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## **Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standards of Programmes in Nigerian Universities Edited for FEC's Approval**

The period 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2004 marked an important landmark in the history of Nigerian University System as the National Universities Commission (NUC) held a workshop that led to the merger of a set of benchmarks and the existing Minimum Academic Standards of programmes taught in Nigerian Universities. Prior to this workshop which had as its theme, “*Towards the Production of Better Skilled and Entrepreneurial Graduates*”, there had been a growing concern by the Nigerian public about the relevance of the curriculum of Nigerian universities to national development. Similarly at that time, the Minimum Academic Standards had existed for 15 years having been developed in 1989 and was thus long overdue for review. In 2001, a set of Benchmarks were developed with the intension of providing the framework for curriculum revision.

In order to have an all inclusive review process, the NUC conducted a national needs assessment survey to find out those aspects of the curriculum of Nigerian Universities that needed to be adjusted for relevance. The Commission also developed a comprehensive entrepreneurial studies curriculum for all undergraduates in the Nigerian University System irrespective of their course of study. Consequently, the workshop served the purpose of reviewing the Minimum Academic Standards and merging the Benchmarks and the revised Minimum Academic Standard documents. The results of the Survey of Needs Assessment of Nigerian Graduates and the developed Entrepreneurial Studies Curriculum were also incorporated into the document during the workshop. In all, there were about 300 senior academics (mainly Professors) from all disciplines who participated in the exercise. All Vice-Chancellors from Nigerian Universities also participated in the review exercise.

The workshop culminated in the production of the Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) Documents which were circulated to Nigerian Universities for their comments. The comments from the universities were also incorporated in the document in

another workshop involving seasoned Nigerian academics. Afterwards, it passed through the scrutiny and subsequent approval of the Quality Assurance Committee of the NUC Board and the Board itself.

Preparatory to presenting the documents to the Federal Executive Council for its approval through the Federal Ministry of Education, the NUC, again put together panels of distinguished professors for a final editing of the documents especially since some other BMAS have been developed since the 2004 workshop. The recent additions were for programmes which previously had none. About thirty five (35) Professors across Nigerian Universities worked for two days at the NUC Secretariat from the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 on the final editing of the BMAS. .

As a reminder and as featured in the NUC *Monday Memo* of August, 2004, six major system-wide standards were proposed in the revised BMAS. These were:

**Insertion of new concepts and topics and deletion of outdated topics:** Outdated topics were deleted from the curriculum now in use in all the disciplines. In their place were inserted more modern topics that are relevant to the needs of the Nigerian economy and emerging global markets.

**Compulsory entrepreneurial studies of 4 units:** To be taken during the second and first semesters of 200 and 300 levels respectively.

**Adoption of minimum CPGA of 1.5:** This increase in the minimum CGPA erases the “Pass” degree classification, thus making “Third Class” Honours, the minimum class of degree. This further translates to a situation where any student with CGPA that is lower than 1.5 will regress to probation and may lose studentship.

**Adoption of new staff profile:** The academic staff ratio of Professors to Senior Lecturers to Lecturers now set at 20:35:45 rather than 20:30:50. The ratio of Teaching to Non-teaching staff has been set to respond to modern-day trends.

**Adoption of new teacher/student ratios:** New teacher: student ratios have been set to respond to modern trends and the prevailing environment.

**All practical courses now compulsory:** All practical courses are now compulsory to ensure that students acquire the necessary practical skills to perform efficiently on the job after graduation.

With respect to specific disciplines some changes were made. Notable amongst these are:

### **Education**

In view of the observed inadequate knowledge of teaching subject content by Education graduates and in order to better prepare teachers for the school system, the four years of post-UME training was found to be inadequate. The duration of five years as it has been implemented for other professions was adopted.

### **Medicine**

Nomenclature for Medical programme should be Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) for Dentistry. Consequently, the MD as currently obtained in Nigerian Universities will cease to exist as a postgraduate academic medical qualification. It will be replaced by the Ph.D.

Candidates to be admitted into the degree programmes shall possess a first degree of at least second class lower division in the medical, pre-medical, biological, chemical, physical or social sciences provided such candidates also had credit pass in Physics, Chemistry, Biology,

Mathematics and English Language at the SSCE, WASC, GCE 'O' level, NECO or its equivalent.

## **NUC Scoping and Sensitization Forum on Research Assessment for National Development**

The National Universities Commission (NUC), through the initiative of the Executive Secretary, Professor Julius A. Okojie, and as part of Federal Government's Reform Agenda on Education, convened a Scoping and Sensitization Forum on Research Assessment and National Development on March 6, 2007.

Over the years, there has been a growing concern about the quality of research and its attendant effects on teaching, training and product quality in the Nigerian University System (NUS), as well as contributions to national Research and Development (R&D). It is also known world-wide that research and product output/quality are enhanced by the concerted and sustainable collaborative efforts of Research Institutes and specialized mandate-driven agencies with dedicated support from development partners and the organized Private Sector.

It is against this background that the NUC considered it fit to reinvigorate R&D efforts, having due regard to its recent successes evident in the products of the *Nigerian Universities Research and Development Fair (NURESDEF)* and the *Voyage of Discovery* television serial documentaries. The main objectives of the Forum were as follows:

- (i) Profile the contributions of the Nigerian University System (NUS) in national R&D and their strategies, in the light of recent Minimum Academic Standards for Postgraduate Programmes;
- (ii) Capture the significant contributions of the Nigerian Research Institute System (NRIS); based on many Exhibitions; and
- (iii) Map out strategies and modalities for enhanced and formalized collaboration between NUS and NRIS with a view to evolving a nationally and globally productive synergy for national development.

The initiative involves two Phases:

- (i) Scoping and Sensitization Forum, comprising a carefully selected and balanced participation profile; and
- (ii) A proposed National Workshop involving Multi - stakeholders, utilizing the product of phase one (Forum) as a Working Document.

The Forum attracted 44 participants drawn from Deans of Postgraduate Schools, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructures, Raw Materials Research and Development Council, Education Trust Fund, National Biotechnology Development Agency, National Board for Technology Incubation, National Research Institute for Chemical Technology, Petroleum Development Trust Fund, among others. The Keynote Address was presented by the Executive Secretary, Prof. Julius

A. Okojie, who emphasized the need for evolving an active product-driven National Research and Development System.

The Forum highlighted issues relating to the modest advances Nigeria has made in R&D which have received little support from end-users, particularly foreign conglomerates. Attention was also drawn to:

- (i) the seemingly disjointed, and inward-looking efforts of universities and research institutes and the need for formalized collaboration and partnership; and
- (ii) lack of unified assessment of formalities of research output and utilizable products, and the need for a formal code of the process for assessment, prototype testing, incubation, adoption and massification; and the need for formulating a compulsory local content in capacity building and institutional strengthening for Nigerian R&D Code for multinational companies that have glaringly domesticated their R&D in their home base(s). This would be in consonance with the policy for Oil and Gas Sector as was commendably done by the Federal Government.

At the end of the Forum, the participants evolved a 4-pronged pathway for the consideration of the Proposed National Workshop. These were in the areas of:

- (a) Research Typology and Harmonisation;
- (b) Research Funding and Partnerships;
- (c) Dissemination of Research Output; and
- (d) Sustainability Factors.

The Forum Organizing Committee comprised Prof. N. O. Adedipe as Chairman, while Prof. D. I. Ker and Prof. W. Herbert were members. Mrs. C. N. Goddy-Nnadi served as the Secretary.

## Executive Secretary Meets with Pro-Chancellors of State Universities

The Executive Secretary had an interactive session with the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of State Universities on Thursday 29 March, 2007. The forum provided an opportunity for the Executive Secretary to discuss and share ideas on a wide range of issues pertaining to:

- New consolidated salary and how it would affect internal brain drain between Federal and State Universities.
- Funding
- Programmes Audit including the prospects of programmes consolidation in State Universities to ensure effective teaching and research.
- University Best Practices and University Governance and
- Security

The Committee expressed appreciation to the Executive Secretary for making out time to meet with the Pro-chancellors and requested him to ensure that he holds regular briefing sessions with the Committee as they considered this particular interactive session very rewarding.

The Executive Secretary assured the Committee that he would lend all necessary support for the growth and development of State Universities in Nigeria.

## **Executive Secretary Receives Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China**

The Executive Secretary, Professor Julius A. Okojie received in audience, the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China, Mr. Jiang Weiming and the Third Secretary, Ms Jiang Ping Ping.

The Executive Secretary having warmly welcomed the Chinese Delegation to the NUC Secretariat, received congratulatory words from the Counselor over the positive changes being injected into the Nigerian University System.

A wide range of bilateral issues on linkages and collaboration between Nigerian and Chinese Universities were discussed.



Professor Julius A. Okojie flanked by  
Mr. Jiang Weiming and Ms Jiang Ping Ping

## **Happy Ed-Maulud-UI-Nabiy**

*Monday Bulletin* wishes the NUC Muslim Community a happy Ed- Maulud-UI-Nabiy celebrations.

***Best wishes for the week.***