

NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION



GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

APRIL, 2023

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Preamble

The guidelines for the establishment of Private Open Universities derive in part from the “Guidelines for establishing Institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria” which has been reproduced in Section 1 below to serve as reference. Other applicable guidelines are: Guidelines on Open Education Resources (see section...of this document), Guidelines on E-Learning (see section...of this document), Guidelines on Transnational Education; Quality Assurance Regulations, Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards, among others.

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria has Approved Guidelines for the Establishment of Higher Institutions of Learning in Nigeria. Relevant excerpts contained in the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Amendment Act No E3 LFN 2004 are reproduced hereunder.

1. CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The Underlisted Criteria Pertain to the Establishment of Conventional (Face- to-Face) Degree-Awarding Institutions:

1. The academic structure and spread of discipline of the proposed institution shall be such as would cater for areas of felt needs.
2. Evidence shall be produced to show that the proposed institution would be provided with adequate: -
 - a. funding, both capital and recurrent;
 - b. academic and support staff.
3. The proposed staffing guidelines shall meet with current guidelines of the National Universities Commission as stipulated in the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).
4. The Federal Government must be satisfied that, on approval being given, the sources of funding and necessary funds will be available.
5. The National Universities Commission shall ascertain and satisfy itself that:

- a. The fixed and enabling assets – i.e., funds, land, movable and immovable assets – are appropriate for establishing the institution in the light of such factors as:
 - i. the type of degree-awarding institution envisaged
 - ii. its philosophy and objectives; and
 - iii. the cost of goods and services prevailing at the time.
 - b. The applicant has supplied a concrete and guaranteed source of financial support for the University to the tune of at least ₦200 million annually over a period of five years.
6. A proposed institution shall have a clearly spelt-out master plan for infrastructural and programme development for at least 20 to 25 years, which shall make adequate provision for:
- a. plan space, aesthetic beauty and fixed financial assets;
 - b.
 - i. minimum land area of 100 hectares for a degree-awarding institution in a salutary site.
 - ii. The site distance from an urban complex shall take into account availability of municipal services, including water, transportation, private accommodation, communication and other consequential inadequate in its community.
7.
 - a. A proposed institution shall have an adequate environmental base and shall be open to all Nigerians and foreigners irrespective of ethnic derivation, social status, religious or political persuasion.
 - b. Accordingly, its laws and statutes shall not conflict with the conventional responsibilities in academia or interfere with avowed traditional institutional autonomy.
8. To pre-empt problems of inadequate municipal facilities, the proposed institution shall have a clear policy on student and staff accommodation and catering services.
9. The proposed institution shall have a well-articulated mission and set of objectives which may be original and innovative but unequivocally in consonance with the socio-economic and political aspirations of Nigeria.

10. To create and sustain credibility and confidence from the start, the administrative structure of the proposed institution shall not depart too radically from established norms.
11. The library, laboratory and workshop facilities including instructional tools and consumables shall be adequate and there shall be long-range plans for sustaining them.
12. The planning and feasibility report of the proposed institution shall include proposed contracts and affiliation with existing similar institutions and plans for co-operation and interaction.

2. Who Can Establish a Private Open University?

A private open university may be sponsored or owned by any of the following, that is:-

2.2.1 by a Company incorporated in Nigeria; or

2.2.2 by an individual or an association of individuals who are citizens of Nigeria, and who satisfy the criteria set out in the schedule to the Act for the establishment of institutions; or an expatriate or foreigner duly verified in accordance with general guidelines set out hitherto.

2.3 An Application for the establishment of a private open university in Nigeria shall be made to the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC) who will in turn recommend to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) through the **Minister of Education** for approval.

2.4 No private open university shall benefit from the education tax with respect to a degree-awarding institution

2.5 No person shall be granted approval to establish a private open university unless the criteria set out in these guidelines have been satisfied.

3 CONDITIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

In the fulfilment of the above criteria as relevant the following conditions shall apply to the establishment of an open university in Nigeria:

Note: The underlisted pertain to the establishment of open universities by the Government and private ownership.

- 3.1 Application in writing, addressed to the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, stating the intent to establish a private open university.
- 3.2 The minimum land area requirement shall be five hectares (5) for the main campus, and there shall be adequate office accommodation for staff and facilities at the study centre(s), where applicable.
- 3.3 E-learning requirements contained in the guidelines for e-learning in Nigerian universities of this document shall apply
- 3.4 Quality Assurance guidelines of the National Universities Commission shall apply.
- 3.5 **One million naira** is to be paid in favour of NUC for ten copies of application forms.
- 3.6 **Ten million naira** is to be paid in favour of the NUC for processing of the application (inclusive of verification visits, the advice of experts and service charges and inspection, evaluation and general assessment of documents and physical facilities).
- 3.7 Academic brief: This shall include the following, among others:
 - i. Institutional ODL policy
 - ii. Action plan
 - iii. Blended learning model
 - iv. Partnership framework
 - v. Learning support system
 - vi. Business model and sustainability framework
 - vii. Service-learning framework
 - viii. Service charges framework that would be submitted to NUC indicating all the possible costs elements and justifications for subsequent approval and implementation. This is without prejudice to competitive pricing/charges by universities.
 - ix. All other requirements prescribed by the NUC.
- 3.8 A clear statement of the mandate of the institution shall be submitted as a separate document. In addition, a statement spelling out a clear pathway and experience of the Promoter in educational service delivery leading to the application is mandatory.

- 3.9 Evidence of qualification and competency in ODL by members of the Planning and Implementation Committee.
- 3.10 Evidence of the qualifications, competency and experience in ODL of designated officers of the proposed institution shall be presented for validation by the NUC.
- 3.11 Physical master-plan for the main campus and each regional study centre.
- 3.12 Certificate of incorporation/ registration of proprietor (where applicable).
- 3.13 Deed of Assignment/ Certificate of Occupancy. Where an institution proposes to begin from a temporary site, evidence of a long-term lease, a deed of ownership or conveyance of the temporary property, and a C of O of the land for the permanent site must be provided.
- 3.11 University law.
- 3.12 Letter of available liquid cash, as well as plans for the expected cash flow over a period of at least five years.
- 3.13 Bank guarantee of funds to the tune of ₦200 million annually from a reputable bank.
- 3.14 Memorandum of understanding with proximate institutions for residential school for conduct of tutorials and practicum.
- 3.15 Submission of sample course materials for analysis.

4.1 STEPS IN THE PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE OPEN UNIVERSITIES

- 4.1 Letter of intent addressed to the Executive Secretary from the Promoters/Proprietors of the Proposed Private Open University, stating reasons for wanting to establish a Private Open University (POU):** Interested applicants are expected to apply in writing to the Executive Secretary, NUC, stating the intent for the establishment of the University. The declaration of intent should include, in brief, the name of the proposed open university, the location, the mission and vision, the nature of the proposed open university and its proposed focal niche in the current Nigerian university system.

4.2 Invitation by the NUC for a brief interaction with the promoters of the POU to ascertain the level of readiness: On the receipt of the letter of intent, the prospective proprietors are invited to the Commission for an interaction to determine their suitability to undertake the Open University project especially in terms of their integrity and the financial sustainability of the Open University when eventually approved.

4.3 Collection of Application Forms after the payment of 1 Million Naira: Following due consideration of the application in writing, individuals or corporate bodies seeking to establish a Private Open University are expected to send a representative to come to the Commission with the prescribed payment to collect a set of ten (10) application forms in person. Upon collection of the forms, copies of guidelines and other requirements are also given for proper guidance. Other clarifications are also sought and given as appropriate.

4.4 Submission of Application Forms and relevant documents/ Payment of 10 Million Naira processing fee: The completed application forms are forwarded with a non-refundable processing fee in favour of the NUC along with one or more of the following documents, if ready:

- i. draft academic brief which should include a chapter on the institutional ODL policy
- ii. draft physical master plan
- iii. draft university law
- iv. sample course materials

4.5 Intensive review/analysis of documents by experts in relevant NUC Directorates (DEPU/DODeL): Following submission of the completed application forms and relevant documents, the documents are forwarded to the relevant divisions of the DEPU/DODeL for analysis after which their comments and observations on such documents are transmitted to the proposed Open University.

4.6 First Site Verification visit by DEPU/DODeL: The DEPU/DODeL undertakes a verification visit to the proposed Open University to review their documents with them on a one-on-one basis and to assess the level of compliance with NUC guidelines. During this visit, inspection of physical facilities is also undertaken to ascertain their adequacy for the proposed colleges for the first phase. In addition, courtesy calls are paid to the government establishments that provide infrastructural facilities such as electricity, water and telecommunications, including the traditional rulers and local government headquarters in the area where the proposed Open University is located. These visits are undertaken to

solicit support of the host community for the proposed Open University and also let them know that a university is being proposed in that area. This visit is considered very important as it reveals, whether the Proprietor is committed to the project, and it is a prerequisite to the final verification visit.

- 4.7 Security screening of proprietors and Board of Trustees:** The purpose of screening the Proprietor (Promoter) and members of the Board of Trustees of the proposed Open University is to enable the Government to ascertain the credibility of those who are sponsoring the university project and to ensure that they are not persons of questionable character.
- 4.8 Revision of Documentation by Proprietor based on report by the DEPU/DODeL:** Following the first visit, the proposed Open University is expected to revise its documents and undertake the modifications of its facilities to reflect the prescriptions given during the visit. The revised documents are forwarded to the NUC for assessment of compliance. If it is found that progress has been made in that direction, the second (final) verification visit is scheduled to the proposed Open University.
- 4.9 Second Site Verification Visit:** This is expected to be the final visit to the proposed Open University, depending on the level of compliance with the given prescriptions. A final inspection of physical facilities is also carried out to ascertain whether they are in consonance with the approved NUC norms.
- 4.10** The documents are reviewed along with the Planning & Implementation Committee with a view to perfecting them to an acceptable level. The documents giving evidence of available liquid cash are inspected and analysed by DEPU/DODeL. The Bank Guarantee of Funds to the tune of ₦200 million will also be sighted along with other legal documents for eventual submission to the NUC.
- 4.11 Approval by NUC management:** The DEPU/DODeL, on returning to the NUC from the final verification visit, writes a comprehensive report, with scores, to the NUC Management for its consideration and further necessary action.
- 4.12 Approval by NUC Board:** The NUC Management, upon receipt of DEPU/DODeL report on the proposed Open University, considers and makes an appropriate recommendation to the University Development Committee (UDC) of the NUC Board for its consideration, after which the latter submits it to the Board for ratification. The Board, thereafter, forwards its recommendation to the Federal Government through the Honourable Minister of Education for its consideration and approval.

- 4.13 Approval by the Federal Executive Council (FEC):** The Federal Executive Council considers the recommendations of the NUC Board and Security report on the proposed Open University's Promoters. If approved, a three-year Provisional Licence is granted to the Proprietor.
- 4.14** Before the commencement of teaching-learning, a resource verification of the programmes for the take-off of the institution shall be undertaken. No academic activities shall commence without formal instruction from the National Universities Commission to do so.