tools you’ve used?” - “Do you notice collaborative behaviors in agent interactions?” - “Has this changed how your team works together?” - **Analysis:** Thematic analysis to identify patterns in staff experiences

**Quantitative Component (Supporting):** - **What:** Performance metrics (resolution times, coordination frequency) - **Why:** Measure whether collaboration actually improves - **Metrics:** Before/after comparisons of team coordination patterns

**Outcome:** Evidence showing whether/how Ubuntu philosophy bridges AI-workplace gaps in real organizational contexts.

## The Interview Plan (THE CRITICAL RESEARCH STEP)

**Who We’ll Interview:** - 1 IT Manager (strategic perspective) - 1 Service Desk Manager (tactical perspective)  
- 8-12 IT specialists (operational experience with agents)

**What We’re Studying Through Interviews:**

1. **Ubuntu Recognition**
   * Do staff notice collaborative behaviors?
   * What Ubuntu principles are visible in practice?
2. **Collaboration Impact**
   * Has departmental knowledge sharing improved?
   * Do teams coordinate differently?
   * What changed in daily work practices?
3. **Cultural Alignment**
   * Does UGENTIC fit GrandWest organizational culture?
   * What makes Ubuntu-driven AI work in this context?
   * What barriers exist?
4. **Practical Insights**
   * What would make this approach succeed elsewhere?
   * What factors are context-specific vs. generalizable?

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes each, recorded and transcribed

**Timeline:** October-November 2025 (as soon as ethics approved)

**Critical Point:** The interviews ARE the research. They provide evidence for whether Ubuntu actually bridges the gap we’re studying.

# RESEARCH PROGRESS

## What’s Complete: Research Design (87%)

**Research Design Phase - ✅ COMPLETE:**

✅ **Literature Review** (7,200 words) - Research gap identified: No studies combine Ubuntu + multi-agent AI + real organizations - 56 peer-reviewed sources (75% from 2024-2025) - Theoretical foundation established

✅ **Methodology Designed** (5,400 words) - Mixed methods approach justified - Interview protocols developed (76 questions) - Ethics framework established - Analysis approach specified

✅ **Research Instrument Built** (8,100 words documented) - UGENTIC operational and tested - Ubuntu principles implemented - Ready for research validation

✅ **Theoretical Framework** (9,400 words) - Discussion chapter drafted (based on design) - Research questions framed - Expected contributions articulated

✅ **Research Introduction & Conclusion** (8,320 words) - Problem statement clear - Research questions defined - Expected outcomes described

**Total:** 38,667 words of research design, theory, and methodology

## What’s Remaining: The Actual Research (13%)

**Research Validation Phase - ⏳ PENDING:**

⏳ **Ethics Approval** - Documents ready - Needs supervisor approval to submit

⏳ **Data Collection** (THE RESEARCH ITSELF) - Conduct 10-14 interviews - Gather observational data - Collect performance metrics

⏳ **Results & Analysis** (5,000-7,000 words) - Analyze interview transcripts - Identify themes and patterns - Answer research questions with evidence - **THIS IS THE ACTUAL RESEARCH OUTPUT**

**Key Point:** 87% = Research DESIGN complete  
13% = Actual RESEARCH (collecting and analyzing evidence)  
We need approval to move from design to execution.

## The Critical Distinction

**What We’ve Done:** - ✅ Identified the research gap - ✅ Designed the methodology - ✅ Built the research instrument (UGENTIC) - ✅ Prepared all research materials - ✅ Written theoretical framework

**What We Haven’t Done Yet (THE ACTUAL RESEARCH):** - ⏳ Collected evidence (interviews) - ⏳ Analyzed findings - ⏳ Answered research questions empirically

**Analogy:** - We’ve built the laboratory ✅ - We’ve designed the experiment ✅ - We’ve prepared all equipment ✅ - **We need approval to RUN the experiment** ⏳

# RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

## Why This Research Matters

**Academic Contribution:**

This would be the FIRST study to: - Combine Ubuntu philosophy + multi-agent AI + real organizations - Empirically test whether cultural values can bridge AI-workplace gaps - Provide evidence-based methodology for culturally-aligned AI

**Practical Contribution:**

If Ubuntu-driven AI works: - Organizations have a framework for better AI integration - Cultural values can guide technology design - SMEs have evidence-based approach to AI adoption

If Ubuntu-driven AI doesn’t work (or works partially): - We learn what fails and why - We identify barriers and limitations - We understand what contexts suit this approach

**Either outcome advances knowledge.**

## The Broader Question We’re Addressing

**Global Challenge:** Organizations worldwide struggle to integrate AI with human work.

**Our Research Asks:** Can indigenous African philosophy provide answers that Western approaches miss?

**If Yes:** - Ubuntu offers a model for human-centered AI - Cultural wisdom guides technological innovation - South African thought leadership on global stage

**If No:** - We understand limitations - We identify what’s needed instead - We contribute to more nuanced understanding

**Both outcomes are valuable research contributions.**

# WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

## The Approval Request (Clear and Simple)

**We Need:**

1. ✅ **Supervisor Approval** - Approve proposal on Moodle
   * Submitted October 1
   * Waiting for your formal approval
2. ✅ **Ethics Support** - Support ethics submission
   * All documents prepared
   * Ready to submit immediately
3. ✅ **Permission to Proceed** - Conduct research phase
   * Interview GrandWest IT staff
   * Collect the evidence that answers our research questions

**What We’re NOT Asking For:** - ❌ Funding - ❌ Resources - ❌ Extensions - ❌ Special treatment

**What We ARE Asking For:** ✅ Permission to conduct the research itself (interviews + analysis)

## Why This Approval Matters Now

**Timeline Reality:**

**Today (Oct 8):** 58 days to December 5 deadline

**Scenario A - Approve Today:** - Ethics submission this week - Ethics review 2-3 weeks - Interviews November (4 weeks) - Analysis & Chapter 5 November (2 weeks) - ✅ Submit on time

**Scenario B - Delay 2 Weeks:** - Ethics submission late October - Compressed timeline - ⚠️ Risky but possible

**Scenario C - Delay 4+ Weeks:** - Cannot complete interviews in time - 🚫 Research incomplete

**Critical Point:** Research DESIGN is done (87%). Research EXECUTION needs 4-6 weeks minimum.

# ADDRESSING POTENTIAL CONCERNS

## “Is the system really necessary for the research?”

**Yes.**

**Why:** - You can’t study “whether Ubuntu bridges AI-workplace gaps” without implementing it - Theory alone doesn’t answer the question - you need real experience - Interviews ask: “Does this ACTUALLY work in practice?”

**Without UGENTIC:** - We could theorize about Ubuntu-driven AI (not research) - We could survey opinions about hypothetical systems (weak evidence) - We couldn’t validate whether the approach ACTUALLY works

**With UGENTIC:** - ✅ Staff have real experience with Ubuntu-driven AI - ✅ We can study actual behavior vs. hypothetical - ✅ Evidence is grounded in lived experience

The system is the research method, not optional.

## “Isn’t this too ambitious for Honours?”

**No - It’s Appropriate.**

**Research Scope (Manageable):** - Single organization case study ✅ - 10-14 interviews (standard qualitative sample) ✅ - Mixed methods (appropriate for Honours) ✅ - 4-month timeframe (tight but achievable) ✅

**Technical Complexity (Managed):** - System already built (not building during research phase) ✅ - Focus on organizational impact, not technical details ✅ - Non-technical chapters written accessibly ✅

**Evidence of Capability:** - 38,667 words written to publication quality ✅ - 56 academic sources reviewed ✅ - Rigorous methodology designed ✅ - Professional execution demonstrated ✅

**Honours research should demonstrate independent capability. This does.**

## “What if interviews show it doesn’t work?”

**That’s FINE - It’s Still Valid Research.**

**Research Goal:** Answer the question with evidence  
**NOT:** Prove the system is amazing

**Three Possible Outcomes (All Valid):**

**Outcome 1 - Works Well:** - Ubuntu-driven AI improves collaboration - Staff prefer it to traditional AI - Evidence supports hypothesis - **Contribution:** Validated approach for others to use

**Outcome 2 - Doesn’t Work:** - Ubuntu-driven AI shows no improvement - Staff find no meaningful difference - Evidence contradicts hypothesis - **Contribution:** Identified what doesn’t work and why

**Outcome 3 - Mixed Results (Most Likely):** - Works in some contexts, not others - Some Ubuntu principles work, others don’t - Complex nuanced findings - **Contribution:** Realistic understanding of limits and potential

**All three produce complete, valid dissertations.**

## “Why Ubuntu specifically?”

**Three Strategic Reasons:**

**1. Research Gap:** - Multi-agent AI: Well-studied ✅ - Ubuntu philosophy: Growing interest ✅ - Ubuntu + Multi-agent + Real organizations: **Never studied ❌** - This fills an identified gap

**2. Cultural Authenticity:** - Research in South Africa - Should engage South African philosophy - Not just imposing Western frameworks - Authentic cultural integration

**3. Practical Alignment:** - IT departments need collaboration ✅ - Ubuntu emphasizes collective wellbeing ✅ - Natural philosophical fit for the problem ✅

**Not arbitrary - strategically justified.**

# RESEARCH ETHICS

## Ethical Considerations (All Addressed)

**Participant Protection:** - ✅ Voluntary participation - ✅ Informed consent - ✅ Anonymization guaranteed - ✅ Right to withdraw - ✅ Minimal risk (talking about work experience)

**Data Protection:** - ✅ POPIA compliance - ✅ Secure storage - ✅ Confidential transcription - ✅ Anonymized reporting

**Organizational Ethics:** - ✅ GrandWest aware and supportive - ✅ No disruption to operations - ✅ Interviews outside work hours (if needed) - ✅ Results shared with organization

**Academic Integrity:** - ✅ Rigorous methodology - ✅ Honest reporting (whatever results show) - ✅ Proper attribution - ✅ Transparent limitations

**All ethics documents prepared and ready for submission.**

# THE BOTTOM LINE

## What We’re Really Asking

**The Simple Question:**

“Can we conduct our research?”

**Translation:** - Research question: Defined ✅ - Methodology: Designed ✅ - Research instrument: Built ✅ - Ethics documents: Prepared ✅ - Timeline: Achievable ✅ - Student capability: Proven ✅

**Missing piece:** Your approval to proceed with the research itself (interviews)

## What This Represents

**This is NOT:** - ❌ “We built a cool system, approve it” - ❌ “Technical demo of AI agents” - ❌ Engineering project

**This IS:** - ✅ “Can Ubuntu bridge AI-workplace gaps?” - ✅ Empirical research with real evidence - ✅ Mixed methods investigation - ✅ Original academic contribution

**The system (UGENTIC) is HOW we study the question.**  
**The interviews are WHERE we get the answers.**  
**The research is ABOUT whether Ubuntu philosophy works for this.**

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

## Immediate Next Steps (If Approved)

**This Week:** 1. You approve proposal on Moodle 2. I submit complete ethics application 3. We schedule November check-in

**2-3 Weeks:** - Ethics committee reviews - I finalize interview logistics - Prepare data collection materials

**4-6 Weeks (November):** - Conduct 10-14 interviews - Gather observational data - Begin analysis

**7-8 Weeks (Late November):** - Complete analysis - Write Chapter 5 (Results - THE ACTUAL RESEARCH OUTPUT) - Finalize dissertation

**December 5:** - Submit complete dissertation - Research question answered with evidence

## The Research Completion Path

**87% Complete = Research DESIGNED**

What’s Done: - Problem identified - Literature reviewed - Method developed - Tool built - Theory articulated

**13% Remaining = Research EXECUTED**

What’s Needed: - Collect evidence (interviews) - Analyze findings - Answer research questions

**We need your approval to move from design to execution.**

# CLOSING STATEMENT

## This Is About the Research Question

**Five Months Ago:** I asked a question: “Can Ubuntu philosophy bridge the gap between AI capabilities and real organizational work?”

**Today:** I’ve designed rigorous research to answer it. I’ve built the tool to test it. I’ve prepared everything needed to collect evidence.

**What I Need:** Permission to conduct the research itself - to interview staff and analyze whether Ubuntu-driven AI actually works in practice.

**The Question Remains Unanswered:** - Not because of lack of preparation ✅ - Not because of lack of capability ✅ - Not because of insufficient timeline ✅

**But because I need supervisor approval to proceed with the research phase.**

## The Core Truth

**Research Question:** Can Ubuntu bridge AI-workplace gaps?

**Research Method:** Build Ubuntu-driven AI and study whether it works

**Research Evidence:** Interviews + observations show whether/how it works

**Research Status:** - Method prepared ✅ - Evidence collection blocked ⏳ - Waiting for approval to proceed

**This is action research about cultural philosophy in AI, not a tech demo.**

# THANK YOU

Thank you for considering this research.

**What I’m asking:** - Approve the research to proceed - Support ethics submission - Allow evidence collection (interviews)

**What I’m offering:** - Rigorous empirical research - Original academic contribution - Evidence-based answers to important questions

**Let’s discover together whether Ubuntu philosophy can bridge the gap between AI capabilities and real organizational work.**

**Presentation Prepared:** October 8, 2025  
**Purpose:** Request approval to conduct research (interviews)  
**File:** Planning/JEMINI\_PRESENTATION\_RESEARCH\_FOCUSED\_Oct8.md  
**Key Point:** UGENTIC is the research tool, not the research subject

# APPENDIX: Quick Reference

**Research Question:** Can Ubuntu philosophy bridge the gap between AI capabilities and real organizational work?

**Research Method:** Action research - build Ubuntu-driven AI system, deploy in real organization, validate through interviews

**Research Tool:** UGENTIC (the experimental AI system)

**Research Evidence:** 10-14 interviews + observational data + performance metrics

**Research Output:** Chapter 5 (Results) - empirical evidence showing whether/how Ubuntu bridges the gap

**What We Need:** Approval to conduct interviews (the actual research)

**Timeline:** 58 days to deadline - need approval soon to complete research phase

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**All supporting documents available upon request.**