



TOWARDS THE

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Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN
Executive Secretary



BLUEPRINT 2.0

TOWARDS THE RAPID REVITALISATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA – 2026-2030



Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN
Executive Secretary





NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION

BLUEPRINT 2.0 **TOWARDS THE RAPID REVITALISATION** **OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION** **IN NIGERIA – 2026-2030**

Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN
Executive Secretary

Abuja
National Universities Commission



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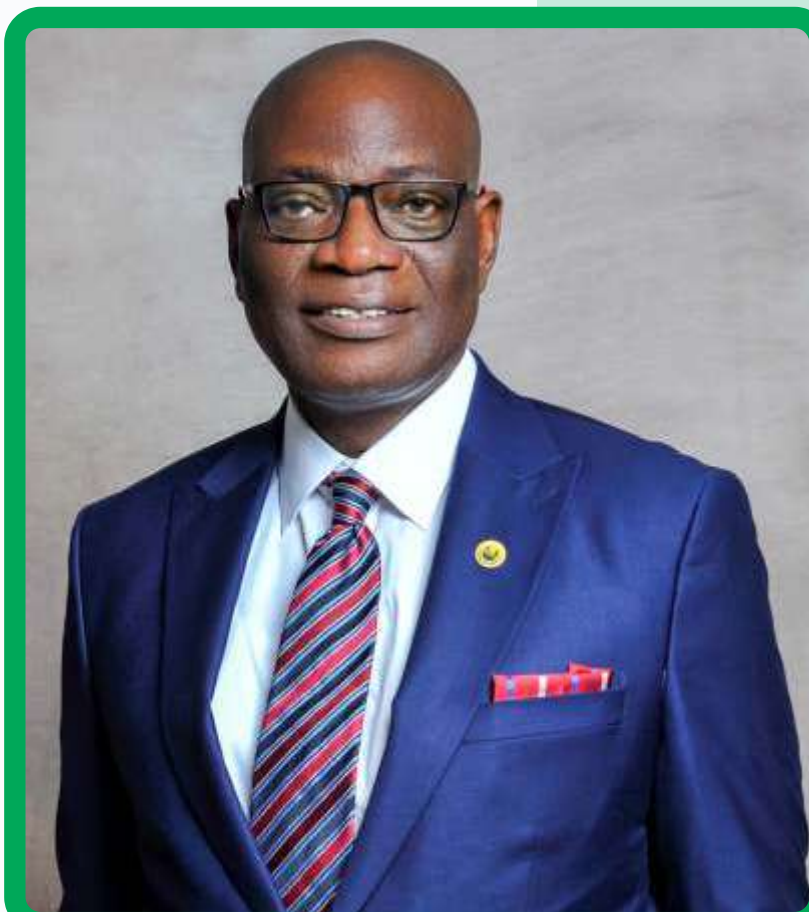
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PREFACE

It is with great honour and delight that I present *Blueprint 2.0: Towards the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education in Nigeria – A Strategic Plan 2026–2030*. This publication is inspired by our collective determination to reposition Nigerian universities as engines of national development, global competitiveness, and social transformation.

The first Blueprint, developed in 2019, laid the foundation that *Blueprint 2.0* builds upon with updated strategies that reflect new realities, emerging technologies, and evolving global standards.

The scope of this document is comprehensive. With 13 carefully crafted chapters, each led by distinguished reviewers drawn from across the NUS, this Blueprint provides a comprehensive roadmap for reform. It addresses pressing issues such as access, curriculum reengineering, modernisation of facilities, staffing, graduate employability, research productivity, governance, funding, ICT integration, gender equity, and harnessing of innovation for wealth creation. By drawing on the expertise of our academics, administrators, and other critical stakeholders within the NUS, the *Blueprint 2.0* ensures that solutions are grounded in the lived realities of Nigerian universities.

The purpose of *Blueprint 2.0* is clear which is to provide a strategic direction that guides the revitalisation of university education between 2026 and 2030. It is designed to serve as a roadmap for policymakers, regulators, institutions, and stakeholders, ensuring that every reform effort is coherent, coordinated, and impactful.

The Ministry of Education's reform agenda encompasses several strategic priorities. Among these, I am especially passionate about advancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), tackling the challenge of out-of-school children, promoting the internationalisation of education and driving digitisation across the education system. These priorities intersect deeply with the themes of this Blueprint:

- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET):** Our universities must not only produce graduates with theoretical knowledge but also with practical, industry-relevant skills. The chapters on *Curriculum Reengineering* and *Producing Nationally-Relevant and Globally-Competitive Graduates* highlight pathways for embedding entrepreneurship, innovation, and vocational competencies into higher education.



- **Out-of-School Children:** Expanding *Access to University Education* is not just about increasing enrolment; it is about creating inclusive pathways for those who have been left behind. By strengthening open and distance learning, flexible entry routes, and community-based outreach, universities can play a pivotal role in reducing educational exclusion.
- **Internationalisation of Education:** In today's interconnected world, Nigerian universities must be globally connected while remaining competitive. The chapters on *Improving Research Productivity* and *Research, Development and Innovation for Wealth Creation* emphasise collaboration across borders, positioning our institutions as hubs of knowledge exchange and innovation.

Digitisation of the Education System: The future of education is digital. The chapter *Towards ICT-Driven Universities* provides a framework for harnessing technology to enhance teaching, learning, governance, and research. Digitisation is also a pathway to strengthen transparency, reduce academic corruption, and improve efficiency across the system.

This Blueprint is not merely a policy document; it is a call to action. It challenges all stakeholders (government, universities, staff, students, industry, and communities) to work together in transforming Nigerian higher education into a system that is inclusive, innovative, globally respected, and capable of driving national development.

I commend the NUC for its leadership in coordinating this effort, and I extend my gratitude to the reviewers and contributors from across our university system. Their expertise and commitment have ensured that *Blueprint 2.0* is both visionary and practical.

As we embark on the journey from 2026 to 2030, let us be guided by the conviction that revitalising university education is central to revitalising Nigeria itself. Together, we can build a system that not only meets the aspirations of our youth but also secures the future of our nation.

Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON
Honourable Minister of Education



FOREWORD

It is with great satisfaction that I present *Blueprint 2.0: Towards the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education in Nigeria – A Strategic Plan (2026–2030)*. This document is a product of rigorous reflection and collaboration within the NUS, and it represents an updated and forward-looking version of the earlier blueprint.

The NUS is a cornerstone of our national development. Yet, it continues to face challenges that demand deliberate, coordinated, and sustained responses. *Blueprint 2.0* provides such a response.

What distinguishes this Blueprint is the process behind it. Each of its 13 chapters was prepared by respected reviewers from within the NUS, reflecting the collective wisdom and experience of our academic community. Their contributions ensure that the strategies outlined here are not abstract ideals but practical responses to real challenges.

The Governing Board of the NUC has a clear oversight role: to ensure accountability, strategic alignment, and fidelity to the Commission's mandate. In this regard, *Blueprint 2.0* is not only a technical plan but also a framework for oversight. It sets out priorities and benchmarks against which progress can be monitored and measured, thereby enabling the Board to discharge its responsibilities with clarity and purpose.

The issues addressed, which range from access and curriculum upgrade to research productivity, governance, funding, ICT integration, gender equity, and innovation, are critical to the revitalisation of our universities. Thus, the NUC Board views this document not simply as a catalogue of challenges, but as a set of commitments. Commitments to transparency, to measurable progress, and to building a system that serves both national development and global competitiveness.

As an academic myself, I fully appreciate the complexities of university life, and I recognise the transformative potential of higher education. As Chairman of the NUC's Board, I am mindful of the trust placed in it (the Board) to guide and oversee the Commission. This Blueprint provides us with a clear roadmap against which we can exercise that oversight to ensure that the revitalisation of university education is pursued with consistency and purpose. It also provides the framework for ensuring that our universities operate within a system that is transparent, responsive, and forward-looking.

I commend the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON, for his l



eadership, the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, *FCVSN*, for steering this process, and the reviewers for their invaluable contributions. The collective efforts on this project have produced a strategic plan that is comprehensive, practical, and deeply rooted in the realities of our university system.

There is no gainsaying that the revitalisation of our universities is essential to the revitalisation of Nigeria itself. This Blueprint is both a roadmap for that revitalisation and a call to collective action. I therefore urge all stakeholders (government, institutions, staff, students, industry, and communities) to embrace the Blueprint as a shared responsibility.

Prof. Oluwatoyin Temitayo Ogundipe, FAS
Chairman, NUC Governing Board





LIST OF ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ACE	Africa Centres of Excellence
ACEDHARS	Centre on Drug Research, Herbal Medicine Development and Regulatory Science
ACE-FUELS	Centre of Excellence in Future Energies and Electrochemical Systems
ACEGID	African Center of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases
ACEITSE	Centre of Excellence for Innovative and Transformative STEM Education
ACEMFS	Centre of Excellence for Mycotoxin and Food Safety
ACENPEE	Centre on New Pedagogies in Engineering Education
ACENTDFB	Africa Centre of Excellence for Neglected Tropical Diseases and Forensic Biotechnology
ACEPHAP	Centre of Excellence for Population Health and Policy
ACEPRD	Centre for Phytomedicine Research and Development
ACE-SPED	Centre for Sustainable Power and Energy Development
ACETEL	Centre of Excellence on Technology Enhanced Learning
ADB	African Development Bank
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFD	Agence Francaise de Development
AFRINIC	African Network Information Centre
AGSMEIS	Agri-Business Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Scheme
Agritech	Agricultural Technology
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ARUA	African Research Universities Alliance
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASTD	Academic Staff Training and Development
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
BOI	Bank of Industry
BOT	Build, Operate, Transfer
CAPIC	Centre for Applied Informatics and Communication
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria



CBT	Computer-Based Testing
CC	Cross-Cutting
CCMAS	Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards
CBE	Competence-Based Education
CDA	Centre for Dryland Agriculture
CEADESE	Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Development and Sustainable Environment
CEFOR	Centre for Oilfields Chemicals Research
CEFTER	Centre for Food Technology and Research
CERHI	Centre of Excellence in Reproductive Health Innovation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease–2019
CSA	Central and Southern Asia
CVCVNU	Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities
CVCTI	Committee of Vice-Chancellors Training Institute
DAP	Director of Academic Planning
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EAS	Educationally Advanced States
ECD	Early Childcare Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EI	Entrepreneurial Innovation
ELDS	Educationally Less Developed States
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ES	Executive Secretary
ETF	Education Trust Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FinTech	Financial Technology
FIIRO	Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FMSTI	Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
FTE	Fulltime Equivalent Students
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Global Innovation Index



GIS	Geographic Information System
GOBE	Graduate Outcome-Based Education
GST	General Studies
FOI	Freedom of Information
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HSS	Humanities and Social Sciences
IAR&T	Institute of Agricultural Research & Training
IBR	Institution-Based Research
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IDICE	Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprise
IGR	Internally-Generated Revenue
IP	Intellectual Property
ITF	Industrial Training Fund
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LFN	Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LMS	Learning Management System
MAN	Manufacturers Association of Nigeria
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
METI	(Japan) Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
MIS	Management Information System
MoTI	Management of Technology and Innovation
MQF	Malta Qualification Framework
NAAT	National Association of Academic Technicians
NACCIMA	Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture
NASENI	National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure



NASS	National Assembly (Nigeria)
NASU	Non-Academic Staff Union
NAWA	Northern African and Western Asia
NBIIC	National Business Incubation and Innovation Clusters
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NBTE	National Board for Technical Education
NCCE	National Commission for Colleges of Education
NCDMB	Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board
NCE	National Certification of Education
NCRDI	National Coordinator for Research Development and Innovation
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDPA	National Data Protection Act
NELFUND	Nigeria Education Loan Fund
NEPAD	New (Economic) Partnership for African Development
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NGCF	National Graduate Competency Framework
NGCIC	National Graduate Competitiveness and Innovation Council
NgCERT	National Computer Emergency Response Team
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NgREN	Nigeria Research and Education Network
NGTS	National Graduate Tracking System
NHEF	Nigerian Higher Education Foundation
NIAP	National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform
NIDO	Nigeria in Diaspora Organization
NIF	National Innovation Fund
NigComSat	Nigeria Communication Satellite
NIH	National Institute of Health
NIHORT	National Horticultural Research Institute
NIMR	National Institute for Medical Research
NIRSAL	Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
NITDA	National Information Technology Development Agency
NOTAP	National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion
NOUN	National Open University of Nigeria



NPCWD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NRC	National Research Council
NRF	National Research Fund
NRIF	National Research and Innovation Council
NRS	Nigerian Revenue Service
NSE	Nigerian Stock Exchange
NUAP	Nigerian University Advancement Programme
NUC	National Universities Commission
NUQAN	Nigerian Universities Quality Assurance Network
NURI-EX	Nigerian Universities Research and Innovation Expo
NURPI	National University Research Productivity Index
NUS	Nigerian University System
NYIP	Nigerian Youth Investment Fund
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
OAK-PARK	ICT-Driven Knowledge Park
OBE	Outcome-Based Education
ODeL	Open and Distance e-Learning
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OER	Open Educational Resources
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OPS	Organized Private Sector
PAMI	Pan African Materials Institute
PBD	Performance-Based Disbursement\
PDAC	Policy Development and Advisory Committee
PG	Postgraduate
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
PMS	Performance Management System
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PTDF	Petroleum Technology Development Fund
PUTOR	Centre for Public Health and Toxicological Research
QA	Quality Assurance
R&D	Research and Development
RD&I	Research Development and Innovation
RICYT	Red de Indicadores de Cienciay Tecnologia (Network of Science and Technology Indicators)



RIMS	Research and Information Management System
RMRDC	Raw Materials Research and Development Council
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RPM	Resource Planning and Management
S&T	Science and Technology
SAS	Senior Administrative Staff
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETI	Science, Engineering, Technology, and Innovation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SEAO	Southeast Asia, East Asia and Oceania
SIWES	Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
SON	Standard Organization of Nigeria
SPESSE	Sustainable Procurement Environmental and Social Standards
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSANU	Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
STISA	(African Union) Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa
STS	Senior Technical Staff
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TERAS	Tertiary Education Research and Application Service
TETFund	Tertiary Education Trust Fund
TIA	Technology Innovation Fund
TICAD	Tokyo International Conference on African Development
TNE	Transnational Education
TOT	Training of Trainers
TSA	Treasury Single Account
TTIP	Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education & Training
UCT	University of Cape Town
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



UNILAG	University of Lagos
UNN	University of Nigeria Nsukka
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
USARM	University System Annual Review Meeting
USPF	Universal Service Provision Fund
UTME	Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination
VAPP	Violence Against Person (Prohibition)
VICBHE	Virtual Institute for Capacity Building in Higher Education
VLAN	Virtual Local Area Network
WACREN	West and Central African Research and Education Network
WHO	World Health Organization
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization





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Emeritus Professor Olufemi Bamiro	Chairman
Prof. Junaidu Kabir	Member
Prof. Garba Aliyu Babaji	Member
Prof. Michael Faborode	Member
Prof. Sagir Adamu Abbas	Member
Prof. Dickson Musa	Member
Prof. Benjamin Ugheoke	Member
Prof. Suleiman D. Abdul	Member
Prof. Gloria Chukwudebe	Member
Prof. Emenike Ejiogu	Member
Prof. Josephine A.A. Agbonika, SAN	Member
Dr. Noel Biodun Salii	Member
Dr. Joshua Atah	Member
Engr. Abraham Chundusu	Member
Mr Abubakar Girei	Member
Dr. Funmilayo Morebise	Member
Mr. Paschal Eruaga	Member
Kenneth Uwah	Secretary/Member
Yvonne Orekyeh	Secretariat
Nehemiah Dauda	Secretariat
Victoria Ikani	Secretariat

Appreciation also goes to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVCNU) for facilitating input by present and former Vice-Chancellors of the Nigerian University System and related stakeholders. The staff and management of the National Universities Commission are also appreciated for their critical input to the final document.



I sincerely thank **Professor Rapael Olu Aina** who was the Chairman of the Governing Board of the National Universities Commission when the preparation of this document was commenced. His inspiration and support is well-appreciated.





INTRODUCTION

Nigerian Universities are critical to the drive to reposition the country towards global competitive standing through world-class education, skills, research, and community service. Our institutions must therefore ensure quality outcomes for development and produce graduates capable of playing significant roles in diverse sectors of the local and global economic environment.

In 2018, the *Blueprint for the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education in Nigeria – 2019-2023* was unveiled with the aim of providing a medium-term strategic direction for a dynamic NUS. The Blueprint had input from a cross-section of stakeholders, cutting across the Universities, the private sector and individuals. This provided key opportunities to identify important issues in the NUS that must be addressed to align with our national development objectives.

The wide adoption of the *Blueprint* brought about a number of positive developments, which serve as a signpost towards greater dynamism of our universities. Through the sustained implementation of the Blueprint, the following achievements were recorded:

1. Increased access to university education with the number of universities growing from 166 in 2018 to 260 in 2023.
2. Comprehensive review of the University Curriculum through the Development of the Core-Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).
3. Development of the Blueprint ICT-Dev Project, funded by the French Development Agency, to support technology integration in Nigerian Universities.
4. Introduction of the students' loan system for higher education in Nigeria.
5. Establishment of the Virtual Institute for Capacity Building in Higher Education (VICBHE).
6. Training of Nigerian University lecturers on AI and its application in Higher Education.
7. Development of information materials to support the efficient administration of the University System.
8. Engagement of Funding Partners through priorities identified in the Blueprint, specifically, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa.

The *Blueprint 2.0* has been developed as part of our commitment to policy continuity and foundation building. Apart from building on the achievements of the earlier plan, there is a need to take into account evolving issues that affect the NUS so that they will continue to develop to world-class status.



Currently, there are 309 Universities in Nigeria. Added to these, new government policies place greater responsibility on the NUC, being the regulatory body for University Education in Nigeria. These include the Dual Mandate Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria, which allows Colleges of Education to award Degrees, related to which is a review of the necessary legislation, which will also allow polytechnics in the country to award Bachelor of Technology degrees.

Development of new knowledge also means that Nigerian Universities must be at the centre of efficient delivery for the benefit of the wider world. Fields such as AI, Data Analytics and Robotics have become central to modern university education. Equally important is the effective application of technology in teaching, learning, research, and administration. During the implementation of the earlier document, COVID-19 changed the global trends and lessons learnt from it need to be adapted for the future.

The development of *Blueprint 2.0* has gone through a rigorous process that ensured extensive stakeholder participation and input. There are a total of thirteen chapters in *Blueprint 2.0*. These cover the two pillars of (higher) education which are access and quality. Major focus is on the components that ensure the success of these pillars, including curriculum, funding, technology application, infrastructure, human capacity, research, gender, and ethical issues. Given extensive attention they received, there is a need for Nigerian Universities to equip the youth with the capacity for wealth creation and self-reliance. The document also critically examines the operations of the NUC, its current status and made recommendations that would ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of its functions.

A dedicated implementation team is already in place to support the rollout of *Blueprint 2.0*. With their support, activities will be continuously monitored across all areas of the document. This will enable the NUC to report regularly to stakeholders on progress being made whilst making adjustments where necessary. We look forward to the support and partnership of everyone as we work towards building a University System that is ideal for the goals of our nation.

Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN
Executive Secretary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blueprint for the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education in Nigeria - 2026-2030 sets out as a comprehensive medium-term policy framework for transforming the NUS in line with national development priorities. It reflects a deliberate shift from expansion-driven policies to performance, quality, and sustainability. The document, referred to as *Blueprint 2.0*, draws on the outcomes and lessons of the 2019–2023 reform cycle. It articulates clear strategic priorities to address systemic inefficiencies and reposition universities as catalysts for economic growth, innovation, and global competitiveness.

Notwithstanding the expansion of the system to over 300 universities across federal, state, and private ownership, critical challenges persist. These include limited access to quality education; low graduate employability and weak research output; inadequate infrastructure and staffing deficits; governance inefficiencies and academic malpractice; unstable funding; and insufficient digital integration. *Blueprint 2.0* provides a coordinated and evidence-based response to these challenges through targeted policy interventions and institutional reforms.

The Blueprint prioritises the optimisation of access through improved utilisation of existing institutional capacity, in alignment with the Federal Government's moratorium on the establishment of new universities. It promotes equitable access through strengthened Open and Distance e-Learning systems, enhanced student financing mechanisms, and deliberate inclusive policies addressing gender disparities, regional imbalances, and the needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Curriculum reform constitutes a central pillar of the policy framework, with a focus on aligning academic programmes with labour market demands and global standards. The Blueprint mandates competency-based, skills-oriented, and digitally enabled curricula, supported by experiential learning, entrepreneurship development, and the integration of emerging disciplines. These measures are intended to produce graduates who are both nationally relevant and internationally competitive.

In recognition of the critical role of infrastructure in delivering quality education, the Blueprint provides for the modernisation, expansion, and sustainable maintenance of teaching, learning, and research facilities. It encourages the deployment of innovative financing models, including Public–Private Partnerships (PPP), to support the development of smart classrooms, laboratories, digital libraries, student hostels, and energy-efficient campus systems.



Human capital development is identified as a key enabler of system performance. The Blueprint promotes data-driven staffing, accelerated postgraduate training, continuous professional development, and enhanced research capacity. It underscores the importance of strengthening both academic and non-teaching personnel to ensure effective service delivery across institutions.

The Blueprint further seeks to reposition universities as centres of research excellence and innovation. It promotes applied and problem-solving research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the commercialisation of research output. Enhanced research funding, improved governance frameworks, and strategic partnerships with industry and development partners are emphasised to ensure that research contributes meaningfully to national development and wealth creation.

Governance reforms are central to the Blueprint's implementation strategy. It provides for strengthened institutional leadership, improved transparency and accountability, and the institutionalisation of performance management systems supported by digital monitoring tools. Measures to combat academic corruption and uphold integrity are reinforced through regulatory mechanisms, technological solutions, and ethical reorientation.

To ensure financial sustainability, the Blueprint advocates for the diversification of funding sources, improved efficiency in resource utilisation, and the introduction of performance-based funding models. These measures are designed to reduce overdependence on government subventions while enhancing institutional accountability and financial resilience.

Digital transformation is embedded across all strategic areas, with a strong emphasis on technology-enhanced teaching, learning, research, and administration. In addition, the Blueprint also recognises the pivotal role of the NUC and outlines measures to strengthen regulatory, quality assurance, and oversight functions to ensure effective policy implementation.

The Blueprint seeks to address gender issues that negatively impact the NUS and the wider society. It therefore gives attention to gender parity relating to enrolment, female academic staff representation, and institutionalisation of approaches towards gender equity. Of keen importance is also removing practices within the system that undermine integrity, including gender-based harassment.

Wealth creation and self-reliance strategies are key to addressing the challenges of economic and social development in Nigeria.



This will be even more successful and sustainable if backed by research information that promotes innovation. These are areas that the Blueprint has extensively covered, providing directions and opportunities for promoting wealth creation and self-reliance in the country.

The implementation of **Blueprint 2.0** is anchored on a results-based management framework with clearly defined targets, timelines, and key performance indicators. Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including digital dashboards, periodic reviews, and independent assessments, are incorporated to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, **Blueprint 2.0** represents a strategic policy reset for Nigeria's university system. It prioritises consolidation over expansion, quality over quantity, and impact over output. Its successful implementation is expected to deliver a more inclusive, efficient, and globally competitive university system capable of advancing Nigeria's human capital development and economic transformation.







I.O

ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Overarching Goal

*By 2030, at least 90% of qualified candidates
in UTME should be able to get admission
into Nigerian Degree-Awarding Institutions*

THOUGHT AND SERVICE
THOUGHT AND SERVICE



1.1 INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of university education in Nigeria is often characterised by intense competition due to the perceived limited institutional capacity. Every year, countless candidates achieve commendable scores in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). However, these scores do not guarantee admission into the universities. An investigation of this systemic failure is the main concern in this chapter. The crisis of access and the conspicuous equity violation against qualified candidates is a recognised endemic national challenge that demands immediate rectification.

1.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The problem of access to higher education in the country is manifested by the inability to admit a significant number of qualified candidates seeking admission through UTME, conducted by the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB). In addressing this problem, particularly access to university education, universities were established at a rapid rate. There are currently 307 universities comprising 72 Federal, 67 State and 168 Private, with temporal distribution as shown in Fig. 1.1 and geographical spread across the country as presented in Fig. 1.2 and in Table 1.1 with histograms of distribution as shown in Fig. 1.3 on a State Basis and in Fig. 1.4 on a Zonal Basis. The rapid rate of establishment has created, among others, the problem of quality education delivery of the close to 400 NUC-approved programmes being run in the system.





Figure 1.1: PROFILE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF 309 UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA (1948-2025)

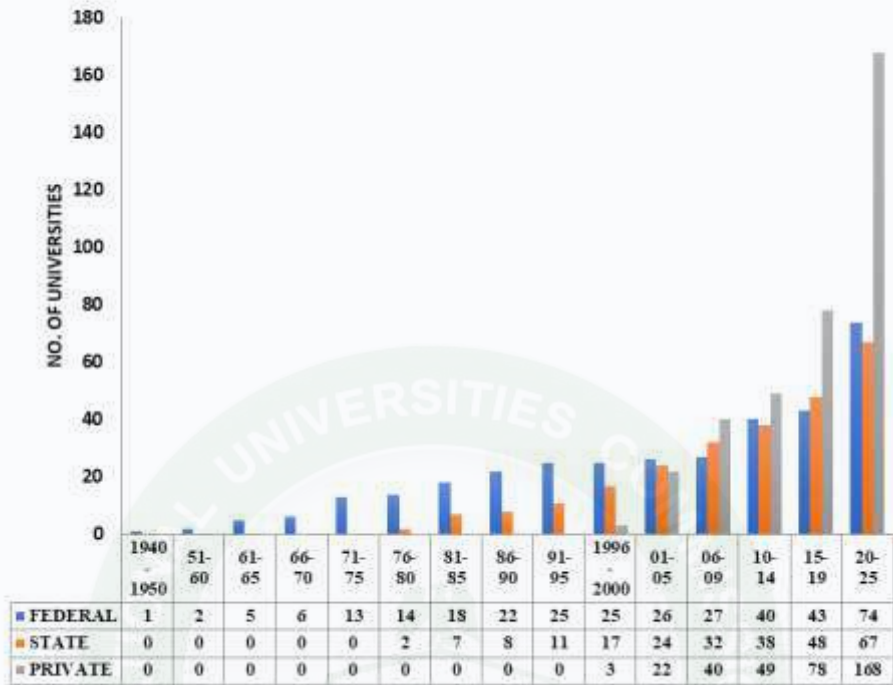


FIGURE 1.2: THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF THE 309 UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA IN 2025

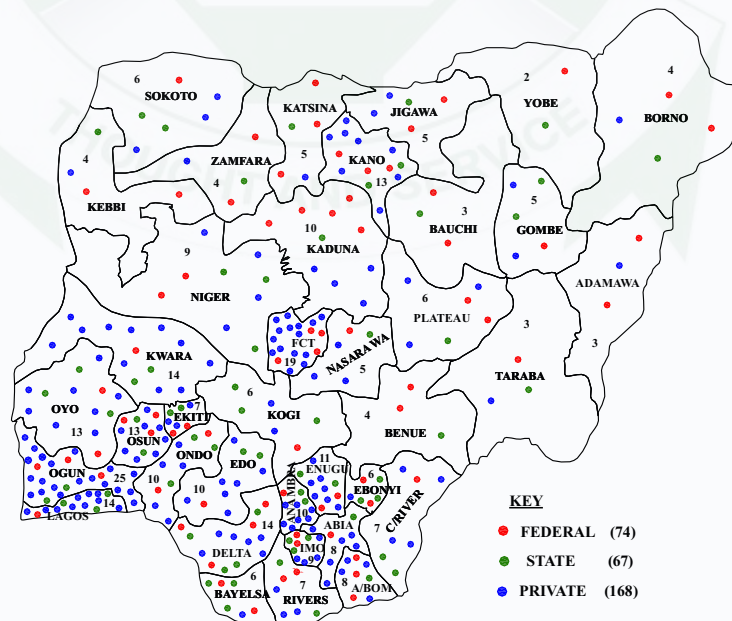




Table 1.1: Profile on State Basis of the 309 Universities in Nigeria 1948-2025

S/N	STATE	UNIVERSITY	FEDERAL	STATE	PRIVATE
1	Abia	8	1	1	6
2	Adamawa	3	2	0	1
3	Akwa Ibom	8	3	1	4
4	Anambra	10	1	2	7
5	Bauchi	3	2	1	0
6	Bayelsa	6	2	3	1
7	Benue	5	2	2	1
8	Borno	4	2	1	1
9	Cross River	7	1	2	4
10	Delta	14	4	4	6
11	Ebonyi	6	2	3	1
12	Edo	10	1	2	7
13	Ekiti	7	2	2	3
14	Enugu	11	2	2	7
15	Gombe	5	1	2	2
16	Imo	9	2	3	4
17	Jigawa	5	2	1	2
18	Kaduna	10	5	1	4
19	Kano	13	3	2	8
20	Katsina	5	3	1	1
21	Kebbi	4	2	1	1
22	Kogi	6	1	3	2
23	Kwara	14	1	2	11
24	Lagos	14	1	3	10
25	Nasarawa	5	1	1	3
26	Niger	9	2	3	4
27	Ogun	25	3	2	20
28	Ondo	10	2	3	5
29	Osun	13	3	2	8
30	Oyo	13	2	3	8
31	Plateau	6	2	1	3
32	Rivers	7	2	2	3
33	Sokoto	6	1	2	3
34	Taraba	3	1	1	1
35	Yobe	2	1	1	0
36	Zamfara	4	2	1	1
37	FCT	19	4	0	15
	TOTAL	309	74	67	168



Profile of the 309 Universities on State Basis





Figure 1.4a: PROFILE OF THE 309 UNIVERSITIES ON ZONAL BASIS

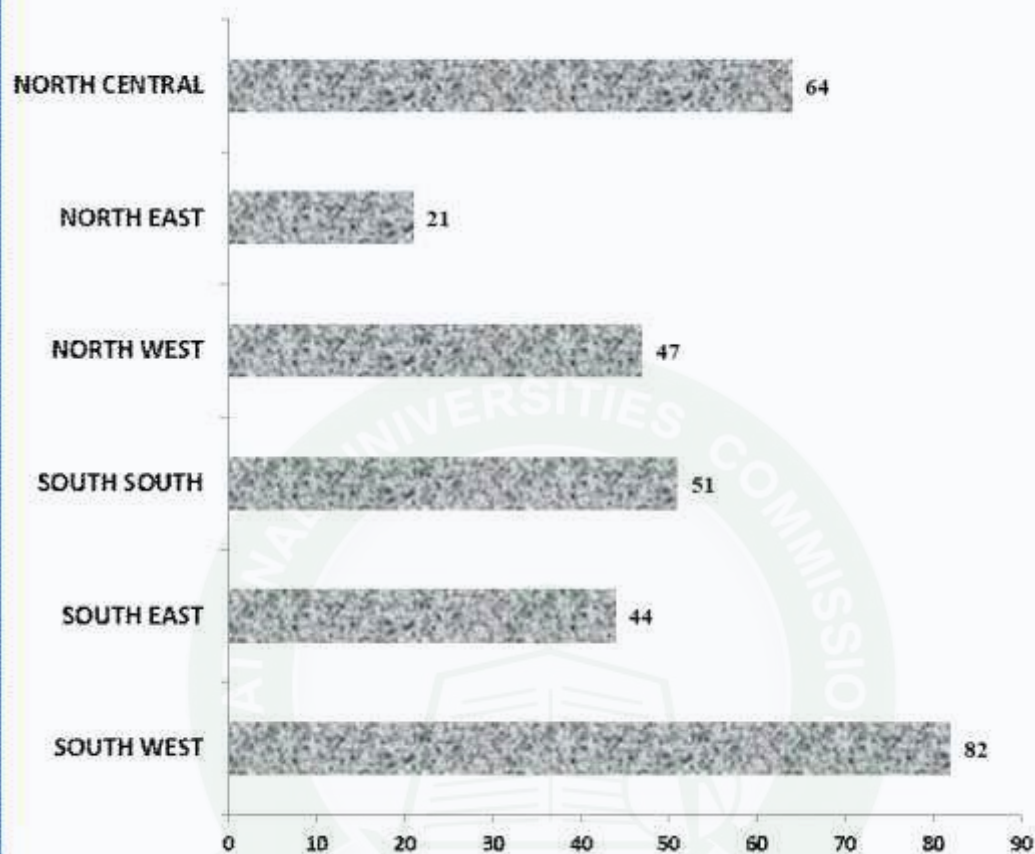
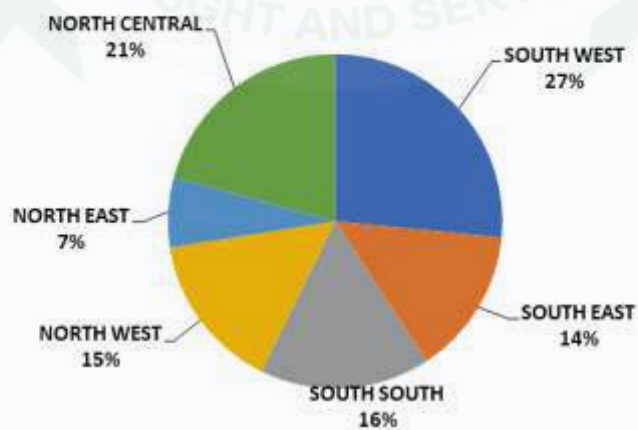


Figure 1.4b : % DISTRIBUTION OF 309 UNIVERSITIES ON ZONAL BASIS





Of interest is the profile of enrolment into NUS from 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 academic sessions as presented in Table 1.2. Details of enrolment in Table 1.2 indicate fluctuations in applications between the 2019/2020 and 2023/2024 academic sessions.

- Applications initially increased by approximately 8.77% from 1,792,719 in 2019/2020 academic session to 1,949,983.
- Applications subsequently underwent a significant decline of 28.20% in 2021/2022 academic session, falling to 1,400,000.
- Applications, however, increased sharply in 2022/2023 academic session by 28.57% to 1,800,000, before declining again in 2023/2024 academic session.
- Applications in 2023/2024 academic session declined by 9.1% over the 1,800,000 applications in 2022/2023 academic session, recording 1,635,881 total applications.

Cumulatively across the five years, a total of 8,578,583 applications were processed, with an overall average admission rate of 30.98% and a non-admission rate of 69.02%.

Table 1.2: Statistics of Enrolment into Nigerian Universities: 2019/2020 – 2023/2024

YEAR	APPLIED	ADMITTED	NOT ADMITTED	% ADMITTED	% NOT ADMITTED
2019/2020	1,792,719	612,557	1,180,162	34.2	65.8
2020/2021	1,949,983	551,553	1,398,430	28.3	71.7
2021/2022	1,400,000	312,666	1,087,334	22.3	77.7
2022/2023	1,800,000	557,625	1,242,375	31	69
2023/2024	1,635,881	639,263	996,618	39.1	60.9
Total	8,578,583	2,673,664	5,904,919	30.98	69.02

Of great importance in *Blueprint 2.0* is the dynamics of the access problem, beyond what is captured in Table 1.3 above. That the access problem has taken a different turn is accentuated by the statistics of admissions into our HEIs in the past three years typified by the summary of the 2022 admissions exercise (Table 1.3) as presented by JAMB in the 2023 Policy Meeting held on 24th June 2023. As shown in Table 1.3, 52.3% of the available quota of admissions in the NUS was unutilised. In other words, for every two vacancies available for admission of candidates, only one was utilised. Thus, the problem of access has transformed from demand being higher than supply to one of supply being higher than demand in the form of available qualified candidates. It has put into question the need for the establishment of more universities, leading the Federal Government to put a moratorium of 6 years on establishment of universities.

**Table 1.3: Summary of Total Admissions to HEIs in 2022**

INSTITUTION	TOTAL QUOTA	TOTAL ADMISSIONS	UNUTILISED QUOTA	% UNUTILISED
Universities	876,926	417,607	459,319	52.3%
Polytechnics	215,532	107,114	108,414	50.3%
Colleges of Education	520,385	31,890	488,495	93.9%
TOTAL	1,612,843	556,611	1,056,228	65%

That the access problem has taken a different turn is accentuated by the statistics of admissions into our HEIs in the past three years, typified by the 2021 (Tables 1.4.a & b) as presented by JAMB during the Policy Meeting held in July 2022. The situation is also illustrated graphically in Fig. 1.5. It can be seen that out of the total quota of admissions of 774,411 for universities, only 312,666 were taken up, leaving an unutilised quota of 461,745, which translates to 60%. Similar unutilised quotas were observed for the polytechnics and the colleges of education, with the latter being the worst case, with only 27,963 admitted out of a total quota of 484,625, which translates to 94% unutilised quota

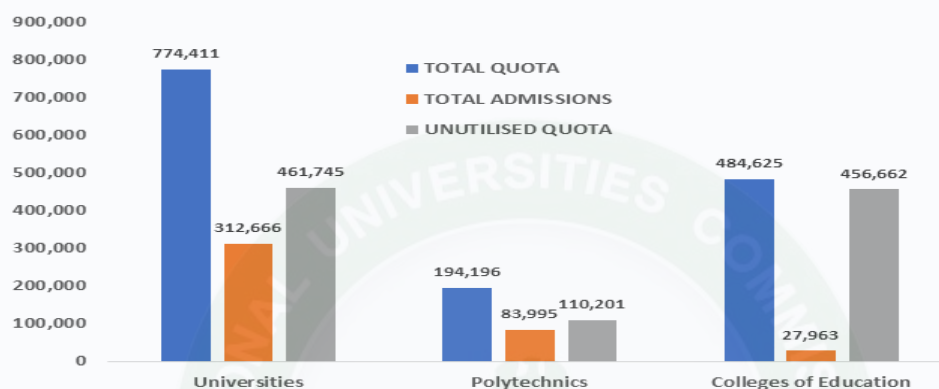
Table 1.4a Profile of Admissions to HEIs in 2021

INSTITUTION		FEDERAL	STATE	PRIVATE	TOTAL
UNIVERSITIES/ DEGREE-AWARDING	Quota	424,442	232,801	117,168	774,411
	Admissions	136,527	139,192	36,947	312,666
	Unutilised Quota	287,915	93,609	80,221	461,745
	% Unutilised	68%	40%	68%	60%
POLYTECHNICS/ MONOTECHNICS	Quota	97,398	71,358	25,440	194,196
	Admissions	45,937	33,507	4,551	83,995
	Unutilised Quota	51,461	37,851	20,889	110,201
	% Unutilised	53%	53%	82%	57%
COLLEGES OF EDUCATION	Quota	161,920	205,180	117,525	484,625
	Admissions	18,245	9,361	357	27,963
	Unutilised Quota	143,675	195,819	117,168	456,662
	% Unutilised	89%	95%	100%	94%

Source: JAMB 2022 Policy Meeting, 19th July 2022

**Table 1.4.b: Summary of Total Admissions to HEIs in 2021**

INSTITUTION	TOTAL QUOTA	TOTAL ADMISSIONS	UNUTILISED QUOTA	% UNUTILISED
Universities	774,411	312,666	461,745	60%
Polytechnics	194,196	83,995	110,201	57%
Colleges of Education	484,625	27,963	456,662	94%
TOTAL	1,453,232	424,624	1,028,608	71%

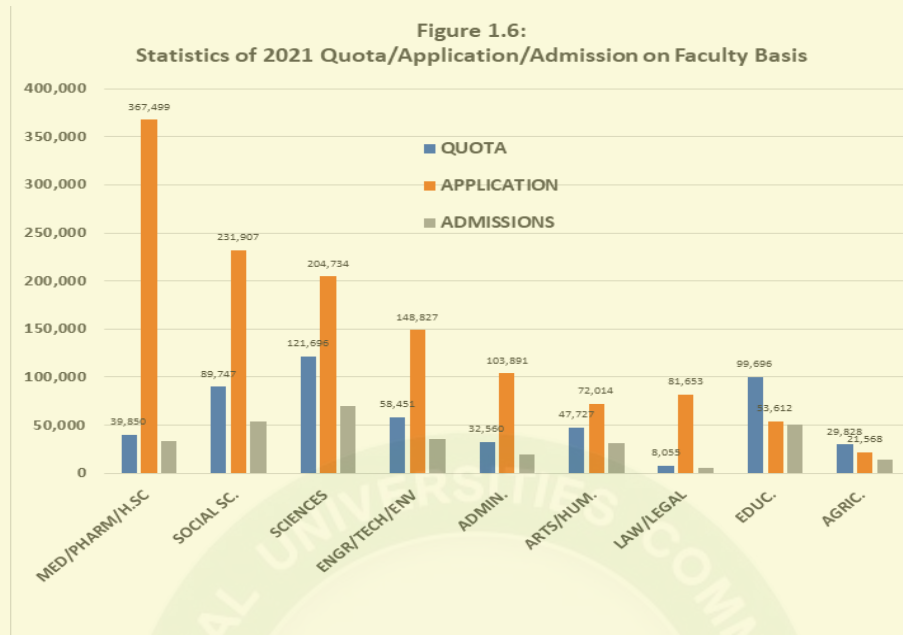
**Figure 1.5:
Nigerian HEIs: Profile of JAMB Admissions in 2021**

The Statistics of Enrolment on Faculty Basis

An important insight into the problem of access is provided by the examination of the issue of admissions against applications on a faculty basis. The breakdown of the admissions on faculty basis is presented in Table 1.5 and graphically illustrated in Fig.1.6. The number of applicants far exceeded the quotas for admissions in most of the faculties, leading to rather low percentages of applicants being admitted. The Faculty of Law could only admit 7% of the applicants, followed by the Faculty of Medicine, with only 9% of applicants gaining admission.

Table 1.5: Profile of 2021 Admissions to Universities on Faculty Basis

FACULTY	QUOTA	APPLICATION	ADMISSIONS	% OF APPLICANTS ADMITTED	% OF UTILISED QUOTA
Med/Pharm/H.Sc	39,850	367,499	33,671	9%	84.5
Social Sciences	89,747	231,907	53,723	23%	59.9
Sciences	121,696	204,734	70,221	34%	57.7
Engr/Tech/Env	58,451	148,827	35,051	24%	60.0
Admin.	32,560	103,891	18,951	18%	58.2
Arts/Humanities	47,727	72,014	31,478	44%	66.0
Law/Legal	8,055	81,653	5,630	7%	69.9
Education	99,696	53,612	50,157	94%	50.3
Agriculture	29,828	21,568	13,784	64%	



Causative Factors Underlying Poor Access

The causative factors of the rather serious situation presented above have been ascribed to, among others, the following:

- Oversubscription to some programmes
- Wrong O-Level subject combination
- Low (Post-UTME) screening score
- UTME-Combination deficiency
- Non-acceptance of admission offers
- Duplication of application
- The admission criteria (45% Merit, 35% Locality, 20% Education Least-Developed States (ELDS))
- Suspension of admissions by some universities due to strikes by staff unions, leading to an unstable academic calendar.

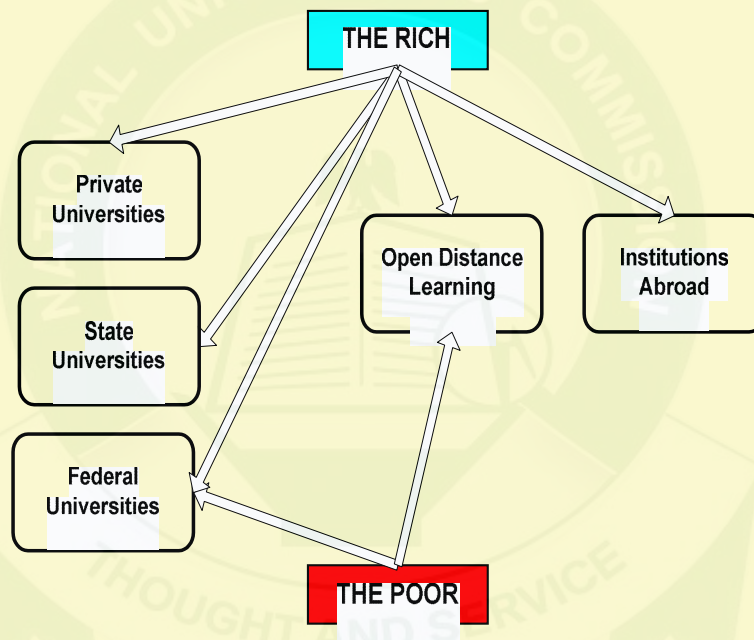




Ownership of Universities

It is pertinent to note another dimension to the problem of access created by the present ownership structure of universities. At federal universities, students pay the least fees due to the general abolition of tuition fees in federal institutions, while at the private universities students pay more than ten times what is being charged in the federal universities for similar programmes. State universities generally charge higher fees than federal universities but much less than private universities. There are some states in the federation where students pay much lower fees as a result of substantial government subventions to their universities to meet their recurrent expenditure. another dimension of the problem of access is depicted in Fig. 1.7, where children of the rich have far more choices than children of the poor.

Figure 1.7: Profile of Access to HE between the Rich and the Poor



Concern About the Quality of Secondary School Education

Addressing university access without a corresponding reform of the secondary education sub-sector will yield limited results. If secondary school graduates are academically weak, university-ready candidates will always struggle to gain access. To ensure that candidates are not just eligible on paper but academically prepared for the rigours of university learning, there is a need for a synergy among the agencies concerned, such as NERDC and JAMB, for a periodic review of the curriculum.



Deficit in Campus Infrastructure and Global Standard Amenities

The inability of Nigerian universities to attract students is driven by a lack of modern campus amenities and specialised welfare services that meet global standards for students' convenient living. To avert this, it is necessary to ensure that major campus infrastructure and soft landing services such as airport pickups, assistance with local bank accounts, partial tuition waivers, reliable internet connectivity, stable power, and health insurance are provided to attract foreign students to support conducive learning. Additionally, the policy must address current constraints in visa logistics, academic stability, and perceptions of safety. In other words, by 2030, Nigeria universities aim to have at least 5% of the total students' population as international scholars with the intention of achieving this through the implementation of a fast-track visa regime and the guarantee of a stable academic calendar for all internationalised programmes. This internationalisation drive will increase internally-generated revenue (IGR) and enhance the visibility of Nigerian Universities, proving that our standards have truly returned to a global level while enhancing the global ranking of Nigerian Universities.

Unstable Academic Calendar

The access problem has also led to a situation in which Nigeria has become a ready market for the recruitment of children of wealthy parents by universities from abroad. It is pertinent to note that the instability of the academic calendar in Nigeria's public universities, caused by incessant strikes by staff unions, has also contributed to the trend. The profile of the total of 251 weeks of national strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) from 1993 to 2022 is shown in Fig. 1.8.

Nigerian students are found in a number of Western countries, as shown in Table 1.5 and illustrated in Fig. 1.9, which presents the profile of Nigerian students enrolled in the United Kingdom from 2013 to 2023. It is clear that the number of students increased significantly from 10,440 in 2019 to 45,370 in 2023. There have also been significant enrolments of Nigerian students in Canadian universities, as shown in Fig. 1.10. The enrolments increased significantly from 2021 to 2022, while there was no data for the year 2023.

It is apparent that the strikes of 2022, which lasted for 8 months, most likely accounted for the significant increase in students enrolled in the UK and Canada in 2022 and 2023. It is also to be expected that private universities, with their characteristic stable academic calendar, will gain increased enrolment as a result of the strikes in Nigerian public universities.

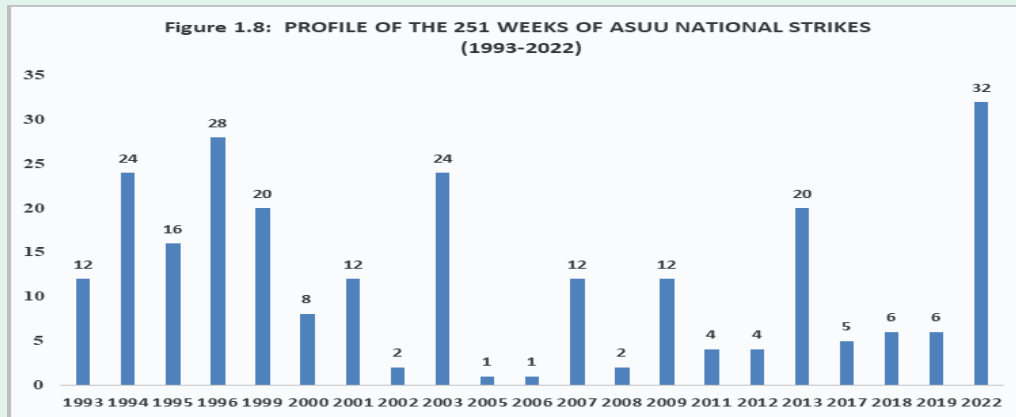
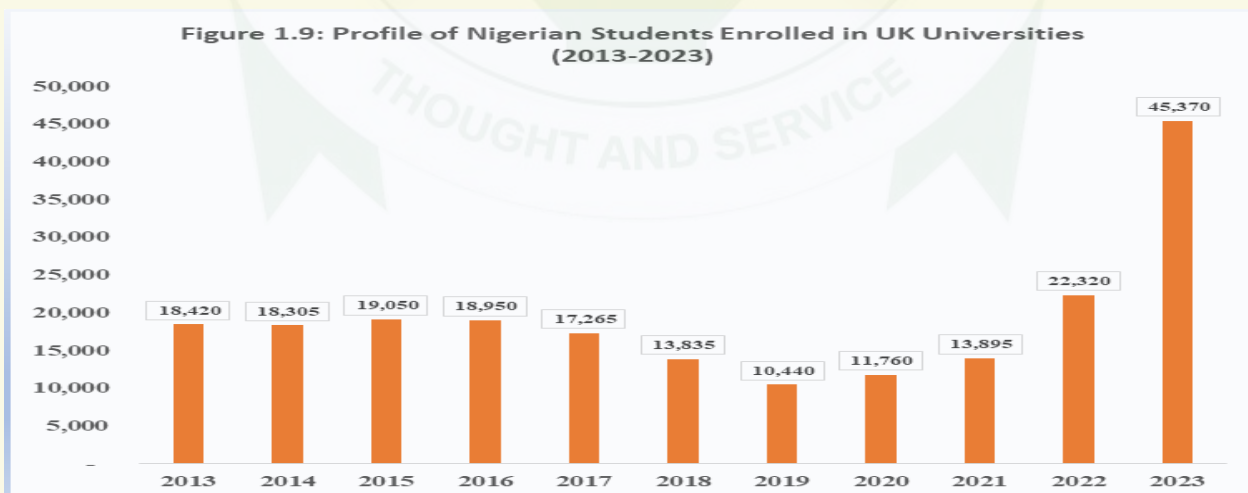


Table 1.6: Profile of Nigerian Students Studying in Selected Countries

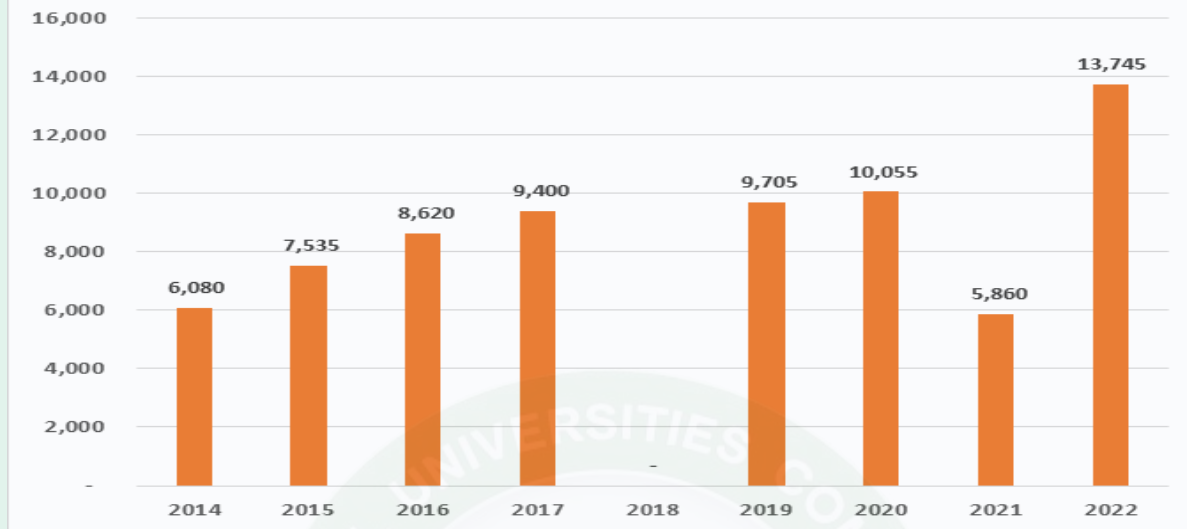
S/No	Country	Year	Total number of International Students	Number of students from Nigeria	Proportion of International Students who hail from Nigeria (%)
1	South Africa	2015	42,351	2,243	5.3
2	United Kingdom	2022	633,910	22,230	3.5
		2023		45,370	
3	United States	2022	948,519	14,438	1.5
4	Canada	2021	621,565	13,745	2.2
5	India	2017	45,424	2,090	4.6
6	Republic of the Philippines	2022	22,247	1,932	8.6



(Source: www.iie.org/projectatlas). The years indicated are those for the most recent data in the respective countries. The countries indicated are those that have presented data on Nigerian students



Figure 1.10
Profile of Nigerian Students Enrolled in Canadian Universities
(2014-2022)



(Source: www.iie.org/projectatlas).

Equity Issues in Access to University Education

1. The quota system is a complex and contentious issue surrounding access to university education in Nigeria. It was introduced to bridge the educational gap between the Educationally Advanced States (EAS), mostly in the south, and Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS), mostly in the North. While it was designed for equity, it is often criticised for compromising merit. A student from an ELDS may gain admission with a significantly lower UTME score than a student from an EAS. While some have noted that the impact of the quota system and catchment area policies on students' admission could be detrimental, it is also notable that this policy has become an impediment to access as universities are careful to implement the established guidelines.
2. This disparity is arguably exacerbated by institutional concentration: the highest density of universities (approximately 60% institutions) is in the educationally advanced South, according to the NUC Bulletin (2025). Conversely, the northern regions host 40% of Nigerian universities, with the North Central zone accounting for about 34% of them.
3. Despite a positive trend in overall female enrolment, which is approximately 48% as of 2022 (NUC, 2022), gender parity remains an unachieved goal. Specifically, women continue to be underrepresented in science and technology-related academic programmes.



4. Achieving equitable access to university education requires significant improvements in provisions and facilities for people with physical disabilities, as current infrastructure is insufficient. As of 2025, less than 15% of federal universities have fully implemented the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 regarding physical ramps, elevators, and other resources.
5. Although federal public universities in Nigeria offer free tuition, this policy is undermined by economic realities. The fact that many families earn less than 700 per day raises serious equity concerns, as even essential expenses that students must pay at school become unaffordable for some students. In addition, research shows that federal universities predominantly serve middle and upper-class families from these regions, rather than the poor students the policies were meant to protect (Ebere, 2025).
6. Financial aid mechanisms such as scholarships, bursaries, and loans for indigent students are limited in number and unavailable to most who require support. However, the introduction of NELFUND is expected to change the dynamics of funding.

1.3 EFFORTS AT ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

A number of efforts are being taken towards addressing the challenge of access towards equitable access to higher education in Nigeria. Some of these include:

Unbundling of Traditional Degree Programmes Into Specialised Programmes

NUC strategic unbundling of some traditional degrees into specialised programmes, thereby expanding access to university in these fields: Agricultural Science, Mass Communication, Computer Science, and Architecture, as presented below:

- **Computer Science**
Unbundled into:
 - i. Computer Science
 - ii. Cybersecurity
 - iii. Data Science
 - iv. Information and Communication Technology
 - v. Information Systems
 - vi. Information Technology
 - vii. Software Engineering
- **Mass Communication, now Communication and Media Studies**
Unbundled into:
 - i. Advertising
 - ii. Broadcasting



- iii. Development Communication Studies
- iv. Film and Multimedia
- v. Information and Media Studies
- vi. Journalist and Media Studies
- vii. Mass Communication
- viii. Public Relations
- ix. Strategic Communication

• **Agricultural Sciences**

Unbundled into:

- i. Soil Science
- ii. Agricultural Economics
- iii. Agronomy
- iv. Animal Science

Dual Mandate Policy

Opportunities for increased access to university education have been provided through the Federal Colleges of Education Act, 2023. The Dual Mandate Policy arising from this Act enables Colleges of Education in the country to offer degree programmes in addition to their National Certificate of Education (NCE) Programmes. At the commencement of the implementation of the Dual Mandate Policy in May 2025, the NUC carried out Resource Verification and approved 503 programmes in 17 Federal Colleges of Education. This is a fraction of the over 200 Colleges of Education in Nigeria that have the potential to offer Degree Programmes. Additionally, there will be opportunities provided by the ongoing amendment of the Polytechnic Act. This will allow Polytechnics in Nigeria to offer the Bachelor of Technology programmes.

Other Strategic Tools for Resolving the Equity Issue

Additional tools for increasing access to higher education include the following, which will be introduced where absent or strengthened where they exist:

- Part-Time Study
- Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL)
- Trans-National Education (TNE)

Part-Time Study

Part-time study, a flexible academic arrangement that does not require UTME, is designed to allow students (of diverse demographics) to pursue a degree while maintaining other commitments. There is a need to encourage more universities to operate part-time programmes. However, this is subject to the readiness of the university to comply with the following extant guidelines



on part-time programmes:

- i. Admission and graduation requirements, staffing, library and physical facilities requirements must be in line with the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for the various full-time academic programmes;
- ii. For a programme to be eligible to run on part-time basis, the approved full-time equivalent must be available in the university, must have earned full accreditation and must be run within approved campuses;
- iii. Enrolment into part-time programmes must not exceed 20% of the total student population in the programme;
- iv. The minimum duration of the part-time programmes must be 150% of the approved duration of the full-time equivalent;
- v. Approval shall not be granted for part-time programmes in Environmental Sciences, Engineering/Technology, Law, Medicine/Medical Sciences, Pharmacy [Pharmaceutical Sciences, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science;
- vi. All admissions into part-time programmes must be through the JAMB, and programmes must be run within approved campuses of universities where the relevant human and material resources are domiciled, i.e. on the main campus of the university;
- vii. Part-time programmes shall be subjected to the NUC accreditation assessment upon maturity of the programme;
- viii. For any programme to be eligible for part-time mode, it must have produced two (2) sets of graduates and satisfied the Resource Verification Requirements.

Commencement of a part-time programme must be subject to NUC's approval.

Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL)

An open and distance learning (ODL) mode in a university system is designed to expand access, increase flexibility, and support lifelong learning, especially for working adults and geographically dispersed learners. Its effectiveness depends on the following core features that distinguish it from conventional face-to-face delivery:

- Open and flexible entry requirements
- Flexible learning structure
- Distance separation
- Use of technology and multimedia
- Instructional design focus
- Learner-centred approach
- Tutor and learner support services
- Interactive communication
- Continuous and flexible assessment
- Scalability and mass access
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Blended support infrastructure



From the above, it can be seen that ODL is not just “learning at a distance”—it is a **systematically designed, technology-enabled, learner-driven model** that balances flexibility with structure, access with quality, and independence with support. It is pertinent to note that as at April 30, 2026, there were thirty-four (34) Distance Learning Centres and seven (7) Open Universities including the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

NOUN is a good example of the future direction of university education, which is expected to be flexible, inclusive, and technology-enabled. With over 190,000 students spread across 128 study centres and robust digital platforms, NOUN empowers learners to pursue their academic goals without putting their lives on hold. Worthy of note are the following 9 faculties at NOUN for diverse programme delivery:

1. Agricultural Science
2. Arts
3. Computing
4. Education
5. Health Sciences
6. Law
7. Management Sciences
8. Sciences
9. Social Sciences

In order to bring the practice of distance learning up to speed with global best practices, it is incumbent on NUC, as the statutory quality assurance agency in the Nigerian university system, to streamline the practice by developing and monitoring a code of good practice. The Commission should accelerate the review and operationalisation of the Guidelines for Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) and blended learning. This will enable accredited universities to establish ODeL centres in underserved states and local government areas, thereby reducing physical access barriers without compromising standards. From the above, it can be seen that ODL is not just “learning at a distance”—it is a **systematically designed, technology-enabled, learner-driven model** that balances flexibility with structure, access with quality, and independence with support. It is pertinent to note that as at April 30, 2026, there were thirty-four (34) Distance Learning Centres and seven (7) Open Universities including the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

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Transnational Education (TNE)

Transnational Education (TNE), referred to as offshore education, is the movement of people, programmes and providers across national boundaries to deliver higher education.

TNE is an instrument for large-scale expansion of the NUS without the immediate need for government capital expenditure. In Nigeria, TNE has become increasingly important because of growing demand for higher education, globalisation, internationalisation of universities, and the desire for globally recognised qualifications.

According to UNESCO and global higher education practice, TNE includes:

- Foreign university campuses operating in another country
- Joint degree programmes
- Dual or split-site degrees
- Online and distance international education
- Franchise arrangements
- Twinning programmes
- International academic partnerships



A Nigerian student may therefore earn a degree from a university in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, or Malaysia while studying partly or fully in Nigeria. Furthermore, TNE allows students to earn internationally recognised qualifications at significantly lower cost than studying abroad. This keeps tuition fees within the Nigerian economy while providing the same prestige and curriculum. TNE is one of the frontiers for educational equity in Nigeria. It removes geographical barriers, enabling students to access world-class education from within Nigeria. By adopting TNE as a complementary framework, we can blend global expertise with national strength, creating a system where a world-class education is a right for every qualified citizen, regardless of his or her location or economic status.

From the above, it can be seen that TNE represents a major opportunity for Nigeria's higher education system. Properly regulated and strategically implemented, it can:

- Expand educational access
- Improve quality
- Promote global competitiveness
- Strengthen research and innovation
- Reduce brain drain
- Advance Nigeria's knowledge economy

However, effective regulation and quality assurance are essential to ensure that TNE contributes meaningfully to the transformation of higher education in Nigeria. This puts a lot of responsibility on NUC in respect of the provision of Guidelines to regulate TNE programmes in Nigerian universities to ensure:

- Academic quality
- Institutional integrity
- International competitiveness
- Protection of students' interests
- Alignment with national development priorities

These guidelines shall apply to all public and private universities operating within NUS.

Development of Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure is supporting the expansion of access. These investments come from:

- Government budgetary allocations;
- TETFund interventions, as presented in greater detail in Chapter 9,
- Interventions from development agencies, and
- The Organised Private Sector (OPS), amongst others.



1.4 JUSTIFICATION

For any nation to thrive in the modern global economy, placing a premium on investing in educated citizens and innovation strategies, mainly through university education, is crucial. However, a severe deficit in access remains evident in the NUS. Only 39.1% of over 8.5 million university applicants between 2019/20–2023/24 academic session secured admissions, leaving over 60.9% behind (JAMB). This high exclusion rate, even accounting for unqualified candidates, signifies an unacceptable waste of human capital and a major impediment to national socio-economic development.

To keep pace with rapid population growth, a substantial increase in access to university education is essential. Increased access to university education is a critical target that must be met and surpassed to accelerate meaningful national development.

Based on the analysis presented earlier, the primary access problem is now attributed to the limited number of qualified candidates to fill the available admission quotas at universities in the NUS. For emphasis, the number of students admitted is approximately half of the available quota. Although not presented herein, several universities in the NUS have enrolments of fewer than 1000 students. The situation has led the Honourable Minister of Education to impose a 6-year moratorium on the establishment of new universities. This is indeed a major policy shift that falls squarely on the implementation of the *Blueprint 2.0*.

SWOT Analysis

The NUS possesses several key advantages that can be immediately leveraged to increase access and enrolment, even though it cannot underplay the existence of minor challenges.

Strengths

- i. Large, qualified applicant pool
- ii. Existing and newly created open universities for increased enrolment
- iii. Capacity for expansion by the existing universities
- iv. Existing legal framework for private participation in the provision of higher education
- v. Availability of Distance Learning Centres across universities



Weaknesses

- i. Funding and infrastructure deficit i.e., obsolete infrastructures, equipment, etc.
- ii. Human capital gap, especially paucity of specialised ODeL experts
- iii. Low level of digital skills and ICT deployment across NUS
- iv. Management challenges in ODeL institutions
- v. Limited student sponsorship

Opportunities

- i. Rapid advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be leveraged to enhance ODeL quality, reach, and efficiency.
- ii. Institutional conversion, such as colleges of education to degree-awarding institutions
- iii. Increase in the number of universities
- iv. Concept of unbundling of programme
- v. Successful consummation of Transnational Education
- vi. Physical expansion potential of existing universities based on the availability of land mass

Threats

- i. Non-formalisation of the draft guidelines for e-learning deployment
- ii. Quality and credibility risk due to the proliferation of illegal ODeL institutions
- iii. Prejudices and misconceptions about ODeL institutions and transnational collaborations and their awards
- iv. Slow acceptance of the use of technology in teaching by academics in the NUS
- v. Operational strain in ODeL institutions, such as excess workload for academic staff
- vi. Difficulties in scaling up the ODeL models to manage large numbers of learners and inappropriate management structure in some ODeL institutions
- vii. Low carrying capacity
- viii. Proliferation of agencies involved in the accreditation of programmes in the NUS.

1.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The main objectives for addressing the problem of Access to University Education in the NUS are derived from the following submissions by Prof. Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, the former Executive Secretary of the NUC, in the convocation lecture titled “*The Future of Public Universities in Nigeria: Between Promise and Precipice*” delivered at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, in September 2025.



One of the most consequential policy shifts in recent memory is the Federal Government's decision to impose a seven-year moratorium on the establishment of new higher education institutions. For decades, Nigeria's university landscape has expanded rapidly, often for political, regional, or symbolic reasons, without commensurate investment in funding, staffing, or infrastructure. As a result, many universities exist in name but lack the academic depth, facilities, and operational capacity to function as credible institutions of higher learning. This moratorium is thus a rare and commendable act of restraint, reflecting an emerging recognition that quality, not quantity, must now be the guiding principle of higher education development. However, seven years may prove insufficient to resolve the deep structural and academic weaknesses that exist across much of the system. There is, therefore, a compelling case for extending the moratorium until a full cycle of system-wide consolidation has been completed.

There is, therefore, a need to consolidate and fully take advantage of existing opportunities for Access to Higher Education within the existing institutions.

There is also a need to re-examine existing policies on admissions into higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The Federal Laws include the JAMB Act (1989), the Federal Character Principle (1999), which mandates that admissions follow a 45:35:20 ratio (Merit: 45%, Catchment Area: 35%, Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS): 20%). These laws that govern the admission process in the NUS are obviously hindering the realisation of the ultimate, highly desired 100% merit-based admission process.

It is observed that the Federal Character Principle (1999), which established Catchment Areas and Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS), is now obsolete, as most states, previously referred to as ELDS, have now passed that status. There is, therefore, a dire need to review the existing admission criteria to achieve a higher percentage of merit-based admission.

The Issue of Quota

In the analysis leading to the policy decision on the initial moratorium of 7 years now changed to 6 years in the establishment of universities, the most critical parameter informing the decision is the serious gap between the published available quota of admissions in the universities and the actual admissions. Thus, the significant difference between the available quota of admissions and the total admissions of candidates (which can be interpreted as “supply” much higher than “demand”) largely informed the policy, aimed at allowing the demand to catch up with supply. The logical question that arises is:



How has the published quota of admission been determined in the NUS?

Thus, as efforts are made to address the issues relating to access to University education with particular reference to current government policies, it is necessary to take a holistic approach to admissions quotas and their utilization. While there are facts that most of the Universities do not fill their quotas, the other issue to consider is whether the institutions have the capacity to utilize their published quotas fully. Is there a chance that some or most of our institutions have been allocated quotas that they do not have the capacity to fill? For example, to appropriately address the issues of quotas, cognizance must be taken of the carrying capacity of an institution in terms of availability of infrastructure, related facilities and human resources. A cursory look indicates that there are challenges of these across the system; institutions committed to quality outcomes can only admit as many students as they have the resources for. Anything beyond this, undermines the commitment to quality, which must be properly addressed.

Key strategic objectives include:

1. Study of the major factors accounting for the poor utilisation of the available quota of admissions in the NUS
2. Reviewing the national laws/guidelines governing the admission criteria
3. Auditing and strengthening existing universities, particularly those struggling with accreditation, staffing gaps, or governance failures
4. Upgrading infrastructure, including lecture theatres, laboratories, hostels facilities, security on campus and libraries
5. Re-equipping universities with modern ICT facilities and research equipment
6. Reforming programme offerings to align with present and future needs
7. Establishing performance benchmarks to assess institutional improvement before any future expansion is permitted
8. Implement a whole “school reform” strategy that elevates the quality of secondary education and create a University Preparatory Year programme for qualified but not admitted candidates.
9. Provision of smart campus infrastructure and global standard amenities in Nigeria universities to increase the percentage of foreign scholars.

1.6 IMPLEMENTATION LOGFRAME

Presented in Table 1.7 is the implementation logframe involving 9 strategic objectives/goals aimed at achieving the overarching goal of “*At Least 90% Of Qualified Candidates in UTME Should Be Able to Get Admissions into Nigerian degree-awarding institutions by 2030*”.



STRATEGIC GOAL NO.	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
SG. No.1 Establishment of Appropriate Quota of admissions for Each University Programme	Determination and utilisation of parameters driving the carrying capacity of a programme. Assess the Carrying Capacities of Each Programme in each university	Properly determined quotas of admissions for the determination of the supply/demand gap of university admissions leading to realistic input to policy formulation.	2026-2027	NUC & Universities (involving Deans of Faculties, Director of Academic Planning, Director of Physical Planning)
SG. No.2 Ensure the Utilisation of Full Admission Quota by Degree Awarding Institutions	Engagement with Universities on appropriate utilisation of admission quotas	Degree Awarding Institutions Fully Review and adopt strategies to fully utilise their quotas	2026-2027	Degree-Awarding Institutions; NUC; JAMB
SG. No.3 Review the current Laws/Guidelines Governing the process of Admissions into Degree-Awarding Institutions	Review existing laws and guidelines on the process of admissions into different programmes in the NUS to optimise the admissions into the different programmes.	Laws and regulations on admissions updated in line with current needs to optimise the utilisation of the determined quotas of admissions to the various programmes.	2027	FME, NUC, Universities.



SG. No.4 Aligning Degree Programmes with emphasis on graduate employability against the Needs of Industry and the Wider Society	Review the existing Programmes to enhance dynamism and alignment with the needs of the industry and society.	Programmes in the NUS aligned with needs of industry and potential applicants, leading to improved enrolments to the various programmes.	2027	NUC and NUS
SG. No.5 Increasing Carrying Capacities of Institutions that have consistently met Accreditation Requirements	Assess institutions for greater capacities based on infrastructural capacities (including lecture theatres, laboratories, hostels facilities, libraries and security on campus) and adequate staffing towards quality programme delivery.	Increased carrying capacities for institutions that have consistently met Accreditation requirements.	2027	NUC
SG. No.6 Upgrade and Strengthen Infrastructure and Human Resources to Meet Expansion of Carrying Capacities of the different programmes.	Needs Assessment of Infrastructure and Resource Needs of Institutions	Infrastructure and other Resources upgraded leading to increased carrying capacities	2026-2027	FME, TETFund, NUC,
SG. No.7 Strengthening Open and Distance Learning platform for admission into degree awarding programmes, a With Emphasis on the	Assess the infrastructural support (e.g., technology) and human resources needs for the operation of Open and Distance Learning platform of Programme delivery. Undertake a critical evaluation of the performance of the existing ODL	Enhanced ODL programme delivery in the NUS.	2027	NUC and NUS



SG. No.8 Implement a whole ‘school reform’ strategy that elevates the quality of secondary school education and create a University Preparatory Year programme for qualified but not admitted candidates.	Serious attention to performance enhancements of the students in Secondary School System at the JSS and SSS levels.	Increase in the number of qualified students for admissions into the different degree programmes in the NUS.	2026-2027	FME, NERDC??, State Ministries of Education, NUC
SG. No.9 Provision of smart campus infrastructure and global standard facilities in Nigeria universities to increase the percentage of foreign scholars.	Critical evaluation and provision of the special infrastructural needs and the admission system to attract foreign students.	Increased percentage of enrolments of foreign students in the NUS	2026-2027	NUC, JAMB and NUS

1.7 CONCLUSION

From the above data on the high level of non-utilisation of the available quota of admissions in our university system, the question that arises is, do we still need more universities? The answer is obviously no, judging by the much-expected moratorium placed by the Hon. Minister of Education on the establishment of more Federal and Private universities. It is indeed a welcome decision to bring sanity to the system.

From the foregoing, it is clear that in developing Blueprint 2.0, the articulated problems of access to university education are not about establishing more universities. Rather, it should be a period of consolidation not a retreat; a strategic pause and an opportunity to build a stronger foundation, deepen the academic culture, and restore global respectability to Nigerian public and private universities. The logic is simple: before we build new institutions, we must fix the ones we already have. Expansion without consolidation is not growth; it is diffusion, fragmentation, and eventual decline.





2.0

CURRICULUM RE-ENGINEERING

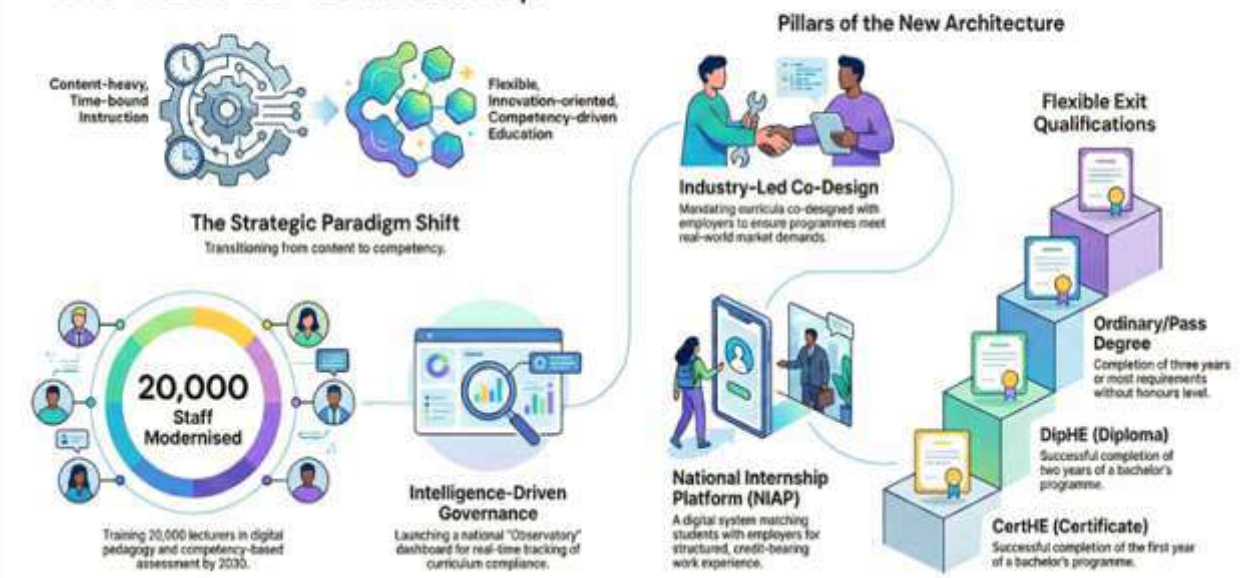
*Repositioning University Curricula for Relevance,
Competency, and Global Competitiveness*

L-R: Prof. Ruggayatu Ahmed Ruffo, Prof. Peter O. Oshodi, Prof. Is-hag Olayinka, the acting Chairman of the NUS, President and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Bello Nnamdi, ES NUS, Prof. Abubakar Adamu Ruffo, Prof. J. A. A. Prof. Julius A. Okeke, Prof. Ali Babu, Prof. Chetiv Galadanci and Douglas Blackstock at the inauguration of the NUS.

Overarching Goal

By 2030, the NUS will deliver a fully competency-based curriculum, with programmes built around clear knowledge, skills, and behavioural attributes across all disciplines. Curricula will align with national priorities and labour market demands, supporting sectors such as the digital economy, manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, climate resilience, and the creative industries, guided by labour market intelligence and employer feedback.

Re-Engineering Nigerian Higher Education: The 2026-2030 Roadmap



Structural imbalances in enrolment will be corrected, shifting students away from over-concentration in the social sciences toward STEM, agriculture, health sciences, and emerging technologies, with incentives and targeted funding. The curriculum will be digitally enabled, ensuring that all graduates acquire core skills in digital literacy, data analysis, and AI, while advanced digital tools are integrated into discipline-specific training.

Academic learning will be closely aligned with the world of work, with Work-Integrated Learning embedded in all programmes to provide practical experience and industry-relevant skills. A flexible and inclusive learning architecture will support lifelong learning through modular curricula, micro-credentials, and stackable qualifications, underpinned by a National Qualifications Framework that enables mobility and recognition of prior learning. Curricula will achieve global comparability while maintaining local relevance, benchmarking against international frameworks and integrating African perspectives and indigenous knowledge. Governance will balance national coordination with institutional autonomy: the NUC will set standards and ensure quality, while universities retain the freedom to innovate and adapt to their contexts.

The transformation is a shift from content-heavy, time-bound instruction to competency-driven, flexible, innovation-oriented education.



2.1 INTRODUCTION

Curriculum re-engineering remains the most critical lever for repositioning the NUS to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. The experience of the 2019 to 2023 reform cycle demonstrated that while the introduction of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) was a significant policy shift, its implementation was uneven and, in many cases, contentious. In the Preface to the NUC CCMAS for all the 17 Disciplines, Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, mni, MFR, FNAL, the then Executive Secretary of NUC, noted, as follows:

“The CCMAS documents are uniquely structured to provide for 70% of core courses for each programme, while allowing universities to utilise the remaining 30% for other innovative courses in their peculiar areas of focus. In addition to the overall Learning Outcomes for each discipline, there are also Learning Outcomes for each programme and course. In general, programmes are typically structured such that a student does not carry less than 30 credit units or more than 48 credit units per session.

Consequently, the Commission is optimistic that the 2021 CCMAS documents will serve as a guide to Nigerian Universities in the design of curriculum for their programmes with regards to the minimum acceptable standards of input and process, as well as, measurable benchmark of knowledge, 21st century skills and competencies expected to be acquired by an average graduate of each of the academic programmes, for self, national and global relevance.”

Stakeholder feedback across universities and disciplines indicates that CCMAS, though well-intentioned, has been perceived as overly rigid in certain contexts, limiting institutional flexibility and constraining the ability of programmes to respond quickly to emerging knowledge areas such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and the creative economy. Simultaneously, variations in institutional capacity, staff readiness, and infrastructure have contributed to inconsistent adoption across the system.

Beyond the challenges of CCMAS, deeper structural issues persist. There is a growing mismatch between the skills produced by universities and those being demanded by the labour market. Employers continue to report deficiencies in critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, digital competence, and workplace readiness among graduates. At the same time, the university system faces a significant imbalance in enrolment patterns, with a disproportionate number of students concentrated on disciplines that have limited absorption capacity in the labour market, while critical sectors such as engineering, agriculture, health sciences, and emerging technologies remain under-supplied.



In addition, the prevailing curriculum model remains largely content-driven and lecture-based, with limited emphasis on demonstrating competencies, interdisciplinary learning, or real-world problem-solving. Assessment practices remain heavily weighted toward end-of-semester examinations, with insufficient use of continuous and applied evaluation methods. Opportunities for structured workplace learning are uneven, and existing mechanisms such as the SIWES, have faced challenges with placement, supervision, and quality assurance.

However, the global higher education landscape is undergoing rapid transformation. Universities worldwide are shifting toward competency-based education, flexible learning pathways, digital delivery systems, and stronger integration with industry and innovation ecosystems. Emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are reshaping the nature of work and the skills required for economic participation. In this context, maintaining the status quo would significantly weaken Nigeria's competitiveness and limit its capacity for sustainable development.

Blueprint 2.0, therefore, adopts a comprehensive and systemic approach to curriculum re-engineering. It does not seek to discard existing frameworks outright but to review, refine, and transition them toward a more flexible, competency-based, and industry-responsive model. The reform is guided by a clear philosophy: national standards must be preserved, but institutional innovation must be enabled.

Central to this new direction is the recognition that curriculum reform requires strong implementation mechanisms. These include clearly defined institutional roles, sustainable funding models, faculty capacity development, digital infrastructure, and robust monitoring systems. New institutional instruments such as the National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council, the CCMAS Implementation Observatory, and the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform will be established to ensure coordination, accountability, and continuous improvement.

This reform also recognises the importance of inclusivity and contextual relevance. Nigerian curricula must align with global standards while incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and addressing local development challenges. They must prepare graduates not only for employment but also for entrepreneurship, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning.

Blueprint 2.0 also adopts a more adaptive, flexible, and intelligence-driven curriculum governance model. It aims to produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also capable, adaptable, and equipped to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's transformation into a knowledge-driven economy.



The Blueprint further reaffirms the statutory mandate of the National Universities Commission as the sole authority responsible for the approval, development, quality assurance, and accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities. Professional bodies retain responsibility for regulating professional practice and membership within their respective professions, but academic programme accreditation and curriculum governance remain within the statutory mandate of the NUC. Greater collaboration and harmonisation between the NUC and professional bodies will nevertheless be encouraged in the interest of programme relevance and national manpower development to face the socio-economic development challenges of our nation state.

Joint NUC and Professional Bodies Programme Accreditation

From the comprehensive study of the problem of graduate employability undertaken by NUC in 2018, the recognized key professional regulatory agencies in NUS are presented below.

S/N	DISCIPLINE	PROFESSIONAL REGULATING BODY
1	Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Home Economics	Nigerian Institute of Animal Science (NIAS)
2	Basic Medical and Health Sciences	Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN)
3	Computing	Computer Professionals (Registration Council of) Nigeria (CPN)
4	Engineering and Technology	Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN)
5	Environmental Sciences	Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) The Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC)
6	Law	Council of Legal Education
7	Medicine and Dentistry	Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN)
8	Pharmaceutical Sciences	Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN)
9	Veterinary Medicine	Veterinary Council of Nigeria



The roles and responsibilities of the professional regulatory bodies in skills development are, among others, to:

- i. Define more clearly the type of skills relevant to their professions and ensure they are embedded in the curriculum of universities in collaboration with NUC.
- ii. Collaborate with the Universities and Organised Private Sector (OPS) towards establishing regional industrial training centres near the universities to ease the process of securing placements of students for SIWES.
- iii. Monitor more closely the implementation of SIWES for the different disciplines they supervise.
- iv. Revise the accreditation templates used in accrediting programmes in universities to give more weight to skills development by universities.
- v. Operationalize special programmes established to support skills development.

For example, in the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, COREN is empowered to regulate and control the practice of Engineering in Nigeria in all aspects and ramifications. The mandate of COREN therefore includes:

- Accreditation of Engineering Programmes;
- Registration of Engineering Personnel and firms;
- Regulation and Control of Engineering Practice.

In response to the above, COREN developed the Benchmark Minimum Academic and Professional Standard (BMAPS) for the training of undergraduate students in all specialties of engineering being run in Nigerian Universities. In practice, for any Engineering programme to commence after the University has been given approval by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to run the programme, COREN will first carry out resource verification to assess staffing and facilities on ground. Based on such assessment/verification, COREN would give or deny approval for commencement of the degree programme. Worthy of note is the high degree of correlation between BMAPS and CCMAAS for engineering programmes. It can readily be seen that NUC and any professional regulatory body can easily undertake joint accreditation by combining their requirements for programme accreditation.

2.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.2.1 Overview of the Current Curriculum Landscape

The Nigerian University System is currently undergoing one of the most consequential transitions in its history. The rapid transformation of the global economy, the emergence of digital societies, the expansion of artificial intelligence, changing labour market structures, demographic pressures, and increasing demand for flexible learning have exposed deep structural weaknesses within existing curriculum systems. At the same time,



these developments also provide Nigeria with a major opportunity to reposition its universities as drivers of national productivity, technological innovation, industrial development, and global competitiveness.

Although important progress was made under Blueprint 1.0 through the introduction of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), implementation outcomes across universities have remained uneven. Several institutions successfully revised programmes and introduced innovative curricular content, while others struggled with implementation due to limited funding, inadequate faculty capacity, weak digital infrastructure, poor instructional design systems, and uncertainty regarding operational flexibility within the CCMAS framework.

A major challenge confronting the current curriculum system is the mismatch between university training and labour market realities. Employers across both public and private sectors continue to report that many graduates lack practical skills, workplace readiness, communication ability, entrepreneurial competence, digital fluency, critical thinking capacity, and problem-solving orientation. This gap has contributed significantly to graduate unemployment, underemployment, skills mismatch, and declining confidence in graduate preparedness.

The present curriculum structure also remains heavily dependent on traditional face-to-face instructional models. While some universities have expanded digital learning capacities since the COVID-19 pandemic, many programmes are still designed primarily for physical classroom delivery. This has limited scalability, reduced flexibility for non-traditional learners, and constrained the ability of universities to participate competitively in emerging global digital learning ecosystems.

The growing importance of e-Learning, Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL), hybrid delivery systems, virtual laboratories, digital collaboration platforms, and AI-enabled learning tools has fundamentally changed how higher education is designed and delivered worldwide. However, curriculum structures within many Nigerian universities are yet to fully integrate these realities. Weak Learning Management System adoption, inadequate digital course content, insufficient Open Educational Resources, limited instructional design support, and uneven digital literacy among faculty continue to affect curriculum delivery quality.

Another significant issue is the slow responsiveness of curriculum review systems to technological and industrial change. Emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence,



Robotics, Cybersecurity, Data Science, Biotechnology, Climate Studies, Renewable Energy, FinTech, Agritech, HealthTech, and Digital Manufacturing are evolving rapidly, yet the current curriculum development cycle often struggles to respond with the necessary speed and flexibility. In several cases, universities proposing innovative programmes encounter long delays before appropriate CCMAS frameworks are developed and approved.

Stakeholders have also raised concerns regarding the balance between standardization and institutional autonomy. While national academic standards remain necessary for quality assurance and system coherence, several universities and disciplines have argued that the current CCMAS structure may not provide sufficient flexibility for institutional uniqueness, regional relevance, interdisciplinary innovation, and rapid adaptation to emerging national needs. These concerns have reinforced calls for a more flexible and adaptive curriculum framework that maintains quality standards while encouraging innovation and healthy institutional differentiation.

Worthy of note is the course structure imbalance between the existing course categorization in the university system which typically involves – Compulsory, Required and Elective and the limited categorization of courses as Compulsory or Elective in the design of the CCMAS. Consequently, courses that should have been designated as Required are being presented as either Compulsory or Elective. This is a major drawback in the adoption of the 70% course prescription per programme. Consequently, some of the CCMAS courses will have to be re-designated under the existing course categorization.

The challenge of curriculum design extends beyond undergraduate education. Postgraduate curriculum systems across many universities remain weakly coordinated at the national level. Unlike undergraduate programmes, postgraduate education lacks sufficiently harmonized curriculum benchmarks, competency expectations, digital research integration standards, interdisciplinary research structures, and nationally coordinated quality frameworks. This has implications for research quality, innovation capacity, international recognition, and postgraduate employability.

Another major concern is the limited integration of industry and employers into curriculum governance. Although some universities maintain active collaboration with industry partners, such engagement remains inconsistent and often informal. Many programmes continue to operate with limited labour market intelligence, weak industry



participation in curriculum review, and inadequate practical exposure opportunities for students.

The existing SIWES structure also faces operational limitations. Stakeholders have noted weak supervision mechanisms, inadequate placement opportunities, inconsistent assessment standards, and poor alignment between industrial attachment experiences and curricular outcomes. In many disciplines outside engineering and technology-related fields, workplace learning opportunities remain either poorly structured or completely absent. There is therefore increasing support for the transition from traditional SIWES arrangements toward a broader and more structured Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) framework applicable across disciplines.

Digital transformation is also reshaping the global meaning of competence itself. Employers increasingly prioritize adaptable skills over narrow disciplinary knowledge. Competencies such as digital literacy, AI awareness, data interpretation, communication, collaboration, creativity, systems thinking, ethical reasoning, and multidisciplinary problem-solving have become essential across nearly all professions. Yet many university programmes still treat such competencies as peripheral rather than foundational.

The curriculum system is also under pressure from changing learner demographics. Increasing numbers of working-class learners, lifelong learners, remote learners, and non-traditional students require flexible learning pathways, modular progression systems, stackable credentials, part-time study options, and asynchronous delivery models. Existing curriculum structures remain insufficiently flexible to accommodate these realities at scale.

Furthermore, there is inadequate integration of indigenous knowledge systems, African development realities, local innovation contexts, and community problem-solving into many university curricula. While global competitiveness remains important, stakeholders emphasised that curriculum reform must also strengthen local relevance by integrating Nigerian realities, African scholarship, indigenous technologies, local production systems, and context-sensitive innovation models.

Concerns were also raised regarding weak information management and fragmented curriculum intelligence systems. Curriculum planning in many cases is not sufficiently supported by real-time labour market data, graduate tracking systems, employer



feedback systems, digital transformation indicators, or sector-specific manpower forecasting. This weakens the ability of universities and regulators to make evidence-based curriculum decisions.

Despite these challenges, Nigeria possesses enormous opportunities for curriculum transformation. The country has one of the largest youth populations in the world, a rapidly expanding digital economy, growing entrepreneurial ecosystems, emerging technology sectors, increasing regional integration opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and significant diaspora expertise that can support curriculum modernisation efforts.

The Nigerian University System also benefits from a large network of universities, expanding private sector participation, improving digital awareness among students and faculty, growing interest in innovation and entrepreneurship, and increasing recognition of the importance of skills-based education. These developments provide a strong foundation for the next phase of curriculum transformation under Blueprint 2.0.

2.2.2 Enrolment Imbalance and System Misalignment

A major structural issue within the NUS is the imbalance in student enrolment across disciplines. There is a persistent concentration of students in the social sciences, management, and arts programmes, while enrolment capacity in the science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and health-related fields remains limited.

This imbalance is driven by several factors, including:

- Lower infrastructure and capital requirements for non-STEM programmes
- Limited laboratory capacity and equipment in science-based disciplines
- Perceived difficulty and cost of STEM education
- Weak policy incentives to steer enrolment toward priority sectors

The consequence is a mismatch between graduate output and national workforce needs. Critical sectors such as engineering, agriculture, healthcare, and emerging technologies continue to experience shortages of skilled professionals, while graduate unemployment and underemployment remain high in oversubscribed fields. Without a deliberate policy intervention, this imbalance will continue to undermine national development goals, including industrialisation, food security, and digital transformation.



2.2.3 Weak Industry Linkages and Limited Practical Exposure

The relationship between universities and industry remains underdeveloped and largely informal. While some institutions have established partnerships with employers, these collaborations are not systematised or embedded within curriculum governance structures. Existing mechanisms for practical training, particularly the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), have faced persistent challenges:

- Difficulty in securing adequate placement opportunities for students
- Weak supervision and monitoring of student activities during placement
- Limited alignment between workplace tasks and academic learning outcomes
- Inadequate funding and logistical support

As a result, many students complete industrial training without acquiring meaningful practical skills. This has contributed to the perception among employers that graduates lack workplace readiness.

The proposed transition to a comprehensive Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) system reflects recognition of these shortcomings. However, the success of such a system will depend on addressing structural constraints, particularly the limited absorptive capacity of industry and the need for incentives to encourage employer participation.

2.2.4 Digital Transformation Gaps

Despite global advancements in digital education, the integration of technology into curriculum delivery within Nigerian universities remains uneven. While some institutions have adopted e-learning platforms and digital tools, many lack the infrastructure, bandwidth, and technical capacity to support modern teaching and learning methods.

Key gaps include:

- Limited access to digital learning platforms and virtual laboratories
- Inadequate training of academic staff in digital pedagogy
- Weak integration of artificial intelligence, data analytics, and emerging technologies into curricula
- Persistent digital divide between institutions

Given the increasing importance of digital skills in the global economy, these gaps represent a significant constraint on graduate competitiveness.



2.2.5 Absence of a National Qualifications Framework

Nigeria currently lacks a fully operational and universally adopted National Qualifications Framework that integrates university, polytechnic, and vocational education pathways. This absence creates several challenges:

- Limited mobility between different levels and types of education
- Weak recognition of prior learning and informal skills
- Difficulty in implementing stackable qualifications and micro-credentials
- Lack of clarity in defining and benchmarking competencies

The development of a Nigerian National Qualifications Framework is therefore essential to support the broader curriculum reform agenda.

2.2.6 Funding and Capacity Constraints

Curriculum reform is resource-intensive. However, many universities, particularly state institutions, operate under severe financial constraints. These constraints affect:

- Curriculum redesign processes
- Faculty training and development
- Acquisition of modern teaching equipment and infrastructure
- Implementation of digital learning systems

There is currently no clearly defined, costed national framework for funding curriculum transformation, which raises concerns about the feasibility of large-scale reform.

2.2.7 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Existence of a national curriculum framework (CCMAS) providing a foundation for standardisation
- Growing national awareness regarding the need for employability-focused education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and industry-responsive curricula.
- Strong regulatory role of the National Universities Commission.
- The National Universities Commission already possesses existing regulatory and curriculum structures that can be strengthened and modernized to support implementation without unnecessary institutional duplication.
- Possession of highly qualified academic personnel with strong disciplinary expertise and growing interest in curriculum innovation.
- Large and growing youth population creating demand for higher education
- The expansion of Open and Distance e-Learning centres in several universities providing an existing platform upon which blended and digital learning systems can be strengthened
- Increasing private sector growth in ICT, fintech, agriculture, manufacturing, renewable energy, and creative industries creates opportunities for strong



university-industry collaboration.

- Growing awareness of artificial intelligence, digital technologies, and data-driven economies is increasing demand for curriculum modernization across disciplines
- Emerging partnerships with international organisations and development partners

Weaknesses

- Overly rigid curriculum structures limiting institutional innovation
- Weak definition and measurement of competencies across disciplines
- Persistent mismatch between graduate skills and labour market needs
- Imbalance in enrolment across disciplines
- Limited industry participation in curriculum design and delivery
- Inadequate funding for curriculum reform and infrastructure development
- Weak assessment systems focused on theoretical knowledge
- Lack of a National Qualifications Framework
- Insufficient faculty capacity in modern pedagogy and digital teaching
- Fragmented postgraduate curriculum standards

Opportunities

- Rapid global expansion of digital learning provides opportunities for Nigeria to scale access through blended learning, ODeL, virtual learning environments, and modular delivery systems.
- Emerging sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Biotechnology, Renewable Energy, Climate Technology, FinTech, Agritech, and Digital Manufacturing create opportunities for new programme development and specialised manpower production.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area creates demand for regionally competitive graduates with multilingual competence, digital skills, and cross-border employability.
- Growing international acceptance of micro-credentials, modular learning, stackable certificates, and lifelong learning creates opportunities for curriculum flexibility and workforce reskilling.
- International development partners such as the World Bank, AFD, UNESCO, British Council, and African Centres of Excellence provide opportunities for technical support and funding partnerships.
- Expansion of industry innovation ecosystems, technology hubs, startups, SMEs, and digital enterprises creates opportunities for stronger Work-Integrated Learning and curriculum co-development partnerships.
- The growing Nigerian diaspora community provides opportunities for international collaboration, remote mentorship, curriculum benchmarking, and virtual teaching partnerships.



- Increasing national interest in entrepreneurship and innovation provides a favourable environment for curriculum transformation toward job creation and enterprise development.

Threats

- Rapid technological change may outpace curriculum review systems if reforms are not implemented with sufficient flexibility and responsiveness.
- Persistent funding limitations may slow infrastructure development, digital transformation, faculty retraining, and implementation capacity.
- Resistance to change among institutions, faculty, professional groups, and regulatory actors may affect reform implementation.
- Weak electricity supply, internet access limitations, and uneven digital infrastructure may hinder large-scale e-Learning deployment.
- Poor coordination between universities, industry, and regulatory agencies may weaken implementation effectiveness.
- Global talent competition may continue to encourage migration of highly skilled graduates and academic staff if local systems remain weak.
- Economic instability and inflation may increase operational costs for universities and reduce institutional capacity for curriculum innovation.
- Over-centralisation of curriculum control may discourage institutional creativity, responsiveness, and differentiation if flexibility mechanisms are not properly strengthened.
- Delays in developing CCMAIS for emerging programmes may discourage innovation and reduce the competitiveness of Nigerian universities in fast-evolving fields.
- Weak monitoring and data systems may undermine evidence-based curriculum planning and policy evaluation.

2.3: JUSTIFICATION

The case for comprehensive curriculum re-engineering in the NUS is compelling, urgent, and grounded in economic, social, and global realities. The current structure of university education is no longer sufficient to support Nigeria's development aspirations or to position its graduates for success in an increasingly competitive, and technology-driven global economy.

2.3.1 Economic Imperative and Cost of Inaction

Nigeria is experiencing a persistent disconnect between educational output and labour market demand. While universities continue to produce large numbers of graduates annually, many lack the competencies required for productive employment. This mismatch contributes directly to graduate unemployment, underemployment, and low productivity across key sectors of the economy.



The economic cost of maintaining the status quo is significant. It includes:

- Loss of potential output due to underutilised human capital
- Increased dependency ratios and social pressure on government systems
- Reduced competitiveness of Nigerian industries due to skills shortages
- Slower pace of innovation, industrialisation, and technological advancement

At the same time, critical sectors such as engineering, agriculture, healthcare, and digital technology continue to experience shortages of skilled professionals. This paradox reflects structural inefficiencies in curriculum design and enrolment patterns.

Without deliberate reform, Nigeria risks deepening its skills deficit at a time when global economies are rapidly transitioning toward knowledge-intensive production systems. Curriculum transformation is therefore not optional; it is a central requirement for economic resilience and growth.

2.3.2 Alignment with National Development Priorities

Nigeria's national development agenda places strong emphasis on industrialisation, food security, digital transformation, healthcare delivery, and climate resilience. However, current university curricula are not sufficiently aligned with these priorities.

Many academic programmes remain theoretical in orientation, with limited connection to real sector needs. Opportunities to integrate emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, biotechnology, and the creative economy into mainstream curricula are not being fully utilised.

Re-engineering the curriculum will ensure that:

- Academic programmes directly support national policy priorities
- Graduates possess skills relevant to strategic sectors
- Universities contribute more effectively to solving national challenges

In addition, the deliberate integration of indigenous knowledge systems will enhance the relevance of education to local contexts, particularly in agriculture, environmental management, health, and cultural industries.

2.3.3 Global Competitiveness and Technological Disruption

The global higher education landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Universities worldwide are shifting toward competency-based education, flexible learning pathways, interdisciplinary programmes, and strong integration with industry and innovation ecosystems.

Emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, automation, and data



analytics, are redefining the nature of work. Many traditional roles are evolving or disappearing, while new roles requiring advanced technical and cognitive skills are emerging.

In this context, Nigerian graduates must compete not only locally but globally. Without curriculum reform:

- Nigerian degrees risk declining relevance in the international labour market
- Graduates may lack the skills required for participation in global value chains
- The country may fall behind in critical technological domains

Aligning curricula with international qualification frameworks such as the AQF, EQF, MQF, and QAA will enhance comparability and mobility, while ensuring that Nigerian graduates meet global standards.

2.3.4 Addressing Structural Weaknesses in Existing Frameworks

The introduction of CCMAS represented an important step toward standardisation and quality assurance. However, stakeholder feedback has highlighted several limitations that must now be addressed. These include:

- Perceived rigidity in the 70:30 structure, particularly in applied disciplines
- Insufficient flexibility to accommodate rapidly evolving knowledge areas
- Uneven implementation across institutions
- Lack of clear competency mapping in many programmes

This reform does not seek to discard CCMAS but to review, refine, and transition it into a more flexible, competency-based framework that retains national standards while enabling institutional innovation.

2.3.5 Need for a Coherent Qualifications and Learning Pathway System

The absence of a Nigerian National Qualifications Framework has limited the development of a coherent, flexible education system. Without such a framework:

- Credit transfer between institutions is constrained
- Recognition of prior learning is weak
- Lifelong learning pathways are fragmented
- Micro-credentials and modular learning lack standardisation

Establishing a national framework will provide the structural foundation for:

- Stackable qualifications



- Exit pathways with clearly defined competencies
- Integration between university, polytechnic, and vocational systems

This is essential for expanding access, improving flexibility, and supporting workforce mobility.

2.3.6 Strengthening the Link Between Education and Work

One of the most persistent criticisms of the current system is the weak linkage between academic learning and workplace requirements. Existing mechanisms, such as SIWES, have not fully achieved their objectives due to structural and operational challenges.

The introduction of a comprehensive Work-Integrated Learning system is, therefore, justified by the need to:

- Provide students with meaningful workplace experience
- Improve employability and job readiness
- Strengthen collaboration between universities and industry

However, this reform also recognises the constraints within the labour market, particularly the limited capacity of employers to absorb large numbers of students. It therefore proposes a structured, flexible, and incentive-driven approach that includes:

- Expanded participation of the informal and non-formal sectors
- Hybrid models incorporating simulations and project-based learning
- Stronger institutional responsibility for placement and supervision.

Also of relevance, based on international best practices, is for us to streamline and effectively coordinate our skills development programmes at formal, non-formal and informal education and training settings, through the development of a NATIONAL SKILLS POLICY. The Policy will standardise quality assured, harmonise and remove any disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower, build a skills training framework, and upgrade the skills of workers. In addition, there should be an agency or Ministry to be responsible for that.

Furthermore, for skills development to improve, there is the need to establish a Sector Specific Skills Council (SSSC). SSSC will define the skills standard, labour market information, and support the development of National Occupational Standards, quality assurance and the delivery of the training.

2.3.7 Institutional and Policy Coherence

Effective curriculum reform requires clear institutional roles and strong coordination mechanisms. The current system is characterised by fragmentation, with limited



alignment between universities, regulatory bodies, industry, and other stakeholders.

The establishment of new institutional mechanisms, such as the National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council and the CCMAS Implementation Observatory, is justified by the need to:

- Institutionalise stakeholder participation
- Ensure continuous curriculum review and relevance
- Provide data-driven monitoring and accountability

These mechanisms will reduce policy fragmentation and improve system coherence.

2.3.8 Implementation Feasibility and Funding Realities

A major limitation of previous reform efforts has been the absence of clearly defined funding models and implementation strategies. Curriculum transformation requires investment in:

- Faculty training and capacity development
- Digital infrastructure and learning technologies
- Curriculum redesign processes
- Monitoring and evaluation systems

This Blueprint recognises these requirements and proposes a shared funding model involving government, TETFund, development partners, and private sector stakeholders. Without such a framework, reform efforts would remain aspirational rather than actionable.

2.3.9 Managing Reform Risks and Stakeholder Concerns

The reform also takes into account legitimate concerns raised by stakeholders, including:

- The need to preserve institutional autonomy
- Risks associated with poorly implemented exit certifications
- Concerns about industry capacity for student placements
- Resistance to increased workload for academic staff

By incorporating flexibility, phased implementation, stakeholder engagement, and incentive structures, the reform seeks to mitigate these risks and build broad-based support.



2.4: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (INTEGRATED POLICY REFORM FRAMEWORK)

To deliver a curriculum system that is responsive, future-oriented, and globally competitive, the NUC will pursue a set of clearly defined, measurable, and institutionally grounded strategic objectives. Each objective is designed to correct identified systemic weaknesses while building a coherent, flexible, and accountable curriculum architecture for the Nigerian University System. The strategic objectives are deliberately framed to balance national quality assurance with institutional autonomy, while ensuring that Nigerian universities retain the flexibility to innovate according to their mandates, regional contexts, and comparative strengths.

Objective 1: Reform and Operationalise a Flexible National Curriculum Framework

The current CCMAS framework will be comprehensively reviewed and repositioned into a more flexible and adaptive national curriculum architecture that preserves quality while enabling institutional innovation.

This reform will:

- Introduce a revised national curriculum structure that defines minimum academic standards without constraining institutional uniqueness.
- Adjust the current 70:30 ratio to allow discipline-sensitive flexibility, particularly in applied and rapidly evolving fields.
- Provide clear guidance on competency mapping across all programmes, ensuring that each course contributes to defined graduate attributes.
- Establish a structured transition roadmap from the current CCMAS model to a competency-based curriculum system, including pilot phases, evaluation cycles, and full rollout timelines.
- Adopt the existing course categorization in form of Compulsory, Required and Elective courses in the review of the CCMAS.
- Mandate periodic curriculum review cycles of 4 to 5 years, with flexibility for fast-evolving disciplines.

Measurable Targets:

- Revised CCMAS framework approved and deployed by 2027.
- 100 percent of programmes aligned with updated national standards by 2029.
- At least 50 percent of programmes demonstrate enhanced institutional content innovation.



Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), University Senates, FME, TETFund.

Objective 2: Establish a National Qualifications and Competency Framework

A coherent national system for defining, measuring, and recognising learning outcomes will be established through the development of a Nigerian National Qualifications Framework (NNQF) and supporting competency frameworks.

This will:

- Define qualification levels across university education, including undergraduate, postgraduate, micro-credentials, and professional pathways.
- Enable credit transfer, stackable qualifications, and recognition of prior learning.
- Provide sector-specific competency frameworks across key clusters such as STEM, Health Sciences, Humanities, Agriculture, and Business.
- Clarify what constitutes a “competent graduate” within each discipline through measurable skill benchmarks.

Measurable Targets:

- NNQF developed and legally adopted by 2027.
- Sector competency frameworks published for at least five major disciplines by 2028.
- All universities aligned with NNQF standards by 2030.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), National Board for Technical Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education, FME

Objective 3: Institutionalise Industry-Academia Collaboration in Curriculum Design

To address weak labour market alignment, a formal and sustainable structure for industry engagement will be established.

This includes:

- Creation of a National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council (NIACC) to guide curriculum policy at the national level.
- Establishment of Institutional Curriculum Advisory Boards in all universities with representation from employers, alumni, professional bodies, and civil society.
- Mandatory industry participation in curriculum design, delivery, and periodic review.
- Integration of diaspora expertise and international partners in curriculum benchmarking.



Measurable Targets:

- NIACC established and operational by 2026.
- 100 percent of universities will establish institutional advisory boards by 2027.
- At least 60 percent of programmes demonstrate documented industry input by 2028.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), Organised Private Sector, Chambers of Commerce, Universities.

Objective 4: Establishment and Mainstreaming Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Across All Disciplines

Conceptual Foundation

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a structured, supervised, assessed, credit-bearing learning experience that integrates academic theory with practical workplace application. It is essential because employers increasingly demand graduates who possess applied competencies rather than only theoretical knowledge. Graduate unemployment is often linked to limited workplace exposure during studies, leaving many students unprepared for professional realities. International evidence shows that universities embedding WIL consistently produce graduates with stronger employability prospects. Thus, WIL is not optional; it is a proven mechanism for bridging the gap between education and employment.

Policy Mandate and Framework

To ensure WIL is embedded as a core component of higher education, a clear policy mandate requires its integration across all academic programmes. This includes:

- Establishing minimum credit thresholds so WIL is substantial and not treated as an add-on.
- Defining programme-specific placement requirements to ensure relevance.
- Embedding competency-based evaluation, with employer feedback incorporated into academic assessment.
- Allowing flexible placement options, including local, international, informal, and small-scale industry opportunities.

Systemic Transformation



The SIWES will be transformed into a comprehensive WIL framework applicable to all disciplines. To support this, a National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP) will be developed as a digital infrastructure to:

- Match students with placement opportunities.
- Track progress and employer evaluations.
- Provide national data for planning, monitoring, and quality assurance.

Measurable Targets

- WIL integrated into 100% of undergraduate programmes by 2030.
- NIAP fully operational nationwide by 2027.
- At least 70% annual student placement success rate.

Responsible Institutions

The NUC will lead implementation, working in collaboration with the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), universities, and private sector employers.

Objective 5: Embed Digital, AI, and Future Skills Across All Programmes

Digital literacy and emerging technology competencies will become mandatory learning outcomes for all graduates.

This objective will:

- Define national minimum standards for digital and AI literacy across disciplines.
- Require all programmes to integrate digital tools, data analytics, and virtual collaboration skills.
- Expand discipline-specific advanced competencies such as machine learning, robotics, bioinformatics, and renewable energy technologies.
- Support the deployment of e-laboratories, simulation environments, and AI-enabled learning systems.

Measurable Targets:

- Digital literacy adopted as a graduation requirement by 2027.
- At least 80 per cent of courses delivered with digital or blended components by 2029.
- Establishment of virtual labs in all STEM-intensive institutions.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), Universities, ICT Partners, Donor Agencies.



Objective 6: Strengthen Curriculum Delivery Through Faculty Capacity and Pedagogical Reform

Curriculum transformation will be supported by a large-scale faculty development programme.

This will:

- Institutionalise training in Outcome-Based Education and Competency-Based Education.
- Introduce mandatory certification in digital pedagogy for academic staff.
- Reform assessment systems to include continuous, competency-based evaluation methods.
- Provide incentives for innovation in teaching and curriculum design.

Measurable Targets:

- At least 20,000 academic staff trained between 2026 and 2030.
- 40 percent of student assessment based on continuous and competency-based methods by 2028.
- All universities implement digital assessment systems by 2029.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), TETFund, Universities, International Partners.

Objective 7: Expand Flexible Learning Pathways and Lifelong Learning Systems

The curriculum system will support diverse learning pathways that reflect global trends in higher education.

These include:

- Introduction of micro-credentials, nano-degrees, and stackable certificates.
- Development of structured exit certification pathways with clearly defined competencies at each level.
- Integration of Recognition of Prior Learning systems.
- Modularisation of courses to eliminate redundancy and improve efficiency.

Central to this is the National Micro-Credential Framework (NMCF) which will guide universities in offering short courses, nano-degrees, and stackable certificates. These credentials will be industry-recognised, with professional bodies and employers participating in co-certification to ensure relevance and competency value.



Structured Exit Certifications

To reduce dropout loss, enable labour market entry, and allow future re-entry, staged exit qualifications will be introduced, aligned with international modular systems. These include:

- Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE): awarded after successful completion of the first year of a bachelor's programme.
- Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE): awarded after two years of successful study.
- Ordinary/Pass Degree (without Honours): for students completing three years of a bachelor's programme or most of it without honours-level achievement.
- Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert): for students who partially complete a master's programme.

Clear governance will be established to:

- Define who determines exit points and certification standards.
- Ensure alignment with labour market expectations.
- Prevent misuse of certifications as mere credentials without competency value.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL will allow learners to:

- Convert work experience into academic credits.
- Enter programmes at advanced levels.
- Progress through modularised curricula that eliminate redundancy and improve efficiency.

Measurable Targets:

- National Micro-Credential Framework operational by 2027.
- At least 30 percent of universities offering micro-credentials by 2028.
- Modular curriculum structures implemented in all universities by 2030.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), Universities, Professional Bodies (advisory only), Employers.

Objective 8: Integrate Indigenous Knowledge and Promote Interdisciplinary Learning

Curriculum reform will reflect both global competitiveness and local relevance.



This will:

- Embed African and indigenous knowledge systems in relevant disciplines.
- Promote interdisciplinary programmes such as AgriTech, Digital Health, and Creative Industries.
- Encourage problem-based learning approaches linked to national challenges.

Measurable Targets:

- Indigenous knowledge components integrated into at least 50 percent of relevant programmes by 2029.
- Establishment of interdisciplinary programmes in all federal universities by 2028.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC, Universities, Cultural and Research Institutions.

Objective 9: Rebalance Enrolment and Align Programmes with National Development Priorities

To address systemic imbalance in enrolment, deliberate policy measures will be introduced.

This will:

- Incentivise enrolment in STEM, agriculture, health sciences, and emerging fields.
- Align programme offerings with labour market intelligence and national priorities.
- Support expansion of capacity in high-demand disciplines.

Measurable Targets:

- Increase STEM enrolment share by at least 20 percent by 2030.
- Annual labour market alignment reports guiding admissions and programme expansion.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), JAMB, Universities, Ministry of Education.

Objective 10: Strengthen Governance, Quality Assurance, and Accountability in Curriculum Implementation

NUC will retain full and sole authority over academic programme accreditation while



strengthening transparency and accountability.

This will:

- Establish the CCMA Implementation Observatory as a national monitoring system with a real-time digital dashboard.
- Publish annual curriculum compliance and performance reports.
- Introduce national curriculum audits every five years.
- Clearly define the advisory role of professional bodies without compromising NUC's regulatory mandate.

Measurable Targets:

- Observatory operational by 2026.
- Annual curriculum performance reports published from 2027.
- 100 percent compliance with national standards by 2030.

Responsible Institutions:

NUC (lead), Universities, External Auditors

2.5: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation of Curriculum Re-Engineering under *Blueprint 2.0* will follow a structured, phased, and institutionally coordinated approach. The plan is designed to translate policy into measurable action, with clearly defined responsibilities, governance structures, funding mechanisms, and accountability systems. It recognises that successful reform depends not only on policy clarity but also on execution discipline, stakeholder alignment, and sustained monitoring.

2.5.1 Implementation Architecture and Governance Structure

A multi-layered governance framework will be established to ensure effective coordination, oversight, and accountability. At the apex, the NUC will serve as the central regulatory authority responsible for policy direction, standards setting, monitoring, and enforcement as well as retain exclusive authority for accreditation of academic programmes.

Supporting NUC at the strategic level will be the National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council (NIACC). This body will institutionalise industry participation in curriculum development and ensure alignment with labour market needs. The Council will include representatives from:



- Key industry sectors
- Professional associations (in advisory capacity only)
- Universities
- Government agencies
- Nigerian diaspora experts

At the operational level, each university will establish an Institutional Curriculum and Employability Committee (ICEC) reporting to the Senate. This committee will coordinate curriculum reform, industry engagement, WIL implementation, and alignment with national frameworks.

To ensure transparency and real-time monitoring, the CCMAS Implementation Observatory will be established within NUC as a digital monitoring and analytics unit. The Observatory will:

- Host a national curriculum dashboard
- Track programme compliance, review cycles, and innovation metrics
- Publish annual curriculum performance rankings
- Provide early warning signals for implementation gaps.

2.5.2 Phased Implementation Timeline (2026–2030)

Implementation will proceed in clearly defined phases to reduce disruption and ensure learning and adaptation.

Phase I: Policy Finalisation and System Design (2026–2027)

This phase will focus on establishing the foundational architecture for reform and will:

- Review and redesign of CCMAS into a flexible national curriculum framework
- Develop and adopt legal aspects of the Nigerian National Qualifications Framework (NNQF)
- Establish NIACC and institutional committees (ICECs)
- Design and deploy the CCMAS Implementation Observatory and digital dashboard
- Develop national guidelines for WIL, micro-credentials, postgraduate curricula, and exit certifications
- Launch pilot programmes for competency-based education in selected universities



Phase II: Pilot Implementation and Capacity Building (2027–2028)

This phase will test new models and build system capacity as well as:

- Rollout pilot curriculum reforms across selected institutions and disciplines
- Launch the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP)
- Initiate large-scale faculty training in OBE, CBE, and digital pedagogy
- Establish sector-specific competency frameworks
- Introduce digital literacy and AI modules across pilot programmes
- Rollout micro-credentials and modular course structures

Phase III: System-Wide Rollout and Integration (2028–2029)

Reforms will be scaled across the entire university system to include:

- Nationwide adoption of revised curriculum frameworks
- Full integration of WIL into all academic programmes
- Expansion of digital learning infrastructure and e-laboratories
- Institutionalisation of interdisciplinary and industry-co-designed programmes
- Implementation of continuous and competency-based assessment systems

Phase IV: Consolidation, Evaluation, and Optimisation (2029–2030)

This phase will focus on performance review and system refinement and to encompass:

- National curriculum audit involving industry and international partners
- Full operationalisation of NNQF across all institutions
- Publication of system-wide performance reports
- Policy adjustments based on empirical data and stakeholder feedback
- Strengthening of sustainability mechanisms

2.5.3 Key Implementation Instruments

To ensure coherence and effectiveness, several core instruments will drive implementation.

The CCMAS Implementation Observatory will function as the central monitoring system. It will operate a real-time digital dashboard capturing:

- Programme compliance with national standards
- Curriculum review cycles
- WIL participation rates
- Faculty training progress
- Digital integration metrics



The National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP) will serve as the backbone of WIL implementation. It will:

- Match students with placement opportunities across public, private, and informal sectors
- Enable tracking of student performance and employer feedback
- Provide national data for planning and policy refinement

The Nigerian National Qualifications Framework (NNQF) will underpin all curriculum structures and enable:

- Credit transfer and articulation across institutions
- Recognition of prior learning
- Integration of micro-credentials and exit certifications into a coherent system

The National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council (NIACC) will ensure sustained collaboration between universities and the labour market, preventing policy drift and maintaining relevance.

2.5.4 Roles and Responsibilities

Clear assignment of responsibilities is critical to avoid implementation ambiguity. Accordingly, each stakeholder has been assigned responsibilities as outlined below:

The NUC will:

- Lead policy development, regulation, and accreditation
- Establish and manage national frameworks and digital systems
- Monitor compliance and publish performance reports

The FME will:

- Provide policy backing and legislative support
- Facilitate inter-agency coordination
- Secure Federal Executive Council approvals where required

Universities will:

- Design and implement curricula within national guidelines
- Establish internal governance structures for curriculum reform
- Engage industry partners and manage WIL programmes
- Ensure faculty capacity development and infrastructure readiness

TETFund and Development Partners will:

- Provide funding for infrastructure, faculty training, and innovation
- Support pilot programmes and research initiatives



Industry and Employers will:

- Participate in curriculum design and review
- Provide WIL placement opportunities
- Contribute to student assessment and mentorship

2.5.5 Financing and Resource Mobilisation

Recognising that curriculum transformation requires significant investment, a blended financing model will be adopted.

Funding sources will include:

- Federal Government allocations
- TETFund intervention funds
- Public-private partnerships
- Donor and international development agency support

Dedicated funding windows will be created for:

- Curriculum redesign and innovation grants
- Faculty capacity development programmes
- Digital infrastructure and e-learning systems
- WIL implementation and NIAP operations

Cost-sharing mechanisms will be introduced, with clear guidelines to support resource-constrained institutions, particularly state universities.

2.5.6 Faculty Capacity Development

A national programme will be implemented to strengthen academic staff capacity.

This programme will:

- Train at least 20,000 lecturers in curriculum design, OBE, and CBE methodologies
- Introduce mandatory certification in digital pedagogy
- Provide continuous professional development in emerging technologies and interdisciplinary teaching
- Establish communities of practice for knowledge sharing
- Developed incentive systems to reward innovation in teaching and curriculum design.

2.5.7 Infrastructure and Digital Ecosystem Development

Curriculum reform will be supported by a modern learning infrastructure.

This includes:



- Development of smart classrooms and blended learning systems
- Deployment of e-laboratories and simulation platforms
- Expansion of broadband access and digital learning tools
- Integration of AI-enabled teaching and assessment systems

Infrastructure upgrades will be prioritised based on institutional needs and performance gaps.

2.5.8 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

A robust monitoring and evaluation system will ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

Key mechanisms will include:

- Annual Curriculum Reform Reports published by NUC
- Quarterly dashboard updates from the CCMAS Implementation Observatory
- Biennial National Curriculum Review Conferences
- National curriculum audits every five years

Performance indicators will cover:

- Curriculum compliance rates
- Graduate employability outcomes
- Industry participation levels
- Faculty capacity development
- Digital integration metrics

Non-compliance will attract regulatory actions, while high-performing institutions will receive recognition and incentives.

2.5.9 Risk Management and Mitigation

Potential risks will be proactively addressed.

Key risks include:

- Resistance to change among faculty
- Funding constraints
- Limited industry capacity for WIL placements
- Digital infrastructure gaps
- Policy misalignment across agencies

Mitigation strategies will include:

- Incentive structures and stakeholder engagement



- Phased implementation to reduce disruption
- Expansion of placement ecosystems including informal sectors
- Targeted funding for underserved institutions
- Strong inter-agency coordination mechanisms

2.6: CONCLUSION

The Curriculum Re-Engineering agenda under *Blueprint 2.0* represents a decisive shift in the philosophy, structure, and delivery of university education in Nigeria. It moves the system away from rigid, content-heavy, and largely theoretical models toward a dynamic framework that prioritises competency, relevance, flexibility, and measurable outcomes.

This reform is grounded in the realities of Nigeria's socio-economic context and the demands of an increasingly competitive global knowledge economy. It recognises that the value of university education must ultimately be measured by the quality, adaptability, and productivity of its graduates. By embedding competency-based approaches, strengthening industry linkages, and integrating digital and emerging skills across all disciplines, the Blueprint establishes a clear pathway for producing graduates who can contribute meaningfully to national development while remaining globally competitive.

The introduction of critical system enablers, such as the Nigerian National Qualifications Framework, the National Industry-Academia Curriculum Council, the CCMAIS Implementation Observatory, and the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform, ensures that reform is not only conceptual but institutionally anchored and operationally viable. These mechanisms provide the structure for coordination, accountability, and continuous improvement across the system.

Equally important is the recognition of institutional diversity and autonomy. The revised curriculum framework balances national standards with flexibility, allowing universities to innovate, differentiate, and respond to their unique contexts while remaining accountable to clearly defined outcomes. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, interdisciplinary approaches, and flexible learning pathways further ensures that the curriculum is both locally relevant and globally aligned.

The success of this reform will depend on sustained commitment from all stakeholders - government in providing policy support and funding; universities in demonstrating leadership and ownership of implementation; industry in actively shaping and delivering learning experiences; and regulatory bodies in ensuring consistency, transparency, and fairness in oversight.



By 2030, the NUS is expected to emerge as a more coherent, responsive, and forward-looking system. Graduates will not only possess academic knowledge but also the skills, competencies, and mindset required to innovate, create value, and compete in diverse environments. Universities will function as active contributors to economic growth, technological advancement, and social transformation.







3.0

MODERNISING AND MAINTAINING FACILITIES FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH

Overarching Goal

By 2030, at least 30% of facilities for teaching, learning, and research should have been upgraded to meet international standards, fully digitised, technology-enabled, and supported by sustainable AI-driven maintenance systems, with continuous improvement beyond 2030. This target shall be benchmarked against a nationally agreed 2025 baseline of existing facilities, with periodic reviews every two years to ensure alignment with evolving international standards and emerging technologies.



3.1 INTRODUCTION

The current state of facilities for teaching, learning and research in the Nigerian university system has historically fallen short of global best practices. Chronic underfunding, weak maintenance culture, analogue-based operations, and outdated research infrastructure have continued to limit the system's competitiveness.

The Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities (2012) provided a candid and troubling account of dilapidated, obsolete, and overstretched facilities. Although progress has been made, particularly through TETFund interventions, the demands of a 21st-century university now extend far beyond traditional physical infrastructure. Modern universities are technology-driven ecosystems that require the following:

- Smart classrooms equipped with interactive digital boards, virtual learning systems, and high-speed connectivity.
- AI-enabled laboratories that support automation, simulation, remote experimentation, and data-intensive research.
- Digitised libraries with cloud-based scholarly resources and AI-driven discovery tools.
- Modern maintenance systems, including predictive analytics, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, and digital asset-monitoring platforms.

Modern university infrastructure must also reflect the principles of equity, accessibility, and inclusive participation. Facilities for teaching, learning, research, accommodation, and digital engagement should therefore be designed to serve all categories of students, staff, and visitors, including persons with disabilities. Inclusive infrastructure, such as barrier-free access routes, ramps, lifts, accessible lecture theatres, adaptive laboratories, and assistive learning technologies, ensures that no member of the academic community is excluded from participating fully in university life. As Nigeria seeks to modernise its universities in line with global standards, integrating accessibility and universal design principles into infrastructure planning is both a social obligation and a strategic investment in human capital development.

Evidence increasingly shows that the quality of teaching and research facilities directly influences student learning outcomes, graduate employability, staff productivity, and universities' capacity to contribute meaningfully to national innovation systems and economic development.



To reposition Nigerian universities for excellence, global competitiveness, and relevance in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), a massive and strategic investment in cutting-edge infrastructure, digital learning environments, research technologies, and sustainable maintenance systems is indispensable. This chapter analyses the situation, provides a SWOT analysis, sets strategic objectives, and outlines a costed plan for modernisation and efficient maintenance from 2026 to 2030.

3.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Needs Assessment Report (2012) revealed a university system marked by inadequate, dilapidated, and poorly maintained facilities. Many institutions continue to struggle with:

- Overcrowded and non-digitalised lecture theatres
- Laboratories lacking modern scientific equipment
- Poorly equipped workshops and studios
- Non-automated libraries with outdated collections
- Inadequate staff offices
- Chaotic, congested campus environments that hinder effective learning and research
- Persistent infrastructural decay due to poor maintenance systems

Despite pockets of improvement, the challenges remain widespread. Many universities still operate “dry labs”, relying on theory rather than practical experimentation due to a shortage of reagents, consumables, or modern equipment. In some cases, the ratio of basic equipment to students is as high as 1:500.

The 2012 report further indicated that:

- Less than 10% of universities had video-conferencing facilities
- Less than 20% used interactive digital boards
- More than 50% lacked public address systems in large lecture theatres
- Internet services remained slow, unreliable, or non-existent
- No university was fully automated, and less than 35% were partially automated



Although targeted interventions since 2012, particularly through TETFund, special grants, and selected donor-funded projects, have led to incremental improvements in some institutions, the situation has improved slightly in the last decade due to TETFund interventions, but global standards have advanced much faster. Most universities still lack:

- Smart classrooms with real-time digital teaching tools
- AI-assisted teaching technologies
- Cloud-enabled research environments
- Modern engineering, medical, and computational laboratories
- High-performance computing facilities
- Campus-wide broadband and Wi-Fi
- Digital maintenance and energy management systems

Private universities also face significant deficiencies, particularly in advanced research equipment and digital research infrastructure, as revealed during NUC accreditation exercises. These challenges collectively undermine university autonomy, teaching quality, research output, innovation capacity, and global rankings. They call for a deliberate and technology-focused investment strategy to ensure modern, functional, and future-ready university facilities. This uneven distribution of infrastructure capacity across institutions has widened quality differentials within the system and constrained national efforts at harmonising academic standards.

3.3 JUSTIFICATION

A comprehensive modernisation of the physical and digital infrastructure of Nigerian universities is urgently required to:

- Align Nigerian universities with international standards in teaching, research, and innovation
- Enhance global competitiveness and improve institutional ranking
- Enable adoption of AI, digital learning tools, virtual laboratories and modern pedagogical technologies
- Support science, technology, engineering, and innovation ecosystems
- Promote home-grown research solutions to national challenges
- Reduce long-term costs through predictive and preventive maintenance systems
- Build digital literacy and technical competencies among students and staff
- Enhance sustainability through energy-efficient, environmentally friendly infrastructure
- Recognise student accommodation as a critical component of the teaching and



learning environment, with direct implications for student wellbeing, academic performance, and institutional attractiveness. Universities shall prioritise the expansion and upgrading of hostel facilities through a combination of public funding and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), ensuring that accommodation provision aligns with enrolment growth and quality standards.

- Promote inclusive and disability-friendly university environments by ensuring that infrastructure, learning technologies, and digital platforms comply with universal accessibility standards, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully in teaching, learning, research, and campus life.

Given Nigeria's youthful population, expanding tertiary enrolment, and the increasing demand for digitally skilled graduates, failure to modernise university facilities poses a direct risk to national productivity, innovation, and global competitiveness. Without modern facilities, and the technology to maintain them, Nigerian universities cannot achieve the mandates expected of 21st-century institutions.

Infrastructure development must be explicitly recognised as a primary determinant of access and enrolment capacity within the NUS. The ability of universities to admit, retain, and successfully graduate students is directly constrained by the availability, quality, and functionality of teaching, learning, and research facilities. Lecture theatre capacity, laboratory space, student accommodation, digital infrastructure, and staff workspaces collectively define the carrying capacity of institutions.

Accordingly, any national strategy aimed at expanding access to higher education must be synchronised with proportional investments in physical and digital infrastructure. Enrolment targets should therefore be tied to infrastructure readiness indicators, ensuring that admission expansion does not compromise quality. This requires adopting a capacity-based enrolment framework, under which universities can expand student intake only in line with verified improvements in facilities, equipment, and support systems.

Furthermore, infrastructure planning should align with programme-specific requirements, particularly in high-demand, resource-intensive disciplines such as medicine, engineering, agriculture, and emerging digital fields. This alignment will ensure that enrolment growth translates into meaningful learning outcomes, employability, and research productivity, rather than overstretched systems and declining academic standards.



3.4 INCLUSIVE AND DISABILITY-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Modern university infrastructure must be designed to serve all categories of learners, staff, and visitors, including persons with disabilities. As Nigeria expands access to higher education and seeks to align its universities with global standards, it is imperative that campus infrastructure reflects the principles of equity, accessibility, and universal participation.

Persons with physical, sensory, cognitive, or other forms of disability often encounter significant barriers that limit their full participation in teaching, learning, research, and campus life. In many institutions within the NUS, lecture theatres, laboratories, libraries, hostels, and administrative buildings were constructed without adequate consideration of accessibility requirements. As a result, students and staff with disabilities frequently face challenges such as:

- Lack of ramps and accessible pathways
- Absence of lifts in multi-storey academic buildings
- Narrow doorways and inaccessible laboratory layouts
- Inadequate accessible hostel accommodation
- Lack of tactile signage and navigation systems
- Absence of assistive learning technologies in classrooms and libraries
- Digital learning platforms that are not compatible with accessibility tools

Addressing these barriers is not merely a welfare consideration; it is a fundamental requirement for inclusive education and human capital development. Ensuring accessibility will enable talented students and scholars with disabilities to contribute fully to national development, innovation, and knowledge production.



International best practice promotes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Universal Design for Infrastructure, which ensure that facilities are accessible and usable by all people without the need for specialised adaptations. Compliance with accessibility standards also aligns NUS with global frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education.

Accordingly, the modernisation of university infrastructure in Nigeria must integrate inclusive design and disability-sensitive planning principles. All new infrastructure projects and facility upgrades should incorporate accessibility standards such as:

- Wheelchair-accessible ramps and lifts
- Barrier-free access routes across campuses
- Accessible seating arrangements in lecture theatres
- Adaptive laboratory workstations
- Accessible hostel rooms and sanitary facilities
- Tactile signage and navigation systems for visually impaired users
- Assistive technologies such as screen readers, speech-to-text tools, and hearing support systems
- Accessible digital learning platforms compatible with assistive technologies

In addition, universities should establish Disability Support and Accessibility Units responsible for coordinating inclusive infrastructure planning, advising on accessibility standards, and supporting students and staff requiring assistive technologies.

Embedding accessibility in university infrastructure planning will promote social justice and expand participation in higher education. It will also enhance diversity within the academic community and strengthen Nigeria's commitment to inclusive national development.



3.5 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Existing baseline infrastructure in many public and some private universities. Availability of well -trained PhDs, researchers, and professors capable of utilising modern technologies. Strong support from TETFund and development partners for infrastructure and research. Growing national and institutional interest in digital transformation and innovation. Expanding ICT penetration and improved awareness of e-learning systems.
Weaknesses	Persistent inadequacy and dilapidation of teaching, learning, and research facilities. Limited adoption of digital tools, AI systems, and innovative classroom technologies. Erratic municipal services (power, water, security) undermine facility utilisation. Increasing enrolment is not matched by a corresponding expansion of facilities and equipment. Weak maintenance culture and insufficient institutional technical capacity. Inadequate funding from proprietors, especially for advanced scientific and digital infrastructure. Fragmented infrastructure planning and weak alignment between academic programmes and facility development plans. Limited accessibility of university infrastructure for persons with disabilities, including the absence of ramps, elevators, accessible learning spaces, and assistive technologies in many institutions.



Opportunities	The expanding digital economy requires graduates with technical skills. The Federal Government’s renewed focus on revitalising universities and digital education. Potential for partnerships with the private sector, tech companies, and philanthropic organisations. Growing global demand for AI, data science, and innovation-driven research capacity. Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) for hostels, Wi -Fi, digital infrastructure, and energy solutions. Opportunities for international collaboration for advanced research laboratories. Potential to establish an Alumni Infrastructure Challenge Fund coordinated by NUC, to harness alumni and diaspora contributions to university infrastructure development. Opportunity to modernise university infrastructure using Universal Design principles, ensuring inclusive and disability -friendly campuses aligned with global accessibility standards and Sustainable Development Goal 4.
Threats	Inadequate and unpredictable funding is affecting project completion. Rising costs of technology acquisition, maintenance, and energy. Cybersecurity risks associated with increased digital adoption. Institutional resistance to technological innovation and administrative reforms. Inconsistent political commitment to higher-education infrastructure renewal. Risk of technology obsolescence due to infrequent and unsystematic upgrades. Environmental and climate-related risks affecting infrastructure durability and energy sustainability.

Strategic Goals

1. By 2030, upgrade at least 30% of teaching, learning, and research facilities to international SMART and digital standards.
2. Between 2026 and 2030, invest in at least 20% additional cutting-edge research equipment, including AI-assisted systems, virtual laboratories, advanced simulation tools, and high-performance computing infrastructure.
3. Strengthen institutional maintenance culture between 2026–2030 through the deployment of AI-based maintenance platforms, predictive analytics, IoT-enabled monitoring, and technical capacity-building.
4. By 2030, ensure that at least 50% of lecture theatres are transformed into modern smart classrooms with interactive digital boards, virtual learning tools, and high-speed campus connectivity.
5. Facilitate Public–Private Partnerships (PPP) for students’ accommodation and campus facilities so that by 2030, at least 25% of students are residential in upgraded or newly constructed hostels.



6. Ensure the re-prioritisation and completion of all abandoned projects between 2026 and 2030.
7. Establish six interdisciplinary central research laboratories—one per geopolitical zone—between 2026 and 2030, equipped with AI-supported instrumentation and advanced research technologies.
8. Develop and enforce national standards for digital-ready teaching and research infrastructure across Nigerian universities by 2030.
9. Institutionalise periodic infrastructure audits and public reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and value for money in infrastructure investments.
10. A Facilities Triage Index shall be developed to guide equitable and strategic allocation of infrastructure investment. The index will rank universities based on a combination of need (current infrastructure deficit and condition) and impact (student population, utilisation rates, and strategic importance). This approach will ensure that limited resources are directed to institutions where they will achieve the greatest improvement in access, quality, and national impact.
11. To promote sustainability and long-term cost efficiency, it shall be mandated that at least 20% of all new capital expenditure on university infrastructure comply with defined Green Building Standards, including solar readiness, water-efficiency systems, passive cooling designs, and environmentally sustainable materials. This will enhance energy resilience, reduce operational costs, and align university infrastructure with national climate commitments.
12. Ensure that all newly constructed or upgraded university facilities comply with universal accessibility standards, enabling full participation of persons with disabilities in teaching, learning, research, and campus life.

Implementation Plan

Strategic Objective 1: By 2030, upgrade at least 30% of teaching, learning, and research facilities to international SMART and digital standards.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
I	A comprehensive and nationally coordinated Facilities Baseline Assessment shall be conducted and published as a prerequisite for all infrastructure modernisation targets. The assessment shall be disaggregated by institution, geopolitical zone, and facility type (laboratories, libraries, lecture theatres, ICT infrastructure, student accommodation, health facilities, power, and water systems). This baseline will provide an evidence-based foundation for planning, resource allocation, monitoring, and periodic progress review.	Q1 2027	FME/NUC/TE TFund



2	A National Facilities Minimum Standard Scorecard shall be developed to define what constitutes “internationally acceptable standards” across key infrastructure categories. The scorecard shall cover, at a minimum: laboratories (including clinical simulation laboratories), libraries, lecture theatres, ICT infrastructure, student accommodation, health facilities, power systems, and water supply. Each university shall be assessed and rated periodically against these benchmarks to guide improvements and ensure accountability.	2027	NUC
3.	Conduct an Update of the Needs Assessment of the NUS to reflect current enrolment trends, programme diversification, population growth rates, and emerging digital infrastructure requirements .	December 2026	NUC/FME
4	Estimate the Cost of equipping the NUS to at least 30% of the required equipment	Q1 2027	NUC/FME
5.	Stakeholders conference on the funding sources for the infrastructure for teaching, learning and research	Sept 2026	NUC, FME and NUS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Between 2026 and 2030, invest in at least 20% additional cutting-edge research equipment, including AI-assisted systems, virtual laboratories, advanced simulation tools, and high-performance computing infrastructure

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Identify priority disciplines and research clusters requiring advanced equipment (e.g., medicine, engineering, AI, agriculture, climate science).	2027	NUC
2.	Develop a national framework for shared access to high-cost research equipment across institutions.	2027	NUC
3.	Mobilise funding through TETFund, competitive grants, PPPs, and international research partnerships.	2026-2030	NUC
4.	Procure, install, and commission equipment with mandatory training for technical and academic staff.	2028	TETFund/NUC

Given the high cost of advanced scientific equipment and the uneven distribution of research infrastructure across institutions, there is a compelling need to establish a Coordinated National Framework for Shared Research Facilities within the NUS. This framework should enable multiple universities to access, utilise, and co-manage high-end research infrastructure at the regional and national levels.



The framework should be anchored on the development of centralised, interdisciplinary research hubs strategically located across the six geopolitical zones. These hubs would house specialised equipment such as high-performance computing systems, advanced laboratories, clinical simulation centres, and precision instrumentation that are otherwise unaffordable for individual institutions.

To operationalise this framework:

- A national inventory of existing research equipment should be developed and digitised.
- A shared access protocol should be established, including scheduling systems, cost-recovery mechanisms, and maintenance responsibilities.
- Governance structures should involve NUC, universities, research institutes, and industry partners.
- Digital platforms should be deployed to facilitate remote access, booking, and utilisation tracking.
- Funding should be mobilised through TETFund, international grants, PPPs, and donor partnerships.

This coordinated approach will:

- Maximise utilisation of scarce resources
- Promote interdisciplinary and multi-institutional research
- Reduce duplication of investments
- Strengthen Nigeria's global research competitiveness

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen institutional maintenance culture between **2026–2030** through the deployment of **AI-based maintenance platforms**, predictive analytics, IoT-enabled monitoring, and technical capacity-building.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Create a dedicated unit in the Department of Physical Planning in the NUS solely for the maintenance of Facilities for teaching, learning, and research	2026–2027	University Governing Councils, NUC
2.	Human Capacity Building Including continuous training of technical staff in AI-based maintenance systems, IoT monitoring, and digital asset management.	Ongoing	Universities



3	A National Facilities Management Training Programme shall be established under the coordination of NUC and TETFund to professionalise facilities management across the NUS. The programme will include certification pathways, continuous professional development, and specialised training in preventive and predictive maintenance, including the use of digital tools, AI-based systems, and IoT-enabled monitoring technologies. This initiative will embed a sustainable maintenance culture and strengthen institutional technical capacity.	2027	NUC, TETFund
4.	Establishment of a budget line specifically for facilities maintenance	2027	Universities

Reliable and sustainable energy supply is a fundamental requirement for modern teaching, learning, and research environments, particularly in technology-driven universities. Persistent power instability across Nigeria continues to undermine the functionality of laboratories, digital learning systems, research equipment, and campus operations. As such, renewable energy solutions must be prioritised as an integral component of infrastructure modernisation.

Universities should progressively transition towards hybrid and renewable energy systems, including solar photovoltaic (PV) installations, battery storage systems, and energy-efficient infrastructure. These systems should be designed to support critical academic functions, including laboratories, data centres, libraries, and smart classrooms.

To achieve this:

- A national university renewable energy roadmap should be developed.
- All new infrastructure projects should be solar-ready by design.
- Existing facilities should be retrofitted with energy-efficient systems and smart energy management technologies.
- Funding mechanisms should include PPP energy models, green financing instruments, and donor-supported climate initiatives.
- Universities should adopt energy auditing and monitoring systems to optimise usage and reduce waste.

Prioritising renewable energy will:

- Reduce dependence on unreliable national grid supply
- Lower long-term operational costs
- Enhance sustainability and environmental responsibility
- Ensure uninterrupted academic and research activities



Strategic Objective 4: By 2030, ensure that at least **50% of lecture theatres** are transformed into modern **smart classrooms** with interactive digital boards, virtual learning tools, and high-speed campus connectivity.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Transform 50% of lecture theatres into modern smart classrooms with interactive digital boards, virtual learning tools, and high-speed campus connectivity	2028	TETFund, NUC, Universities

Strategic Objective 5: Facilitate Funding/Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) for students' accommodation and campus facilities so that by 2030, at least 25% of students are residential in upgraded or newly constructed hostels.

An Alumni Infrastructure Challenge Fund shall be established under the coordination of NUC to incentivise alumni and diaspora contributions to university infrastructure development. The fund will operate on a matching-grant basis (e.g., a 2:1 model), where alumni-raised funds are matched by government or institutional contributions. This mechanism will strengthen stakeholder ownership, diversify funding sources, and enhance the long-term sustainability of infrastructure investments.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	A structured Facilities Public–Private Partnership (PPP) Framework shall be developed to mobilise private sector investment in university infrastructure. The framework will provide guidelines for Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT), lease, and concession models, enabling private investors to finance, construct, and manage facilities such as hostels, laboratories, and digital infrastructure. The framework shall draw from successful models in comparable contexts, including Kenya and South Africa, and may be complemented by innovative financing mechanisms such as infrastructure bonds and blended finance arrangements.	Q4 2026	NUC, TETFund

Strategic Objective 6: Ensure the re-prioritisation and completion of all abandoned projects between 2026 and 2030.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Completion of all abandoned/on-going projects in Nigerian Universities	2026-2030	TETFund, Universities, FME



Strategic Objective 7: Establish **six interdisciplinary central research laboratories**—one per geopolitical zone—between **2026 and 2030**, equipped with AI-supported instrumentation and advanced research technologies.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Establish six interdisciplinary central research laboratories —one per geopolitical zone, equipped with AI-supported instrumentation and advanced research technologies	2027-2028	TETFund, FME, Universities

Strategic Objective 8: Develop and enforce national standards for digital-ready teaching and research infrastructure across Nigerian Universities

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Develop and enforce national standards for digital-ready teaching and research infrastructure across Nigerian universities	2027	NUC

Strategic Objective 9: Institutionalise periodic infrastructure audits and public reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and value for money in infrastructure initiatives

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Develop a national framework and guidelines for periodic infrastructure audits in Nigerian universities that cover physical facilities, digital infrastructure, research equipment, and maintenance systems.	2026	NUC, FME, and relevant professional bodies
2.	Establish multidisciplinary Infrastructure Audit Committees at national and institutional levels, comprising experts in engineering, ICT, quantity surveying, facilities management, and finance.	2026 – 2027	NUC, University Governing Councils
3.	Design and deploy a standardised digital infrastructure audit and reporting platform for data collection, verification, and analysis across the NUS.	2027	NUC, NITDA, Universities
4.	Conduct baseline infrastructure audits across all federal, state, and private universities to establish reference benchmarks for facilities condition, utilisation, and compliance.	2027 – 2028	Infrastructure Audit Committees, Universities



5.	Institute mandatory biennial infrastructure audits and annual self -assessment reports by universities, aligned with national reporting templates.	2028 – 2030	Universities, NUC
6.	Publish periodic national infrastructure status reports to promote transparency, inform policy decisions, and guide funding allocations.	2028 – 2030	NUC, FME
7.	Link audit outcomes to infrastructure funding prioritisation, maintenance planning, and, where necessary, regulatory actions.	2028 – 2030	NUC, FME, TETFund

Strategic Objective 10: Develop Facilities Triage Index to guide equitable and strategic allocation of infrastructure investment.

S/N	Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
1	Develop a conceptual framework and methodology for the Facilities Triage Index, defining key indicators for need (infrastructure deficit and physical condition) and impact (student population, utilisation rates, strategic importance).	2026	NUC, FME, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), selected universities
2	Conduct stakeholder consultations and validation workshops with universities, regulators, and experts to refine the index parameters and ensure national acceptability.	2026	NUC, Universities, Professional Bodies
3	Collect and compile baseline infrastructure and enrolment data across all universities to populate the index.	2026–2027	NUC, Universities, NBS
4	Develop and deploy a digital triage index platform/dashboard for scoring, ranking, and visualising infrastructure needs across institutions	2027	NUC, NITDA, Technology Partners
5	Pilot the Facilities Triage Index in selected universities across geopolitical zones and refine based on feedback.	2027–2028	NUC, Selected Universities
6	Fully implement the Facilities Triage Index nationwide and integrate it into infrastructure planning and funding allocation decisions .	2028	NUC, FME, TETFund
7	Update and recalibrate the index periodically (e.g., every two years) to reflect changes in infrastructure, enrolment, and national priorities.	2028–2030	NUC, Universities
8	Publish annual rankings and infrastructure priority reports to promote transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.	2028–2030	NUC, FME



Strategic Objective 11: Integrate Green Building Standards into University Infrastructure (2026–2030)

S/N	Activity	Timeline	Responsibility
1	Develop and adopt National Green Building Standards for Universities , covering solar readiness, energy efficiency, water management, passive cooling, and sustainable materials .	2026	NUC, FME, Federal Ministry of Environment, Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)
2	Issue a policy directive mandating that at least 20% of all new capital infrastructure projects in each university comply with Green Building Standards .	2026	FME, NUC, University Governing Councils
3	Conduct capacity -building programmes for university physical planning units, engineers, and contractors on green infrastructure design and implementation .	2026–2027	NUC, TETFund, Professional Bodies
4	Integrate green compliance requirements into project design, approval, and procurement processes across all universities .	2027	NUC, Universities, TETFund
5	Retrofit selected existing facilities with energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable systems as part of the pilot projects.	2027–2029	Universities, TETFund, Development Partners
6	Establish monitoring and certification mechanisms to ensure compliance with Green Building Standards .	2027–2030	NUC, SON, Environmental Agencies
7	Promote renewable energy adoption (solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and energy storage systems) as part of green infrastructure implementation .	2027–2030	Universities, NUC, Ministry of Power, Private Sector
8	Publish annual reports on green infrastructure adoption and performance across universities .	2028–2030	NUC, FME



Strategic Objective 12: Integrate Disability-Inclusive and Universal Accessibility Standards into University Infrastructure

Ensure that all newly constructed or upgraded university facilities comply with national accessibility standards and Universal Design principles, enabling persons with disabilities to fully participate in academic and campus life.

S/N	Activity	Timeline	Responsibility
1	Develop and adopt National Accessibility Standards for University Infrastructure that cover barrier-free access, ramps, lifts, accessible laboratories, lecture theatres, hostels, and digital learning platforms.	2026	NUC, FME, National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)
2	Conduct a national accessibility audit of university facilities to identify infrastructure barriers affecting students and staff with disabilities across the NUS	2026–2027	NUC, Universities, NCPWD
3	Establish Disability Support and Accessibility Units in universities to coordinate inclusive infrastructure planning, assistive technology provision, and support services for students and staff with disabilities.	2026–2028	Universities, Governing Councils, NUC
4	Integrate accessibility compliance requirements into infrastructure design, approval, and procurement processes for all new university projects.	2027	NUC, Universities, TETFund
5	Retrofit selected existing academic buildings, libraries, laboratories, hostels with ramps, lifts, accessible pathways, adaptive furniture, and assistive technologies	2027–2029	Universities, TETFund, Development Partners
6	Provide assistive learning technologies including screen readers, captioning systems, speech-to-text tools, and hearing support devices in lecture theatres and digital learning platforms.	2027–2029	Universities, NUC, ICT Units
7	Conduct capacity building programmes for university planners, architects, engineers, and ICT specialists on universal accessibility and inclusive infrastructure design.	2027–2028	NUC, Professional Bodies



3.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A technology-driven modernisation programme requires a robust hybrid monitoring and evaluation system, integrating:

- Expert technical committees drawn from engineering, ICT, science, and facility management professions
- AI-enabled project monitoring dashboards to track progress, spending, and timelines
- IoT-based verification tools for installed equipment
- Digital maintenance logs accessible by regulators and institutions
- Independent audit teams to assess quality, functionality, and compliance

Each stage of infrastructure upgrade and equipment installation must undergo transparent vetting, specification verification, testing, and certification before commissioning. Monitoring reports shall be produced annually, with a comprehensive mid-term review in 2028 and a summative evaluation in 2030.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The revitalisation of Nigerian universities requires a deliberate, technology-driven investment in modern teaching, research, and learning facilities. Only through strategic planning, the adoption of AI and other innovative technologies, and a stronger maintenance culture can Nigerian universities achieve global competitiveness.

A modern university is not only a collection of buildings but also a digitally connected, technologically advanced ecosystem that enables innovation, supports world-class research, and produces graduates equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.









4.0

ENSURING ADEQUATE NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND OTHER STAFF IN THE RIGHT QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Overarching Goal

By 2030, the NUS will have at least 90% of the required staff for the quality delivery of programmes in the system and enhanced university-industry collaboration, leading to high rate of production of employable graduates by the system.



4.1 INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that our universities have an important role to play in transforming the economy as knowledge workers. This is accentuated by the organisers of the Going Global 2013 conference, which addressed the theme of "Global Education: Failure of Research Grants" by stating:

In the 21st century, knowledge-based economies will create the wealth, prosperity, and well-being of nations. Research and tertiary education systems are primary drivers of these, playing three key roles. They produce cutting-edge knowledge; they transfer, exchange, and apply it to drive innovation; and they educate and skill knowledge workers. For these three roles to build knowledge and innovation in a globalised world, they must themselves be globally connected. Cutting-edge research requires world-class research partners from across the globe; major innovation requires not only researchers but also businesses and investors to collaborate across national boundaries; knowledge workers need to develop international competencies and skills to be effective in the future world.

Thus, most required of our universities is for them to play the three key roles of knowledge production through research, knowledge dissemination or teaching towards skills development, and knowledge transfer in the form of research-driven innovation – products and processes – entering the socio-economic space. It is pertinent to note that these roles are squarely within the long-established functions of a university – teaching, research, and community service. So, what we are witnessing today is the dynamics of these basic functions over time as universities seek local and global relevance.

The challenges of quantity and quality of teachers can be interrogated through the examination of the critical issues of access, quality, and funding. The initial concern with increasing access (demand higher than supply) was the major driver of government policies leading to the liberalisation of the establishment of several universities by public (Federal and State) and private sectors in the country. The number of universities increased in leaps and bounds to the current level of 309, made up of 74 Federal, 67 State, and 168 Private, with the rapid rate of establishment as shown in Fig. 4.1. The rapid rate of establishment was unfortunately not accompanied by any plan for staffing, with new universities having to poach staff from existing universities. Added to this is moonlighting by lecturers.

The quality parameter serves as a measure of the extent to which our universities have



been producing the expected broad array of skills and competencies of graduates needed to improve the match between labour supply and demand. Of paramount importance is the extent to which the curriculum and its delivery have translated to the production of employable graduates with the appropriate skill sets to thrive in the economy, either as entrepreneurs creating their own jobs, or “intrapreneurs” working in established business outfits. Overall, Nigeria, as a developing economy, is still bearing the brunt of increased joblessness. Various surveys of the labour market skills demand and employer assessment of the performance of graduate employees across private and public organisations in Nigeria, point to the prevalence of a mismatch between the job skills acquired by employees from academic institutions and the actual skills set needed to execute tasks in the labour market.

From a study of countries with high graduate employability, it is shown that the challenges of developing the diverse skills sets to drive a national economy, through the continuous production of employable graduates to face the dynamics of the skills requirements in the socio-economic space, transcend the education and training system. For the NUS, it is a situation that calls for a systemic collaboration of efforts by the identified key stakeholders, including the NUC, the universities, the ITF, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), TETFund, Professional Regulatory Bodies, and the Bank of Industry (BOI). NUC is expected to collaborate with these stakeholders towards the development of outcomes-based curriculum, which has proven to be more attuned to the development of diverse skills. Also notable is the paucity of staff, both in quantity and quality, to deliver the revised curriculum.

The funding parameter seeks to address the mechanisms for funding the identified diverse activities towards the production of adequate staff, both in quality and quantity. It is pertinent to note that we are also expected to address the case of non-teaching staff as they play important roles in the handling of the teaching, research, and community relations of our universities. Bearing in mind the issue of the diverse needs of academic and non-academic staff in the system, the presentation is in two parts, as shown below, with Part A devoted to the exploration of the case of Academic Staff in quantity and quality and Part B devoted to the case of Non-Teaching Staff in quantity and quality.

PART A : THE CASE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN QUANTITY AND QUALITY



4.2 STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

This chapter will address some vital questions in a bid to identify the strategic directions and core activities towards tackling the challenges of inadequate teachers in the system as well as the issues of quality in research and teaching. The questions to be addressed are:

1. What is the proper mechanism for determining the required staffing per programme being run in each university and, by extension, the NUS, towards data-driven determination of the global shortfall in number and disciplines?
2. What are the strategies to be employed for meeting the established shortfall in teacher numbers?
3. How do we ensure quality of teachers in the university system at all levels?
4. How do we set out to improve pedagogy, teaching, and research skills of teachers in the university system?
5. How do we accelerate the training of academic staff and competent professional university administrators?
6. How do we achieve the full complement of trained staff in all sectors of the NUS by 2030?
7. How do we significantly increase/enhance the quality of teaching and research in the NUS through appropriate investment in pedagogical skills as well as capacity and competencies to carry out quality teaching, innovation-driven research, and other pertinent activities?

4.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Quantity Parameter

A key requirement in repositioning the NUS is the need for a remarkable increase in the number of university teachers holding PhD qualifications with improved teaching methods and pedagogy skills during the plan period (2026–2030). Federal, State, and Private universities are generally understaffed and rely heavily on part-time and visiting lecturers as well as contract appointments for retired professors. It is, therefore, important to put in place measures to systematically address the identified gaps within the specified time frame (2026 – 2030). In so doing, our universities will begin to have the needed high-level human resources that are critical to the achievement of excellence in teaching, learning, and research.

There is also a need to consider the technical support staff in the form of technologists. The quality and quantity of technologists have gone down drastically; hence, the running of labs for engineering and sciences has been suffering.

Of crucial importance is the calculation of the Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) students per programme, as the basis of determining the required staff and also the allocation of resources. FTE is a useful parameter for sharing resources between departments in a



university, taking due cognisance of the actual courses offered by each department and the students registered for such courses from both within and outside the department. The importance of FTE can, therefore, not be overemphasised, bearing in mind the high level of interdepartmental courses in the Faculties of our universities. This parameter is particularly important, given the several departments that run service courses to support the degree-offering programmes in the University.

The above will entail the proper establishment of the Academic Planning Unit in each university with professionally qualified staff with capacity to determine the required staffing, based on the calculation of the FTEs students per programme and the utilisation of the prescribed NUC Students/Staff ratio for the various disciplines and programmes being run in the NUS, to obtain the required staffing (teaching and senior technical staff). The staff projections are to be based on the following NUC-prescribed Students/Teacher ratios, which are still applicable:

Management Sciences:	30:1
Faculty of Arts:	30:1
Basic Sciences	
- Mathematical Sciences:	20:1
- Physics with Electronics:	20:1
- Chemical Sciences:	20:1
- Biological Sciences	20:1
- Computer Science:	20:1
Engineering and Technology:	15:1
College of Environmental Design & Technology:	15:1
College of Applied Social Sciences	30:1
Medical Sciences (MBBS & BNCs):	10:1
General Studies:	30:1
Open Distance Learning:	300:1 and above.

Due to the deployment of modern-day technology in open distance learning, the Students/Staff ratio can be as high as 300:1, as observed in some of the properly run ODL institutions in the country.

From the 2019 data presented earlier, the total students' enrolments of 2,159,461 and academic staff of 73,343 translate approximately to 29 Students: 1 Academic Staff. Based on the range of Students: Staff ratios presented above, with most disciplines below 20:1, one can readily appreciate the serious inadequacy of academic staff in 2019.



In the staff projections, provision is to be made for at least 6 academic staff, as prescribed by NUC in any programme where the calculated FTE suggests something lower. This is to ensure that all fields are fairly catered for, while concerted efforts must be made to improve the staffing situation, going forward.

Also, due cognisance is to be taken of the following pyramidal structure of academic staff, as recommended by NUC:

Professors & Readers	20%
Senior Lecturers	35%
Lecturers I & Below	45%

Under the ranks of Lecturer I and Below, it is important to note the need to include those in the ranks of Lecturer II and Graduate Assistant. The Graduate Assistantship positions that nurture careers in teaching should be promoted alongside intentional mentorship by senior academics.

It is pertinent to note that these planning ratios are more applicable to new universities and can guide staff recruitment. However, they are often highly distorted in old institutions where, due to regular promotions of productive academic staff, there can be significantly more Professors/Readers than the 20% prescribed above. Cases abound in some old institutions with professors exceeding 30% in a department. For example, at Ahmadu Bello University, the total staff strength of 2,225 in 2019 was distributed as follows: 29.3% in the Professorial Cadre; 15.5% in the Senior Lecturer Cadre; and 55.2% in the Lecturer I and below Cadre. At the University of Ibadan, the total staff strength of 1,682 in 2019 was distributed as follows: 39.3% in the Professorial Cadre; 25.9% in the Senior Lecturer Cadre; and 34.8% for Lecturer I and below Cadre. It is also pertinent to note that the Academic Planning Units in most of our universities do not have the capacity to calculate the FTEs per programme. Most of them resort to the use of Student Head Count, which is seriously deficient for the determination of the staffing requirement at the programme level. The Units are also expected to keep track, for each programme, the actual staff on ground, which should form the basis of the determination of the staff shortfall on programme basis.

These competencies of the Academic Planning Units in our universities are also expected to be deployed in developing the Revised Academic Brief for the 2026-2030 period. This will ensure a data-driven approach to addressing the staffing requirements during the period. This is indeed not negotiable. NUC will have to drive this, coupled with the collation and analysis of appropriate data at the national level.



The Quality Parameter

One of the key issues generating debates in the NUS regarding staff quality is the NUC policy that every lecturer in the NUS must possess a PhD degree relevant to their discipline. In other words, the possession of a PhD degree by lecturers has become the recognised currency for staying in Nigerian academia. Although NUC has not seriously pursued the implementation of this important initiative, there is no doubt that the initiative is aimed at ensuring that the human capital in the sector possesses evidence of competencies in teaching, research, and, possibly, innovation. The centrality of research in any academic setting cannot be faulted. Also, the use of the possession of a PhD degree as a pseudo-measure of not only the research capability of a staff but, to some extent, teaching quality, as one reinforces the other. There is a significant variation in the number of staff with PhD degrees from faculty to faculty, while currently only about one out of two academic staff in the NUS has a PhD

Comparative Graduate Enrolments in World-Class Universities

The scarcity of staff with doctoral degrees in most disciplines, especially the science-based ones, should be regarded as a challenge for staff development schemes that must look beyond local institutions to foreign institutions that are ready to engage in staff capacity building through the operation of mutually beneficial memoranda of understanding. This is already operational in public universities through the funding support by TETFund on the platform of the Academic Staff Training and Development (ASTD) programme.

ASTD is an intervention window geared towards upgrading the quality of teaching and research capacity in Nigeria's public tertiary education institutions through sponsorship for Master's and Doctoral degree studies within and outside the country in top-quality universities. Thus, our universities, particularly the first- and second-generation universities, should be encouraged to transition to postgraduate universities with significantly increased enrolments in postgraduate programmes. For example, the University of Ibadan, with the vision to transition into a postgraduate university, had a vision of 60% Postgraduate and 40% undergraduate. Arising from this commitment several years ago, the University has been producing the highest number of PhD graduates in Sub-Saharan Africa. The comparative figures of enrolments, compared to world-class universities, are illustrated in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Comparative Postgraduate Enrolments in Selected World-Class Universities.**

University	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Total Enrolment	% Postgraduate Students
University of Ibadan	15,411	15,250	30,661	50*
University of Cape Town	16,895	11,715	26,810	44*
Harvard	7,002	10,094	17,096	59
Stanford	6,442	11,325	17,767	64
MIT	4,066	6,140	10,206	60
Oxford	11,106	6,601	17,707	37
Cambridge	12,284	6,649	18,933	35
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)	4,254	4,386	8,640	51
Beijing University	14,662	16,666	31,328	53
University of Tokyo	15,466	12,676	28,142	45

2021 data presented at the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) Biennial International Conference 15-17 November 2023, held at the University of Lagos.

Research Grants for Staff

A major factor in improving teacher quality is the availability of research grants to support development-oriented research and innovation. Our universities are to transform into developmental universities through the conduct of applied research that addresses our developmental challenges, as well as basic research aimed at deepening knowledge in the disciplines. Before the arrival of the National Research Fund (NRF) by TETFund, research was being funded majorly by a number of external funding agencies involving, among several others:

- WHO (The World Health Organisation)
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation)
- NIH (National Institute of Health), USA
- World Bank
- African Development Bank



Noteworthy is the sponsorship of research to address some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with notable results. Suffice it to note that foreign grants, as to be expected, are geared towards addressing problems of interest to the agencies.

The interventions by TETFund, of relevance to research, are:

- Procurement of teaching and research equipment
- Academic staff training and development
- Library Development
- Provision of ICT infrastructure
- Conference Attendance
- Institution-Based Research
- Journal Publication
- National Research Fund (NRF)

Of interest is the NRF, which took off in 2013 with a grant of N3.0 billion. Suffice it to note that it is now the major source of research grants for public universities. The funding situation is reflected in the analysis of the outcome of the 2020 Call for Proposals exercise by TETFund. NRF received a total of 5,814 Concept Notes from the public institutions, distributed as follows:

- 3,562 under the Science, Engineering, Technology, and Innovation (SETI) Research Category with 11 development-oriented thematic areas
- 1,446 under Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Research Category with 10 development-oriented thematic areas; and
- 806 under the Cross-Cutting (CC) Research Category with 6 development-oriented thematic areas.

Bearing in mind the multidisciplinary nature of every research grant application, the exercise must have involved close to 20,000 researchers from the NUS. Suffice it to note that after a critical assessment of the Concept Notes in which led to the invitation of 573 applicants to submit their full proposals, only 217 grants were awarded from the total allocated fund of N6.4 billion. The rather limited fund allocation by TETFund under NRF accounted for the small number of grants awarded. There is an urgent need for TETFund to significantly increase the allocation to NRF to encourage the teeming population of researchers submitting proposals.

Equally critical is the lack of support for research commercialisation. There is no innovation fund to move research results to the market. TETFund is in the best position to



launch the National Research Innovation Fund to take commercialisable research results from what is referred to as the “valley of death” through the “proof of concept” to end users, in collaboration with potential investors. A good example is South Africa, with a well-funded innovation fund connecting university research results with end-users in the diverse sectors of their economy, leading to a significant increase in the industrial competitiveness of the enterprises in the different sectors of their economy. It is pertinent to note the proposal from the 23 December 2025 FGN-ASUU Agreement for the establishment of a National Research Council (NRC), which will be funded with not less than one per cent of Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Council is expected to strengthen innovation, fund research, and support research universities and centres of excellence across the country. The proper establishment of the NRC in terms of funding and operations will go a long way in improving the performance of our universities as knowledge workers through the conduct of research, development, and innovation of relevance to the socio-economic development of our nation state.

In respect of building the research capacity of teachers in the NUS, it is noteworthy that Private Universities are excluded from the competition for research grants, despite the proven research capacity of some of these universities. Researchers from our private universities are expected to join principal Investigators from public institutions in undertaking research projects. When it is realised that a knowledge-driven developing economy like Nigeria needs to engage its national research manpower and beyond in tackling its developmental problems, there is a need to revisit this discriminatory policy.

Process of Programme Accreditation

NUC started with discipline-based accreditation in 1990 in the NUS. This continued until the year 2017, when the Commission shifted to programme accreditation with resource persons sourced only from the programme to be accredited. Several professional agencies have also been conducting programme accreditation, independent of NUC. The need to address the resulting burden on universities has led the Honourable Minister of Education to declare that all professional bodies shall no longer be allowed to conduct accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities independently of the NUC. Consequently, all the stakeholders are to consider how to streamline the accreditation processes without compromising standards, to eliminate needless multiplicity, while respecting the statutory responsibilities of the NUC and each of the recognised professional bodies.



Of interest in this chapter is the formation of a seven-man committee by Government and other stakeholders, to consider how the Joint Accreditation could be carried out henceforth, taking into consideration the template and instruments for the Accreditation, the accreditation cycle, as well as the funding.

It is also important for the new template for the accreditation of any programme to emphasise the required number and quality of teachers, with the number based on the courses offered and the enrolment levels for each course. The quality parameter should not be based solely on the number of staff with Ph.Ds., but should also include the mapping of the identified skills and competencies required for each discipline. The quantity and quality of staff should constitute the highest percentage score in the template for accreditation.

4.4 STRATEGIC GOALS

A range of strategic activities aimed at ensuring an adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff of the right quantity and quality during the plan period of 2026–2030 is presented herein.

1. Support the proper establishment and training of Academic Planning and Monitoring Units in the universities with responsibility for the development of the required academic plan and appropriate monitoring to cover the period 2026–2030. This will contain integrated information on projected student enrolments, required teaching and non-teaching staff, and other relevant data, on a programme basis.
2. Granting universities autonomy to employ additional staff (teaching and non-teaching) as determined necessary, without requiring the approval of federal agencies
3. Support universities towards mounting postgraduate programmes with gradual increase in the percentage of postgraduate to undergraduate enrolments. The first-generation universities should aim for a 60:40 ratio of postgraduate to undergraduate enrolments by the end of the plan period.
4. Diaspora Engagement - Nigeria has vast pool of highly trained professionals in the diaspora. Structure a partnership with the diaspora community to attract experienced Nigerian academics abroad to participate in university programmes.
5. Promote the concept of “Professor in Practice” as a platform for achieving the required university-industry partnership for teaching and research.



6. Each university should provide up-to-date data and information on its website on staffing and student enrolments on a programme basis for analysis by NUC. NUC should establish a National University Staff Qualification Database, a verified, real-time registry of all academic staff across Nigerian universities to enable accurate workforce planning, prevent ghost staffing, and provide evidence for the Commission's advisory role on staffing to the government.
7. The establishment of a template for programme accreditation with strong emphasis on programme staffing (quantity and quality) towards the joint accreditation of programmes in the NUS by NUC and the relevant approved regulatory bodies.
8. Intensification and proper monitoring of the existing TETFund-bonded Academic Staff Training and Development (ASTD) programme to support early-career academics in pursuing postgraduate studies, both local and overseas.
9. Train the Provosts of the Postgraduate Colleges in the NUS on the expected capacity-building outcome of postgraduate education.
10. Develop system-wide criteria for the appointment and promotion of professorial staff to uphold academic excellence and ensure quality standards across the system.
11. Give annual incentives to the identified top 10 most productive colleges of postgraduate studies in the NUS
12. Establish pedagogical training for all university teachers.
13. Need to sustain student evaluation of the teaching quality of teachers in the universities.
14. Strengthening staff welfare and capacity development through improved working conditions, incentives, and continuous professional development programmes, including attendance at local and international discipline-based conferences.
15. Encourage the launch of the proposed Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities' Training Institute (CVCTI) to provide leadership development and 21st-century management training for university executives.
16. Encourage the establishment of Research Management Offices in the universities with responsibility for training on proposal writing, attraction, and management of research grants to be sourced from local and foreign sources.
17. TETFund to increase the grant allocation to the National Research Fund to not less than N20b for a minimum of 400 grants annually and to N30b at the end of the plan period to award at least 600 research grants to researchers in NUS.
18. TETFund to significantly increase the Institution-Based Research Grant, which has been helping our universities to implement research capacity building of junior academics.



19. NUC should actively engage foreign agencies and development partners to fund research relevant to Nigeria's socio-economic development.
20. NUC and TETFund should explore the establishment of a National Research Innovation Fund to support the commercialisation of research outputs in selected industrial sectors, thereby enhancing their competitiveness.
21. Train university administrators and technical staff to ensure the efficient management and operation of their institutions.
22. Support specialised training of professors to update their disciplinary knowledge and skills, including training in mentoring early-career academics.
23. Promote inter-university and international faculty exchange programmes to enrich institutional knowledge capacity, address critical staffing gaps, and expose Nigerian academics to global best practices.
24. NUC should actively support the resolution of the lingering and most destabilising problems of national strikes by university staff unions, with a view to ensuring systemic stability and staff wellbeing.
25. Implementation of the 2025 FGN-ASUU Agreement for the establishment of a National Research Council (NRC), which is to be funded with not less than 1% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Council is expected to strengthen innovation, fund research, and support research universities and centres of excellence across the country.
26. Speedy conclusion of the ongoing negotiations by the Federal Government with the non-teaching staff unions (SSANU, NASU, NAAT).

4.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Due cognisance must be taken of the outcome of the SWOT Analysis of the situation as identified below in Table 4.2 in relation to the design of the implementation plan.



Table 4.2:SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Current FME/NUC Policies and Minimum Academic Standards for ▪ Mandates for qualifications ▪ Teaching qualification ▪ Postgraduate Degree Training ▪ Staff/student Ratio ▪ Visiting /Adjunct Lecturer Mandates ▪ Moratorium on the creation of new universities for the next 6 years ▪ Programmed visitation to each institution to determine and address the major shortcomings	Absence of system-wide policies for monitoring process, timing, and the determination of quality of Postgraduate Teaching and Thesis Supervision.
Opportunities	Threats
▪ Leveraging on technology to effect Collaborations with Diaspora Faculties in teaching and research ▪ Triple Helix Partnerships involving Government, Industry, and University in addressing socio-economic issues ▪ Address of Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), African Union Agenda 2063, Strategic Goals of FME/NUC ▪ Drive for Globally Relevant Graduates	▪ Funding Brain drain (now referred to as “Japa”) ▪ Aging Professoriate ▪ Non-alignment with System-wide policies ▪ Unstable institutional governance system

The implementation of the above 26 Strategic Goals is predicated on the following key stakeholders – NUC, TETFund, Universities, Funding Agencies, Training Agencies, Federal and State governments, the Staff Unions and the Industry. One of the major drawbacks to the implementation of above-stated goals is the absence of reliable data and information as input to the planning. The most crucial data to drive the implementation of the above goals is the range of data in a properly developed Academic Brief for each university paying due attention to the required staff, existing staff, qualifications, projected students’ enrolments etc. Overall, every university is expected to review its academic plan to cover the period 2026-2030 at least.

In what follows, the implementation strategy, the timeline, the executors, and the take-off grant, where needed, are presented in Table 4.3.



Table 4.3: Implementation Strategy, Activities, Responsibility and Timeline

STRATEGIC GOAL NO.	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
1. Support the proper establishment and training of Academic Planning and Monitoring Units in the universities with responsibility for the development of the required academic plan and appropriate monitoring to cover the period 2026-2030. This will contain integrated information on projected student enrolments, required teaching and non-teaching staff, etc. on programme basis.	Support the proper establishment and training of Academic Planning and Monitoring Units in the universities with responsibility for the development of the required academic plan and appropriate monitoring to cover the period 2026-2030. This will contain integrated information on projected student enrolments, required teaching and non-teaching staff, etc. on programme basis.	Vice-Chancellor, Provost of Postgraduate College, Director of Academic Planning and Monitoring, NUC	0-6 months in 2026
2. Granting of autonomy to universities to employ the critically determined required additional staff (teaching and non-teaching), without the present recourse for approval to Federal Agencies such as the Federal Character Commission, Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Budget Office, and Office of the Accountant General of the Federation	Granting of autonomy to universities to employ the critically determined required additional staff (teaching and non-teaching), without the present recourse to some Federal Agencies for approval	FME, NUC	0-6 months in 2026
3. Support universities in mounting postgraduate programmes with a gradual increase in the percentage of postgraduate to undergraduate enrolments. The first-generation universities should aim at 60:40 ratio of postgraduate to undergraduate	Support universities in mounting postgraduate programmes with a gradual increase in the percentage of postgraduate to undergraduate enrolments. The first-generation universities should aim at 60:40 ratio of postgraduate to undergraduate	Vice-Chancellor, Provost of Postgraduate College, Director of Academic Planning and Monitoring, NUC	An annual event from 2026-2030



4. Diaspora Engagement - Nigeria has vast and highly trained professionals in the diaspora. Structure a partnership with the diaspora community to attract experienced Nigerian academics abroad to participate in university programmes.	Structure a partnership with the diaspora community to attract experienced academic professors to participate in university-based programmes.	NUC and Vice-Chancellors	0-6 months in 2026
5. Promotion of the concept of “Professor in Practice” as a platform for achieving the required university-industry partnership for teaching and research.	Promotion of the concept of “Professor in Practice” as a platform for achieving the required university-industry partnership for teaching and research	NUC, TETFund, ITF, Industry and Universities	0-6 months in 2026
6. Each university should provide up-to-date data on staffing and student enrolments on a programme basis on its website for analysis by NUC.	Each university should provide data on staffing and student enrolments on a programme basis on its website for analysis by NUC. NUC should establish a National University Staff Qualification Database, a verified, real-time registry of all academic staff across Nigerian universities to enable accurate workforce planning, prevent ghost staffing, and provide evidence for the Commission’s advisory role on staffing to government.	Universities and NUC	0 – 6 months in 2026 and subsequent years



7. The establishment of a template for programme accreditation with strong emphasis on programme staffing (quantity and quality) towards the joint accreditation of programmes in the NUS by NUC and the relevant approved regulatory bodies.	The establishment of a template for programme accreditation with strong emphasis on programme staffing (quantity and quality) towards the joint accreditation of programmes in the NUS by NUC and the approved regulatory bodies.	NUC & Professional Bodies	0 – 6 months in 2026 and subsequent years
8. Intensification and proper monitoring of the existing TETFund - bonded Academic Staff Training and Development (ASTD) programme to support junior academics for postgraduate studies – local and overseas.	Intensification of the existing TETFund- bonded Academic Staff Training and Development (ASTD) programme to support junior academics for postgraduate studies – local and international.	TETFund and the Universities to ensure proper implementation to eliminate the present abuse of the scheme.	Yearly event
9. Train the Provosts of the Postgraduate Colleges in the NUS on enhancing the expected capacity building outcome of postgraduate education	Train the Provosts of the Postgraduate Colleges in the NUS on enhancing the expected capacity building outcome of postgraduate education	NUC to develop and present the programme to all the provosts in the NUS	0 – 6 months in 2026
10. Develop system-wide criteria for the appointment and promotion of professorial staff to serve as a check on the high level of mediocrity in the	Develop system-wide criteria for the appointment and promotion of professorial staff to serve as a check on the high level of mediocrity in the	NUC to promote system-wide appointment and promotion criteria for the NUS. Particular attention to be paid to the	0 – 6 months in 2026



12. Establish pedagogical training for all university teachers.	Establish pedagogical training for all university teachers.	NUC to handle in collaboration with Regulatory Agencies and actors from industry.	Yearly event
13. Need to sustain student evaluation of teaching quality of teachers in the universities	Need to sustain student evaluation of teaching quality of teachers in the universities.	NUC to promote the relevant mechanism of implementation in collaboration with the universities.	Semester-based event
14. Strengthening staff welfare and capacity development through improved working conditions, incentives, and continuous professional development programmes through attendance of professional/discipline-based local and international conferences.	Attention to infrastructural development – offices, lecture theatres, housing, etc. Attendance of professional/discipline-based local and international conferences by university teachers. About 10% - 20% of staff should be targeted.	The Vice-Chancellor in collaboration with the Director of Physical Planning and the Deans of Faculties in each university	Yearly event
15. Encouragement of the take-off of the proposed Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities' Training Institute (CVCTI) to provide the training platform for the exposure of the university leadership to 21 st century management techniques	Encouragement of the take-off of the proposed Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities' Training Institute (CVCTI) to provide the training platform for the exposure of the university leadership to 21 st century management techniques.	NUC & CVCNU	Yearly event



17. TETFund to increase the grant allocation to National Research Fund to not less than ₦20b for a minimum of 400 grants annually and to ₦30b at the end of the plan period to award at least 600 research grants to researchers in NUS	TETFund to increase the grant allocation to National Research Fund to not less than ₦20b for a minimum of 400 grants and to ₦30b at the end of the plan period to award at least 600 research grants based on proposals from the entire NUS.	TETFund yearly allocation to NRF	Yearly Event
18. TETFund to significantly increase the Institution Based Research Grant which has been helping our universities to implement research capacity building of junior academics.	TETFund to significantly increase the Institution Based Research Grant	TETFund, in collaboration with the universities with responsibility for ensuring that the grants are given to junior academics and are properly monitored.	Yearly Event
19. Attraction by NUC of foreign agencies to support research on issues of relevance to the socio - economic development of our nation state.	Attraction of foreign agencies to support research on issues of relevance to the socio-economic development of our nation state.	NUC has considerable experience to be deployed towards attracting more foreign grants to address pressing national developmental problems.	Yearly Event
20. NUC to explore with TETFund the establishment of the National Research Innovation Fund to support the commercialisation of	The establishment of the National Research Innovation Fund to support the commercialisation of research results in selected industrial sectors of our	NUC, TETFund and universities	Yearly Event



22. Support specialised training of professors to update knowledge and skills in their disciplines and in mentoring	Specialised training of professors to update knowledge and skills in their disciplines and in mentoring.	VC, Provost of PG College to mount programmes on Research Proposals Writing and AI-driven teaching and research methodologies	Yearly Event
23. Promote inter - university and international faculty exchange programmes to enrich institutional knowledge capacity, address critical staffing gaps, and expose Nigerian academics to global best practices.	Development and Promotion of staff exchange programmes targeted at staff capacity building and international exposure.	VC, Provost of PG College, NUC	Yearly Event
24. Support by NUC towards the resolution of the lingering and most destabilizing problems of national strikes by university staff unions to achieve the stability of the system and the encouragement of staff.	The resolution of the lingering and most destabilizing problems of national strikes by university staff unions to achieve the stability of the system and the encouragement of staff.	NUC, in collaboration with the Federal and State Governments, to resolve the problem through encouragement of intellectual approach to handling the identified problems militating against the smooth running of the NUS.	Urgent closure of the lingering matter.
25. Implementation of the 2025 FGN -ASUU	Implementation of the 2025 FGN -ASUU	NUC, in collaboration with	o – 8 months in



4.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Specialised monitoring and evaluation programmes will need to be instituted to closely ascertain the implementation of the various activities along the lines identified above. Strict adherence to quality assurance mandates will be required to clear-cut policies that drive efficiency. A detailed framework with specified protocols and timelines, as well as key performance indicators (KPIs), will need to be developed by PDAC and rolled out for the close monitoring of the overall process.

PART B: THE CASE OF NON-TEACHING STAFF IN QUANTITY AND QUALITY

4.7 STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

This chapter will address vital questions to identify strategic directions and core activities for tackling the challenges of appropriate quantity and quality of non-teaching staff in the system. Following the NUC guidelines for the preparation of an Academic Brief for a university, non-teaching staff, is captured in the following three main categories:

- Senior Technical Staff (STS)
- Senior Administrative Staff (SAS)
- Junior Staff (JS)
-

The questions to be addressed are:

1. What is the proper mechanism for determining the required categories of non-teaching staff as indicated above for each university and, by extension, the NUS (NUS), towards data-driven determination of the appropriate quantity and quality?
2. What are the strategies to be employed for meeting any established shortfall?
3. How do we ensure the quality of the different categories of non-teaching staff in the university system?
4. How do we set out to improve the required skills of the different categories of non-teaching staff, most especially those in the STA and SAS categories?

4.8 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Quantity Parameter

The Universities will adopt the NUC guidelines in the calculation of the number of Senior Technical Staff (STS). The number of Senior Technical Staff (STS) is projected at 25% of the total Academic Staff which, as earlier presented in Part A, is obtained on the basis of the calculated Full-Time Equivalent Students and the specified NUC norm for Students: Staff ratio for each programme.

For the Senior Administrative Staff (SAS), universities are expected to take advantage of developments in technology to optimise the number required. Thus, the total number of Senior Administrative Staff is projected at 2% of the total academic staff.



Similarly, universities are expected to outsource some of their activities that would have necessitated the employment of many Junior Staff. The number of Junior Staff is, therefore, expected to be projected at a maximum of 4% of the total student population.

The Academic Planning Unit in each university with professionally qualified staff with capacity to determine the required staffing, based on the calculation of the Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTEs) per programme and the utilisation of the prescribed NUC Students: Staff ratio for the various disciplines and programmes being run in the institution, is expected to be used to determine the required non-teaching staff on the basis of the above ratios. Thus, the academic brief will contain information on the various categories of staff required to handle the projected programmes to be run during the planned period.

These competencies of the Academic Planning Unit at each university are also expected to be deployed in developing the Revised Academic Brief for the 2026-2030 period. This will ensure a data-driven approach to addressing staffing requirements during the period.

The Quality Parameter

The different categories of non-teaching staff require different types of training for capacity building. For example, STS involves technologists with varied capacities working across different laboratories and technical sectors of the university. Technologists need to be trained to handle modern-day equipment based on the varying degrees of deployment of modern technologies. There is no gainsaying the fact that the rate of obsolescence among technologists is indeed high because most institutions are not able to cope with the required capacity upgrading from “analogue” to “digital” to cope with the various services.

In respect of the situations at the Registries and the Bursaries, a stakeholder noted as follows:

- * For decades, university Registries have been seen as dumping grounds for all and sundry, as the panacea for unemployed youths regardless of their abilities, interests or capabilities and recruitment often favoured patronage rather than quality.
- * Producing administrators that can effectively drive a future-ready university system takes years of hands-on tutelage and a mindset that is open to learning, unlearning and relearning, qualities that are lacking in a generation in a hurry and full of angst.
- * The low level of experienced career administrators and other non-teaching staff, including the Bursary and Audit departments, is due to high turnover rate of this category of staff due to the accelerated establishment of universities, lack of awareness or interest by graduates in non-teaching career in universities, except as a last resort after a long period of unemployment.



The Registrar is at the apex of the categories of staff in the SAS. The Registrar shoulders serious responsibilities in the administration of a university. The need for capacity building is dictated by the paucity of experienced registrars in the system. NUC can leverage on the activities of the Association of Registrars of Nigerian Universities (ARNU) for the training of registrars and other categories of staff in SAS.

Basically, for non-teaching staff, a Strategic Plan that identifies the actual needs in terms of quantity and quality of each university will enable identified knowledge and skills gaps to be rectified over time. Furthermore, professionalisation and specialisation in different aspects of higher education administration will improve the quality of governance and management in universities. To achieve this, Train-the-Trainer programmes should be encouraged to handle the needs of all the categories of non-teaching and technical staff.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Envisioning the future of the NUS for global competitiveness and ascertaining adequacy of teachers in number and quality are core essentials in determining the efficacy and relevance of our universities as agents for the socio-economic development of our nation state. It is also important to appreciate the key roles of the non-teaching staff towards the creation of the necessary environment for effective operation, administration and management of the system.

All this is critical to the performance of the traditional functions of teaching, research and community service, most required for the transformation of our universities to knowledge workers, with the knowledge deployed to address our national challenges while producing graduates with the relevant skills sets to drive our economy.





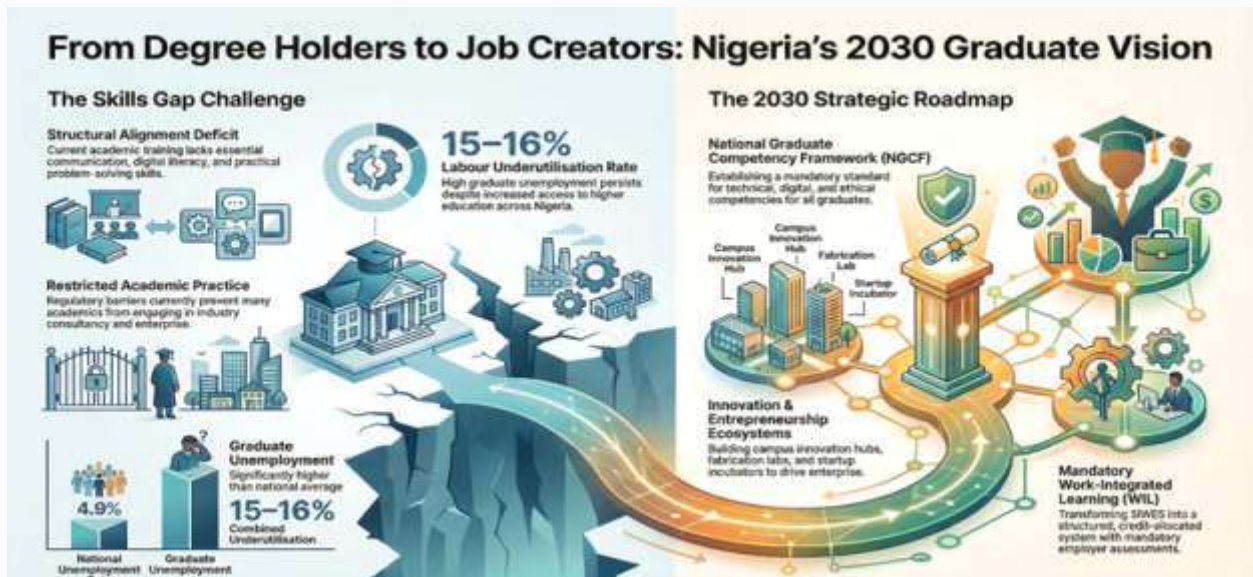


5.0

PRODUCING NATIONALLY-RELEVANT AND
GLOBALLY-COMPETITIVE GRADUATES, AND
STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP
IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Overarching Goals

By 2030, the Nigerian University System (NUS) shall produce graduates who possess the knowledge, technical competencies, entrepreneurial capability, ethical orientation, digital fluency, and global exposure required to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of our nation state while competing successfully in regional and international labour markets.



The Nigerian university graduate of the future shall not merely be a recipient of academic certification, but a problem-solver, innovator, researcher, creator of value, and responsible citizen. Universities shall therefore be repositioned as centres for knowledge production, skills formation, enterprise development, technological innovation, societal transformation, and drivers of Nigeria's emerging knowledge economy.

Blueprint 2.0 envisions a university system where graduate quality is measured not only by examination performance, but also by demonstrable competencies, employability outcomes, entrepreneurial productivity, research commercialisation, innovation output, global mobility, and societal impact. To achieve this, universities will strengthen industry partnerships, deepen experiential learning, institutionalise outcome-based education, expand innovation ecosystems, and integrate flexible pathways for lifelong learning, workforce adaptation, reskilling, and continuous professional development.

The system will support stronger collaboration among universities, industry, government, development partners, and communities through a strengthened Triple Helix framework that connects knowledge production directly to economic productivity and national development priorities. Universities shall increasingly become active participants in industrial growth, technological advancement, knowledge commercialisation, productivity enhancement, policy development, and local problem-solving.

Graduate preparation shall be aligned with strategic national priorities, including agriculture, digital economy, manufacturing, energy transition, healthcare, climate resilience, security, creative industries, biotechnology, and emerging technologies. Greater emphasis shall also be placed on multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary learning, practical training, capstone projects, industry immersion, leadership development, civic responsibility, and innovation-driven entrepreneurship. Particular attention shall be



given to strengthening innovation and productivity within small and medium-scale enterprises, local industries, and the informal economy, which collectively absorb a significant proportion of Nigeria's workforce.

The goal also includes cultivating critical thinking, ethical judgement, civic awareness, leadership, resilience, and attention to student wellbeing, recognising mental health and personal stability as essential for long-term success. Academic professionals will be legally empowered to practice, consult, and engage with industry, strengthening the bridge between academia and the wider economy.

The NUS shall therefore become a strategic driver of national productivity, innovation-led growth, and sustainable economic transformation.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The question of what Nigerian universities produce, and how effectively graduates are prepared for life, work, innovation, and leadership after graduation, has become one of the most critical issues confronting the Nigerian higher education system. While access to university education has expanded significantly over the last two decades, concerns continue to grow regarding graduate employability, practical competence, entrepreneurial readiness, workplace adaptability, and global competitiveness.

Employers across multiple sectors consistently report that many graduates possess limited problem-solving abilities, inadequate communication skills, weak digital competencies, insufficient practical exposure, and poor readiness for modern work environments. At the same time, graduate unemployment and underemployment remain persistent national challenges despite increasing numbers of degree holders entering the labour market annually.

This contradiction reflects a deeper structural challenge within the Nigerian higher education system: the disconnect between knowledge production and economic productivity. Universities continue to generate academic knowledge and graduate output, yet insufficient mechanisms exist for translating research, innovation, and skills into industrial application, enterprise creation, technological advancement, and national wealth generation. As a result, the university system has not fully evolved into a functional knowledge economy ecosystem capable of driving productivity, competitiveness, and large-scale job creation.



These challenges are rooted in several structural weaknesses within the university system. Teaching and learning remain largely theoretical in many institutions, with insufficient emphasis on experiential learning, industry immersion, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and competency demonstration. Existing internship systems such as SIWES have often suffered from weak supervision, inadequate placement opportunities, poor coordination, and limited alignment with programme learning outcomes.

Entrepreneurship education has also remained largely classroom-based, with limited transition into actual enterprise development, product innovation, commercialisation, or start-up creation. Many universities lack fully functional innovation ecosystems, incubation centres, maker spaces, fabrication laboratories, technology transfer offices, and venture support systems capable of transforming student ideas into viable economic ventures. In many advanced and emerging economies, universities increasingly function as productive innovation ecosystems where research, industry collaboration, start-up incubation, intellectual property commercialisation, and workforce development operate as interconnected components of national economic strategy. Nigerian universities must progressively transition toward this model by strengthening pathways that convert academic knowledge into marketable products, scalable enterprises, public policy solutions, creative industries, and community-based innovations.

At the same time, the global economy is undergoing rapid transformation driven by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, automation, green transitions, biotechnology, fintech innovation, remote work systems, and global talent mobility. Skills requirements are evolving much faster than many university curricula can currently accommodate. Increasingly, employers seek graduates who can adapt quickly, work collaboratively across disciplines and cultures, communicate effectively, use digital tools proficiently, solve complex problems, and continue learning throughout their careers.

Nigeria also faces unique national development challenges that require universities to play a far more active developmental role. Food insecurity, energy deficits, healthcare challenges, climate vulnerability, industrial underdevelopment, unemployment, insecurity, and low technological productivity all demand graduates capable of applying knowledge directly to national problems. Universities can no longer operate as isolated academic spaces disconnected from economic production systems and societal realities.

Another major challenge lies in weak and fragmented industry–university linkages. Collaboration between universities and industry remains inconsistent, personality-driven, and poorly institutionalised. Many curricula are developed without sustained labour market intelligence or structured industry participation. As a result, graduates are often trained for outdated realities rather than current and emerging economic needs.



To address this, *Blueprint 2.0* adopts a stronger Triple Helix approach that deepens collaboration among universities, industry, and government institutions. This framework positions universities not only as centres of teaching and research, but also as engines of innovation, enterprise development, policy support, and industrial productivity. The strengthened Triple Helix framework proposed under *Blueprint 2.0* also seeks to reposition universities as active participants within Nigeria's emerging knowledge economy. Under this approach, universities will increasingly contribute not only through teaching and certification, but also through applied research, technology transfer, start-up acceleration, skills forecasting, regional innovation partnerships, and support for strategic national industries.

The Blueprint also recognises the importance of evidence-based planning. At present, Nigeria lacks a sufficiently robust national graduate tracking architecture capable of systematically monitoring employment outcomes, entrepreneurial performance, postgraduate progression, professional mobility, and labour market relevance. Similarly, periodic Labour Market Observatory Surveys are weak or fragmented, limiting the ability of institutions and regulators to respond dynamically to changing workforce realities. *Blueprint 2.0* therefore introduces stronger systems for labour market intelligence, graduate tracking, and institutional performance analytics. Labour market intelligence systems will therefore serve not only as monitoring tools, but also as strategic instruments for enrolment planning, curriculum forecasting, manpower development, and national productivity alignment.

The issue of global competitiveness is equally important. Nigerian graduates often possess strong intellectual potential, but many lack sufficient international exposure, multilingual competence, collaborative learning experiences, and internationally benchmarked professional skills. Limited participation in exchange programmes, joint degrees, virtual collaborations, global certifications, and international internships constrains graduate competitiveness within increasingly integrated global labour markets. Global competitiveness within *Blueprint 2.0* is defined not merely by international rankings, but by the ability of Nigerian graduates, researchers, start-ups, and institutions to participate effectively in global knowledge networks, innovation systems, professional mobility pathways, and cross-border economic opportunities.

In response, *Blueprint 2.0* promotes structured internationalisation strategies including virtual exchange programmes, global collaborative learning, industry-linked international internships, digital certification pathways, and stronger integration of foreign language competencies, especially French, within the ECOWAS context.



The Blueprint 2.0 also acknowledges that graduate development must extend beyond technical skills (often referred to as “hard skills”) alone. Equally important is a range of “soft skills” comprising ethical leadership, emotional resilience, civic responsibility, mental well-being, teamwork, adaptability, and creativity which are increasingly central to long-term success in both professional and entrepreneurial environments. Universities must therefore support holistic graduate development that integrates hard skills relevant to the discipline coupled with soft skills. Based on international best practices, the attributes of the diverse skills involved in competency framework towards the development of employable graduates are presented in Table 5.1

Table 5.1: The Relevant Skills within the Competency Framework

ATTRIBUTE	ACADEMIC DIMENSION	EXPECTED ABILITY AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL
Discipline/ Subject Specialists	Understand and respect the values, principles, methods and limitations of their discipline(s)	Possess the breadth and depth of knowledge within their disciplinary area(s). Possess discipline-relevant professional skills, knowledge and competencies.
Scientific skills	Exposure to the practical and analytical aspects of the programme of choice	Students in science -based disciplines will have spent many hours per session acquiring basic laboratory skills relevant to their programmes of study including statistical analysis, basic experimental design. Students should recognise their responsibility to follow Health and Safety guidelines. Final year students choose supervised research projects where they design their own experiments, analyse data, prepare report and present their results verbally.
Investigative	Are intellectually curious and engage in the pursuit of new knowledge and understanding	Are able to investigate problems and provide effective solutions through ability to locate, analyze and synthesize relevant information from a variety of sources and media.
Independent and Critical Thinkers	Identify, define and assess complex issues and ideas in researchable form.	Apply creative, imaginative and innovative thinking and ideas to problem solving. Exercise critical judgment in evaluating sources of information and constructing meaning.
Reflective Learners	Use feedback productively to reflect on their work, achievements and self-identity.	Set aspirational goals for continuing personal, professional and career development. Identify and articulate their skills, knowledge and understanding confidently and in a variety of contexts.
Effective Communicators	Articulate complex ideas with respect to the needs and abilities of diverse audiences	The student has good skills in verbal and written communication. Communicate clearly and confidently, and listen and negotiate effectively with others. Presents



Ethically and Socially Aware	Consider and act upon the ethical, social and global responsibilities of their actions. Exposure to the richness of the multi-cultural and international experiences, opportunities and ways of thinking	Depending on their work and extracurricular activities, undergraduate students should have an awareness of the concepts of ethical and sustainable practice. Have a practical and contemporary knowledge of relevant professional, ethical and legal frameworks.
Professional development	Students undertaking internships and SIWES are likely to seek professional development opportunities at their host organisations.	Undergraduate students make limited, short-term career decisions at this stage. They are introduced to the concept of skills and competencies and how to talk and write about them. Students are encouraged to identify areas of strength and weakness and to look for opportunities to develop them. Students work on their communication, written and presentation skills.

Particular attention is also given to postgraduate education. Postgraduate training remains critical to national research productivity, innovation capability, and global academic competitiveness. Yet several postgraduate programmes continue to experience weak supervision systems, delayed completion timelines, inadequate research funding exposure, poor grant-writing capacity, and limited commercialisation pathways for research outputs. *Blueprint 2.0* therefore, introduces stronger postgraduate curriculum reforms, including grant-writing training, intellectual property management, innovation commercialisation, automated postgraduate tracking systems, interdisciplinary research collaboration, and stronger industry-research integration.

The Blueprint further recognises the importance of system-wide knowledge sharing and continuous institutional learning. To strengthen coordination across the university system, the resuscitation of the University System Annual Review Meeting (USARM) is proposed as a national platform for reviewing progress, sharing innovations, discussing emerging challenges, disseminating best practices, and strengthening policy coherence across institutions.

At the implementation level, *Blueprint 2.0* proposes a transition from input-driven education models toward Graduate Outcome-Based Education (GOBE). Under this framework, universities will increasingly be evaluated not merely by infrastructure or enrolment figures, but by measurable graduate outcomes including employability rates,



entrepreneurial success, innovation outputs, global mobility indicators, research productivity, industry engagement, and societal impact.

Capstone approaches will also be institutionalised across programmes to ensure that students graduate with demonstrated capacity to integrate knowledge, solve real-world problems, and apply interdisciplinary thinking to practical national and global challenges.

Importantly, *Blueprint 2.0* does not support the introduction of a broad “Professor in Practice” framework at this stage. Stakeholder consultations revealed significant concerns regarding institutional readiness, regulatory abuse, quality assurance complications, and possible distortion of academic standards. Instead, the Blueprint encourages structured industry engagement through adjunct participation, collaborative teaching, industry mentorship, co-supervision, guest instruction, and applied research partnerships within clearly regulated institutional frameworks.

Ultimately, this section of *Blueprint 2.0* seeks to reposition Nigerian universities as institutions that produce capable graduates, generate usable knowledge, stimulate innovation, strengthen industries, expand national productivity, and serve as foundational drivers of Nigeria’s transition toward a competitive knowledge-based economy.

5.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Nigeria’s higher education system is operating within a rapidly changing national and global environment that demands a fundamental rethinking of how universities prepare graduates, generate knowledge, and contribute to economic transformation. The traditional university model, which was largely designed for stable industrial economies and rigid professional pathways, is increasingly unable to respond adequately to the pace of technological disruption, labour market volatility, demographic expansion, and the growing demand for innovation-driven growth.

The NUS has expanded significantly over the past two decades in terms of enrolment, institutional diversity, and programme offerings. However, this quantitative expansion has not been matched by equivalent improvements in graduate employability, practical competencies, industry responsiveness, entrepreneurial capability, research commercialisation, or global competitiveness. Employers across sectors continue to express concern regarding the mismatch between university training and workplace expectations.

In a study of six critical sectors of the Nigerian economy undertaken by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and UNIDO in 2018, no fewer than 925 trades were found to be hard to fill in Nigeria’s labour market. The breakdown of the vacancies showed:



- Housing Sector - 19.7%
- Petro-chemical sector - 13.9%
- Auto Industry - 11.4%
- Textiles - 10.3%
- Steel works - 10.1%
- Services Sector - 8.9%
- Leather Industry - 3.3%
- Other sectors - 22.4%

The identified skills involved in the creation of the vacancies were:

- Technical skills (15.7%)
- Basic IT skills (11.8%)
- Advanced IT skills (9.2%)
- Soft skills (16.7%)

Graduates are often perceived as possessing theoretical knowledge without sufficient exposure to practical problem-solving, digital tools, teamwork, communication skills, innovation processes, or real-world industry environments. Beyond employability concerns, the system also faces a deeper structural challenge: the weak conversion of university knowledge into productive economic activity. Although universities continue to produce graduates, research outputs, and academic publications, limited institutional linkages exist between knowledge generation and industrial productivity, technology transfer, enterprise development, manufacturing growth, public policy innovation, and community problem-solving. This has contributed to a situation in which knowledge production exists without a sufficiently developed knowledge economy capable of translating academic output into broad national productivity gains.

At the same time, Nigeria's economic structure is undergoing major transitions. The growth of the digital economy, financial technology, renewable energy, creative industries, precision agriculture, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, logistics, and data-driven services requires a workforce with multidisciplinary competencies and adaptive learning capacity. Yet many university programmes remain narrowly disciplinary, content-heavy, examination-oriented, and weakly connected to evolving national manpower needs. These transitions also require universities to move beyond narrow disciplinary silos toward more interdisciplinary, problem-solving, and industry-responsive learning models.

The challenge is compounded by rising youth unemployment and underemployment. Although graduates continue to emerge in large numbers annually, the economy has not been able to absorb them at the required scale. A significant proportion of graduates either remain unemployed or transition into informal economic activities without structured support for enterprise creation, innovation development, or business incubation. This disconnect has intensified public concern regarding the relevance, quality, and economic value of university education.



Another major concern is the weak institutionalisation of outcome-based and competency-based education across the university system. While curriculum reforms such as the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) introduced important changes, implementation has remained uneven. Many programmes still rely heavily on lecture-based delivery and end-of-semester examinations, with limited use of simulations, experiential learning, industry projects, design thinking, capstone projects, digital collaboration platforms, or competency demonstration models.

Similarly, entrepreneurship education, though introduced in many universities, has remained largely theoretical and disconnected from actual enterprise development ecosystems. In several institutions, entrepreneurship courses are taught as compulsory general studies without corresponding incubation facilities, mentoring systems, start-up financing pathways, innovation hubs, fabrication laboratories, or structured partnerships with industries and investors. Consequently, the transformative potential of entrepreneurship education has not been fully realised.

The existing Work-Integrated Learning structure also faces major limitations. The SIWES, though valuable in concept, has suffered from inconsistent supervision, poor placement coordination, weak industry participation, inadequate funding, limited digital tracking systems, and weak integration into curricular learning outcomes. Many students struggle to secure meaningful placement opportunities, while institutions often lack the systems required for quality assurance and impact evaluation. The challenge is particularly severe in sectors experiencing placement shortages, including medicine, nursing, engineering, and technology-related disciplines.

Furthermore, the rapid emergence of digital learning ecosystems globally has exposed major structural gaps within Nigerian universities. Although some institutions adopted blended learning approaches during the COVID-19 period, many universities still lack robust Learning Management Systems (LMS), institutional instructional design capacity, digital content production systems, virtual laboratories, simulation platforms, and Open Educational Resources (OER) repositories. Curriculum frameworks also remain largely designed for conventional face-to-face delivery, limiting flexibility, scalability, lifelong learning opportunities, and access for working-class learners, remote learners, and non-traditional students.

There are also unresolved tensions regarding institutional autonomy, professional regulation, and curriculum governance. Stakeholders have expressed concerns about the rigidity of certain aspects of the CCMAS framework and the need for greater flexibility to allow universities to respond to their unique mandates, regional priorities, and innovation aspirations. At the same time, there is a broad consensus that national quality standards must be preserved. The challenge, therefore, lies in achieving an appropriate balance between national coordination and institutional innovation.



Postgraduate education presents an additional layer of concern. While undergraduate curriculum reforms have received considerable attention, postgraduate programmes have not undergone equivalent systematic re-engineering. In many cases, postgraduate curricula remain weakly aligned with emerging research priorities, innovation ecosystems, interdisciplinary problem-solving, digital research tools, intellectual property management, grant writing competencies, and industry-linked research commercialisation. Delays in postgraduate completion timelines also remain widespread due to weak monitoring systems and inadequate supervisory structures. In addition, postgraduate research in many institutions remains insufficiently connected to industry priorities, patent development, start-up ecosystems, community problem-solving, and international research funding opportunities.

The university system must also confront the growing demand for global competitiveness. Nigerian graduates increasingly compete within regional and international labour markets. Yet many programmes still provide limited opportunities for global exposure, foreign language proficiency, international collaboration, virtual exchange, cross-border internships, or internationally recognised professional certifications. Without deliberate reforms, Nigerian graduates risk becoming progressively disadvantaged within a highly competitive global knowledge economy. Global competitiveness is increasingly measured not only by degree attainment, but also by internationally benchmarked competencies, professional certifications, mobility opportunities, innovation outputs, research influence, and participation within global knowledge networks.

At the same time, important opportunities exist. Nigeria possesses a large youth population, expanding digital entrepreneurship ecosystems, growing private sector innovation, a vibrant creative economy, an active diaspora knowledge network, and increasing international interest in African talent markets. These opportunities create a strong foundation for repositioning universities as engines of innovation, enterprise development, workforce transformation, and national productivity.

The Blueprint therefore recognises that the future of Nigerian higher education cannot be built on incremental reforms alone. What is required is a coordinated transformation that links curriculum redesign, graduate employability, entrepreneurship development, industry partnerships, digital learning, research commercialisation, flexible learning pathways, and innovation ecosystems into a coherent national strategy.



SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Nigeria possesses one of the largest higher education systems in Africa, with a wide network of federal, state, and private universities distributed across the country. This provides an important institutional foundation for national human capital development.
- The NUS also benefits from a large and youthful population that represents a significant reservoir of talent, creativity, entrepreneurial energy, and digital adaptability. Nigerian students and graduates continue to demonstrate resilience and competitiveness in several international academic and professional environments.
- The introduction of CCMAS has already created an important national platform for curriculum standardisation, benchmarking, and competency-focused reforms. Similarly, the growing recognition of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), competency-based learning, and digital pedagogy provides a strong policy foundation for future transformation.
- The growing emphasis on employability, innovation, entrepreneurship, digital learning, and competency development within national higher education policy also provides a strong platform for repositioning universities as contributors to Nigeria's emerging knowledge economy.
- There is also increasing interest among industries, development partners, technology firms, and international institutions in supporting university reforms, digital skills development, innovation ecosystems, and start-up incubation initiatives within Nigeria.
- Nigeria's growing technology ecosystem, fintech sector, creative industries, agritech ecosystem, and digital entrepreneurship landscape provide emerging opportunities for stronger university-industry collaboration, applied research partnerships, start-up incubation, and practical student engagement.
- The presence of institutions such as TETFund, ITF, NITDA, BOI, SMEDAN, NASENI, and the Nigeria Start-up Act 2022 also creates opportunities for coordinated support for innovation, enterprise development, research commercialisation, and graduate employability initiatives.

Weaknesses

- Many university programmes remain heavily theoretical, examination-driven, and weakly aligned with labour market realities. Practical training, competency demonstration, experiential learning, and industry immersion remain inadequate in several disciplines.
- Graduate employability remains a major concern due to persistent gaps in communication skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, teamwork, entrepreneurship, innovation capability, and workplace readiness.
- There also remains a weak institutional culture for translating academic knowledge into commercially viable products, scalable innovations, policy solutions, and industry-responsive technologies.
- Entrepreneurship education remains weakly connected to practical enterprise ecosystems. Many universities lack functional innovation hubs, start-up incubators, fabrication laboratories, venture support systems, and structured mentorship programmes.
- Weak industry participation in curriculum development and programme delivery has contributed to outdated curricular structures and limited responsiveness to



changing workforce demands.

- Digital learning infrastructure remains uneven across institutions. Several universities lack robust Learning Management Systems, digital content production systems, virtual laboratories, and instructional design support units.
- Academic staff capacity gaps also persist in areas such as digital pedagogy, competency-based assessment, curriculum digitisation, industry-linked teaching, and interdisciplinary learning design.
- The SIWES framework faces implementation weaknesses including inadequate placements, poor supervision systems, insufficient funding, inconsistent employer engagement, and weak assessment integration.
- Postgraduate curriculum structures remain underdeveloped in relation to innovation management, intellectual property systems, grant writing, multidisciplinary research, and research commercialisation.
- Institutional data systems remain weak. Labour market observatory systems also remain fragmented, limiting evidence-based enrolment planning, workforce forecasting, and curriculum responsiveness.

Opportunities

- Rapid growth in digital technologies, artificial intelligence, fintech, agritech, healthtech, renewable energy, and creative industries provides opportunities for new academic programmes, specialised competency tracks, and industry-linked training models.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and broader regional integration initiatives create opportunities for Nigerian graduates to participate in expanded African labour markets, cross-border enterprise development, and regional innovation ecosystems.
- Increasing global acceptance of blended learning, remote work, online certification, micro-credentials, and flexible learning pathways creates opportunities for Nigerian universities to expand access and diversify delivery systems.
- There is growing international demand for digital talent, healthcare professionals, creative professionals, software developers, researchers, and innovation-driven graduates, areas where Nigerian universities can develop competitive advantage.
- Development partners such as the World Bank, UNESCO, AFD, British Council, and African Centres of Excellence continue to support higher education reforms, digital transformation, research capacity development, and innovation systems strengthening.
- The growing recognition of skills-based hiring, professional micro-credentials, remote work systems, and digital service exports creates opportunities for Nigerian universities to produce globally mobile talent capable of participating in international knowledge and innovation markets.
- The expansion of diaspora engagement platforms also creates opportunities for remote mentorship, collaborative teaching, virtual exchange, research partnerships, and global networking.
- Nigeria's informal economy and SME sector also provide significant opportunities for enterprise-based learning, applied research, start-up incubation, and community-centred innovation.



Threats

- Persistent funding constraints remain a major threat to curriculum reform, digital transformation, research commercialisation, innovation infrastructure development, faculty training, and entrepreneurship support systems.
- Rapid technological change may continue to outpace curriculum review cycles if universities fail to establish more responsive and adaptive governance systems.
- Weak industry absorption capacity may limit internship and WIL opportunities if deliberate incentives and partnership frameworks are not developed.
- Brain-drain continues to affect academic staffing, research productivity, mentorship systems, and institutional continuity across the university system. Continued migration of highly skilled graduates may also weaken national innovation capacity and reduce the country's ability to retain critical talent within strategic sectors.
- The digital divide between institutions may widen educational inequality if targeted interventions are not implemented to support resource-constrained universities.
- Resistance to reform from institutional actors accustomed to traditional teaching methods may slow implementation of competency-based education, digital pedagogy, and industry-linked learning models.
- Policy fragmentation and overlap between regulatory agencies, professional bodies, and institutional mandates may also create governance tensions if coordination mechanisms are not clearly defined.
- Global competition for talent, innovation, and knowledge-intensive industries is intensifying. Without rapid and coordinated reforms, Nigerian graduates and institutions may increasingly struggle to compete effectively within regional and international labour markets, research ecosystems, and technology-driven economies.





5.3 JUSTIFICATION

The reform of graduate development, employability systems, entrepreneurship education, and innovation capacity within the NUS has become a national imperative. Rapid changes in technology, industry, and the global economy have altered the nature of work and the competencies required for economic participation. Universities must therefore move beyond traditional models of theoretical instruction and produce graduates who are adaptable, innovative, digitally competent, and capable of contributing directly to national development.

Despite the steady expansion of university enrolment and graduate output in Nigeria, concerns about graduate employability and workplace readiness remain widespread. Employers consistently identify deficiencies in practical competence, communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving ability, digital literacy, and professional adaptability. This disconnect between university training and labour market expectations has contributed to unemployment, underemployment, and declining public confidence in graduate quality.

Beyond employability concerns, the reforms are also necessary to address the weak connection between university knowledge production and economic productivity. Although Nigerian universities continue to produce graduates and research outputs, limited institutional mechanisms exist for translating knowledge into commercially viable innovations, scalable enterprises, industrial solutions, public policy impact, and broader national development outcomes.

The urgency of reform is reinforced by Nigeria's demographic realities. With one of the largest youth populations globally, the country cannot sustain a higher education system that produces graduates without corresponding opportunities for skills development, innovation, enterprise creation, and labour market integration. Graduate unemployment on this scale poses significant economic and social risks, including reduced productivity, rising dependency, migration pressures, and growing social instability.

At the same time, the structure of the global economy is changing rapidly. Emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, biotechnology, digital finance, climate technology, advanced manufacturing, data analytics, and the creative economy increasingly demand interdisciplinary knowledge, digital fluency, entrepreneurial orientation, and continuous learning capacity. This requires stronger interdisciplinary learning, flexible competency pathways, and closer alignment between education, innovation, and industry systems.



The reform agenda is also justified by the need to align university education more closely with national development priorities. Programme expansion across many institutions has often occurred without sufficient linkage to labour market intelligence, industrial policy, manpower planning, or regional economic needs. This has contributed to enrolment imbalance and insufficient capacity development in critical sectors such as engineering, agriculture, health sciences, education, environmental studies, manufacturing technology, and emerging digital industries. The Blueprint therefore emphasises evidence-based curriculum planning guided by labour market data, sector forecasts, employer feedback, and national development priorities.

A major justification for the reforms lies in the growing importance of competency-based and outcomes-driven education globally. Universities around the world are increasingly adopting flexible learning pathways, micro-credentials, modular certification systems, blended learning models, and competency-based approaches that allow graduates to acquire practical and transferable skills throughout changing career cycles. Nigeria cannot remain dependent on rigid curriculum structures that are poorly aligned with contemporary workforce realities.

The proposed reforms therefore support the integration of digital literacy, artificial intelligence awareness, entrepreneurship, innovation capability, leadership development, critical thinking, civic responsibility, and global citizenship across all programmes. These competencies are now essential requirements for employability, productivity, and participation in the modern economy.

The introduction of micro-credentials, stackable learning pathways, and flexible certification systems is intended to expand access to learning, strengthen workforce adaptability, and support lifelong education. At the same time, stakeholder concerns regarding quality assurance and credential fragmentation are acknowledged. For this reason, all such reforms will operate within nationally regulated qualification and competency frameworks coordinated by the NUC through its statutory structures.

The strengthening of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is equally important. International evidence shows that structured workplace learning significantly improves graduate employability, professional competence, and transition into the labour market. Nigeria's current SIWES framework provides a foundation but requires substantial reform to improve placement systems, supervision, assessment, digital tracking, and industry participation. The proposed WIL framework is therefore intended to make practical industry exposure a structured and measurable component of university education across disciplines. The framework will also strengthen exposure to SMEs, start-ups, community enterprises, digital workplaces, and informal sector production systems that increasingly shape employment realities in Nigeria.



Similarly, the establishment of the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP) is justified by longstanding challenges associated with student placement and coordination. Many students currently face difficulties securing placements because of weak institutional linkages and fragmented systems. NIAP will provide a coordinated national digital platform for internship matching, placement management, supervision, employer engagement, and performance tracking, while expanding opportunities to include SMEs, start-ups, research institutes, creative industries, and digital enterprises. The platform will further support national placement analytics, internship quality assurance, and evidence-based workforce planning.

The Blueprint also recognises that sustainable economic growth cannot depend solely on conventional salaried employment. Universities must increasingly produce graduates capable of creating enterprises, generating innovation, and solving local problems. Entrepreneurship education must therefore move beyond theory to practical incubation, mentorship, start-up development, technology transfer, and innovation financing. The establishment of university innovation hubs, incubation centres, and entrepreneurship ecosystems is central to this objective.

Another key justification for the reform is the need to strengthen collaboration among universities, industry, and government through a more functional Triple Helix framework. Stronger partnerships are necessary to improve curriculum relevance, research utilisation, innovation development, graduate employability, and industrial competitiveness. The Blueprint therefore promotes structured industry participation in curriculum review, collaborative research, co-sponsored innovation projects, and industry-linked teaching and learning.

The reform agenda also addresses longstanding gaps in postgraduate education. Postgraduate programmes remain critical to research productivity, technological advancement, policy development, and national innovation capacity. However, many programmes are insufficiently connected to industry needs, interdisciplinary research, grant acquisition, intellectual property management, research commercialisation, and global research standards. The Blueprint therefore proposes stronger postgraduate curriculum benchmarks, improved doctoral supervision systems, automated postgraduate tracking, and the integration of innovation and research commercialisation competencies into postgraduate training.

The reforms further seek to strengthen regulatory clarity and quality assurance within the university system. The Blueprint reaffirms the statutory authority of the NUC in the development, approval, and accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian



universities. Professional bodies retain responsibility for professional regulation and membership standards but do not supersede the academic regulatory mandate of the Commission. Clarifying these roles is necessary to reduce duplication, conflict, and uncertainty within the system.

The Blueprint equally recognises the need to improve flexibility within the CCMAS framework while maintaining national quality standards. Stakeholder concerns regarding rigidity and implementation challenges have informed the recommendation for periodic review of CCMAS to allow greater institutional innovation, responsiveness to emerging disciplines, and alignment with evolving national priorities.

Finally, the reforms are justified by the growing digital transformation of higher education globally. Learning is increasingly technology-driven, flexible, collaborative, and lifelong. Nigerian universities must therefore redesign teaching, learning, and curriculum delivery systems to support blended learning, virtual laboratories, digital course delivery, Open Educational Resources, and AI-supported educational systems. Without such reforms, the NUS risks losing relevance and competitiveness within increasingly digital, innovation-driven, and globally competitive knowledge economies.

This Blueprint therefore represents more than an academic reform initiative. It is a national human capital and knowledge economy strategy designed to strengthen graduate quality, innovation capacity, enterprise development, workforce readiness, research productivity, and Nigeria's long-term economic competitiveness.

5.4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (2026–2030)

To move from intention to measurable outcomes, the Strategic Objectives under this section are structured around two clearly defined pillars, with cross-cutting enablers that ensure coherence across the system. Each objective is tied to specific institutional responsibilities, implementation mechanisms, and measurable outputs.

Pillar A: Graduate Quality, Relevance, and Employability

Objective 1: Institutionalise Graduate Outcome-Based and Competency-Based Education Across the NUS

The NUC shall ensure that all universities adopt curriculum and teaching models that are competency-driven, outcomes-based, and aligned with national manpower needs, labour market realities, and global standards.

This objective shall include:

- Development and implementation of a National Graduate Competency



Framework (NGCF) covering technical competence, communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, ethics, problem-solving, civic responsibility, innovation, and global citizenship.

- Mandatory mapping of all university programmes to clearly defined graduate attributes and measurable learning outcomes.
- Integration of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and professional ethics into all programmes.
- Promotion of interdisciplinary and problem-solving approaches to learning across STEM, health sciences, humanities, agriculture, education, environmental studies, and social sciences.
- Institutionalisation of capstone projects, industry-based assignments, simulations, and practical competency demonstrations across programmes.
- Adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Competency-Based Education (CBE) models as national standards for curriculum delivery and assessment.
- Alignment of graduate outcomes with national development priorities, SDGs, regional integration frameworks, and international competitiveness benchmarks.
- Universities shall also align graduate formation with the development of a national knowledge economy in which research, innovation, digital capability, enterprise creation, and applied problem-solving contribute directly to productivity growth, industrial transformation, and national competitiveness.

Objective 2: Strengthen Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), Industrial Attachment, and Experiential Education

The NUC shall reposition practical learning and workplace exposure as central components of university education.

This objective shall include:

- Expansion of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) to cover all practice-oriented disciplines and progressively extend structured workplace exposure to all undergraduate programmes.
- Reform of SIWES into a modern, competency-tracked, digitally monitored, and credit-bearing WIL framework.
- Establishment of the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP) as a coordinated digital system for internship placement, supervision, tracking, reporting, and employer engagement.
- Integration of industry-based projects, service learning, field immersion, community engagement, and applied research into programme requirements.
- Diversification of placement opportunities beyond large industries to include SMEs, start-ups, research institutes, farms, hospitals, technology hubs, development organisations, creative industries, and informal sector enterprises.
- Encouragement of local and international internship opportunities, virtual internships, remote project collaboration, and cross-border industry exposure.
- Development of incentives for participating employers, supervisors, and partner institutions to expand placement capacity.
- Strengthening collaboration among NUC, ITF, universities, industry associations, chambers of commerce, and professional groups to support large-scale WIL implementation.



- A minimum of 40 percent of student assessment to be based on continuous, competency-driven evaluation such as projects, simulations, case studies, and portfolios.
- Integration of Outcome-Based Education for programme design and Competency-Based Education for individual skill validation.
- NUC to revise accreditation instruments to include competency demonstration as a core requirement.

This ensures that graduates are assessed not only on what they know, but on what they can do.

Objective 3: Establish a National Graduate Tracking and Employability Intelligence System

The NUC shall institutionalise data-driven monitoring of graduate outcomes, employability trends, and workforce integration.

This objective shall include:

- Establishment of the National Graduate Tracking System (NGTS) under the coordination of the NUC.
- Mandatory graduate destination surveys across universities at 6, 12, and 24 months after graduation.
- Collection and analysis of data relating to employment outcomes, entrepreneurship, postgraduate progression, salary trends, professional certifications, and international mobility.
- Development of Graduate Employability Indices and Employer Satisfaction Surveys as part of national quality assurance processes.
- Integration of graduate outcome data into accreditation, ranking, planning, and funding decisions.
- Deployment of digital dashboards for institutional performance monitoring and policy intelligence.
- Graduate outcome data and Labour Market Observatory findings shall directly inform curriculum review, enrolment planning, programme expansion decisions, and national manpower forecasting.

This will provide the evidence base for policy decisions, accreditation, and institutional performance ranking.

Objective 4: Mainstream Digital Skills, Emerging Technologies, and Future-of-Work Competencies Across All Programmes

The NUC shall ensure that all graduates acquire competencies relevant to the digital economy and emerging global industries.

This objective shall include:



- Integration of digital literacy, AI awareness, data analytics, cybersecurity, virtual collaboration, digital communication, and digital ethics into all undergraduate programmes.
- Promotion of advanced technology training in fields such as robotics, machine learning, renewable energy systems, bioinformatics, GIS, fintech, agritech, healthtech, and digital manufacturing.
- Strengthening virtual laboratories, simulation systems, digital studios, and technology-enabled learning environments.
- Integration of global case studies, multidisciplinary projects, and innovation-focused learning experiences into teaching.
- Development of internationally benchmarked digital certification pathways for students.
- Promotion of multilingual competencies, including French and relevant indigenous languages, to improve regional and international competitiveness.
- Expansion of flexible learning pathways, blended learning systems, and technology-supported lifelong learning opportunities.

Objective 5: Embed Student Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Civic Responsibility

Graduate readiness will include psychological and social preparedness.

Measures include:

- Mandatory final-year module on wellbeing, resilience, and transition to work.
- Minimum standard of one trained counsellor per 500 students.
- Integration of ethics, civic responsibility, and leadership into all programmes.

Objective 6: Promote Graduate Global Competitiveness, Mobility, and International Exposure

The NUS shall prepare graduates to compete effectively within regional and global knowledge economies.

This objective shall include:

- Promotion of student exchange programmes, international internships, joint degrees, and virtual exchange initiatives.
- Encouragement of cross-border collaborative projects and international research exposure.
- Development of a “Global Ready Graduate” framework covering digital fluency, intercultural competence, leadership, professional communication, and foreign language exposure.
- Alignment of programmes with international quality benchmarks and globally recognised certifications.



- Promotion of international academic partnerships and participation in global innovation networks.
- Integration of global citizenship, sustainability awareness, and international perspectives into curriculum delivery.

Pillar B: Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Enterprise Development

Objective 7: Transform Entrepreneurship Education into Practical Enterprise Development and Innovation Leadership

The NUS shall reposition entrepreneurship education from theoretical instruction to practical enterprise creation, innovation development, and problem-solving.

This objective shall include:

- Establishment or strengthening of entrepreneurship centres, innovation hubs, start-up incubators, fabrication laboratories, maker spaces, and technology incubation parks across universities.
- Embedding entrepreneurship education across all disciplines rather than restricting it to standalone GST-style courses.
- Integration of start-up development, business modelling, innovation management, social enterprise development, and venture creation into teaching and learning.
- Creation of structured mentorship systems involving industry leaders, successful entrepreneurs, alumni, investors, and innovation experts.
- Development of student enterprise funding mechanisms through partnerships involving government, TETFund, industry, development partners, financial institutions, and the Start-up Act framework.
- Promotion of social entrepreneurship models that address national challenges in food security, healthcare, education, sanitation, energy, climate adaptation, and community development.
- Institutionalisation of innovation competitions, hackathons, enterprise challenges, and commercialisation support systems.
- Encouragement of university-industry collaborative innovation projects capable of generating patents, start-ups, and scalable local solutions.
- Universities shall develop innovation financing partnerships involving industry, development finance institutions, venture capital networks, alumni investors, and public innovation funds to support start-up incubation and enterprise scaling.

Objective 8: Strengthen Innovation, Research Commercialisation, and Intellectual Property Development

Universities shall be repositioned as centres of innovation, applied research, and economic value creation.



This objective shall include:

- Establishment of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) and Intellectual Property Management Units across universities.
- Integration of grant writing, intellectual property management, innovation commercialisation, and research enterprise development into postgraduate education.
- Promotion of adaptive research focused on solving national and community challenges.
- Strengthening pathways linking student research, innovation projects, and enterprise incubation.
- Expansion of partnerships with industry, investors, development agencies, and innovation ecosystems to support commercialisation and start-up growth.
- Encouragement of measurable innovation outputs including patents, prototypes, licensed technologies, start-ups, and community-based solutions.
- Universities shall progressively establish structured pathways for translating research outputs into commercially viable products, public policy solutions, industrial processes, patents, start-ups, and community-based innovations.
- Performance indicators for universities shall increasingly include innovation outputs, technology transfer activities, start-up generation, patent registration, and industry-utilised research.

Objective 9: Align Skills Development with National and Sectoral Priorities

The Blueprint shall ensure that university skills development, curriculum delivery, research priorities, and innovation activities are deliberately aligned with Nigeria's strategic economic and developmental goals.

This objective shall include:

- Publication by the NUC of periodic National Priority Skills and Competency Clusters to guide curriculum review, programme development, enrolment planning, and institutional specialisation.
- Alignment of selected university programmes and research activities with regional economic strengths and comparative advantages across strategic sectors, including agriculture and agribusiness, energy transition, healthcare and biotechnology, ICT and the digital economy, manufacturing and industrial technology, creative industries, environmental sustainability, housing and infrastructure, and education technology.
- Systematic use of Labour Market Observatory Surveys and graduate outcome data to guide programme expansion, modification, consolidation, or phase-out.
- Formal participation of industry stakeholders in identifying evolving sectoral



competency needs and future workforce demands.

- Strengthening of industry-linked practical training, applied research, capstone projects, and problem-solving initiatives tied directly to national development challenges.
- Promotion of interdisciplinary programmes capable of responding to complex national problems across sectors.
- Greater emphasis on local production systems, technology adaptation, value-chain development, and import-substitution innovation.
- Support for enterprise development and workforce preparation within both the formal and informal sectors of the economy.
- Accelerated curriculum development support for emerging disciplines and new professional fields through strengthened CCMAS review mechanisms and fast-track programme approval systems.

Cross-Cutting System Objectives

Objective 10: Deepen Industry–University Partnerships and Strengthen the Triple Helix Innovation Framework

The Blueprint shall strengthen collaboration among universities, industry, and government as a foundation for graduate employability, innovation, and national productivity.

This objective shall include:

- Establishment of formal Industry Advisory Councils across universities and disciplines.
- Institutionalisation of industry participation in curriculum review, programme design, teaching, mentoring, supervision, and assessment.
- Promotion of co-sponsored research projects, joint innovation programmes, and industry-supported laboratories.
- Strengthening of labour market observatory systems to guide curriculum planning, enrolment decisions, and skills forecasting.
- Resuscitation of the University System Annual Review Meeting (USARM) as a national platform for policy dialogue, knowledge sharing, and system-wide evaluation.
- Encouragement of tax incentives, rebates, and supportive regulatory policies to stimulate private sector investment in university research, internships, innovation, and skills development.
- Promotion of joint degree programmes, collaborative certifications, and partnerships with global technology firms and professional organisations.
- Expansion of alumni engagement as mentors, innovation partners, internship facilitators, and career development contributors.



Objective 11: Strengthen Academic Staff Capacity, Professional Practice, and Institutional Support Systems

The success of graduate competitiveness reforms depends significantly on the quality, motivation, and professional relevance of academic staff.

This objective shall include:

- Continuous professional development for academic staff in digital pedagogy, competency-based assessment, innovation support, entrepreneurship education, and industry-oriented teaching.
- Structured mentorship programmes pairing junior academics with experienced faculty members.
- Review of restrictive regulations that limit academics from engaging in relevant professional practice and industry participation.
- Promotion of “grow-your-own” talent development strategies to strengthen staff recruitment and retention.
- Improvement of institutional work culture, research support systems, and staff welfare conditions.
- Reduction of excessive administrative burdens that undermine teaching quality, mentoring, and research productivity.

Objective 12: Integrate the Informal Economy, Community-Based Enterprise Systems, and Flexible Skills Pathways into University Skills Development

The NUS shall recognise the informal economy as a critical component of national productivity, employment generation, innovation, and skills development.

This objective shall include:

- Development of structured pathways linking informal sector skills, artisanal expertise, vocational competencies, and experiential learning to formal university certification systems.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) frameworks that allow individuals with demonstrable competencies acquired through work experience, apprenticeships, community practice, or informal enterprise to receive academic credit or advanced placement.
- Integration of SMEs, cooperatives, start-ups, farms, creative enterprises, technology clusters, fabrication centres, and informal production ecosystems into university practical learning frameworks.
- Expansion of Work-Integrated Learning opportunities beyond formal corporations to include small-scale industries, community enterprises, digital freelancers, innovation clusters, and social enterprises.
- Development of modular and stackable learning pathways that allow learners to

acquire competencies progressively while remaining economically active.

- Promotion of entrepreneurship models that address local development challenges in agriculture, housing, healthcare, sanitation, transportation, environmental sustainability, renewable energy, and digital inclusion.
- Support for community-based innovation and indigenous problem-solving approaches through partnerships between universities, local industries, traditional knowledge systems, and grassroots innovators.
- Integration of indigenous knowledge systems into entrepreneurship, agriculture, healthcare, architecture, environmental studies, and creative industries curricula where academically appropriate.
- Strengthening collaboration between universities, technical institutions, innovation hubs, and informal sector associations to improve workforce mobility and national productivity.
- Development of flexible certification pathways that support transition from informal learning to formal qualifications without undermining academic standards.

Objective 13: Promote Distributed, Flexible, and Technology-Enabled Learning Systems for Inclusive Graduate Development

The NUS shall expand access, flexibility, affordability, and lifelong learning opportunities through distributed and technology-enabled educational models.

This objective shall include:

- Promotion of multi-modal curriculum delivery systems combining face-to-face, blended, online, asynchronous, and self-paced learning approaches.
- Development of flexible learning structures that accommodate working learners, remote learners, lifelong learners, professionals, and underserved populations.
- Expansion of Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) frameworks as a strategic mechanism for widening access and improving system scalability.
- Strengthening the integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual laboratories, simulation systems, digital libraries, and AI-supported learning platforms across universities.
- Promotion of modular learning systems, micro-credentials, nano-certifications, and stackable qualifications that support continuous reskilling and workforce adaptability.
- Encouragement of digitally autonomous learning systems for low-connectivity environments through offline learning resources, preloaded devices, broadcast learning systems, Open Educational Resources (OER), and community-based digital learning centres.



- Support for the development of institutional instructional design units to strengthen digital course development, online pedagogy, multimedia content creation, and curriculum digitisation.
- Promotion of virtual internships, remote collaboration projects, digital mentoring systems, and online industry engagement platforms.
- Expansion of international virtual exchange programmes, collaborative online learning, and cross-border digital classrooms.
- Encouragement of regional specialisation models in which institutions develop niche strengths aligned with local economic priorities and comparative advantages.
- Development of quality assurance benchmarks for digital learning delivery, online assessment systems, virtual supervision, and flexible learning pathways.
- Support for inclusive and accessible curriculum design guided by universal design principles and equitable access standards.
- Institutional specialisation and distributed learning models shall be aligned with regional economic clusters and comparative advantages, including agribusiness zones, energy corridors, technology ecosystems, creative industry hubs, mining regions, and manufacturing clusters.

By 2030, the NUS shall progressively increase measurable innovation outputs, including graduate employability rates, start-up creation, patent filings, licensed technologies, industry-funded research, international certifications, enterprise incubation outcomes, and commercially applied research outputs. These indicators shall form part of institutional performance evaluation and national higher education competitiveness assessments.

5.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (2026–2030)

The successful implementation of this strategic pillar will require coordinated institutional reform, sustainable financing, regulatory clarity, strong industry participation, digital infrastructure expansion, and measurable accountability systems. The implementation approach for this section is therefore designed as a system-wide reform programme involving the NUC, FME, universities, industry, professional associations, development partners, research institutions, innovation ecosystems, and relevant government agencies.

Implementation shall be guided by the principles of institutional flexibility, measurable outcomes, stakeholder participation, regional relevance, digital transformation, inclusivity, and continuous quality assurance.



5.5.1 National Coordination and Governance Structure

A. National Graduate Competitiveness and Innovation Council (NGCIC)

The Federal Government, through the NUC and the FME, shall establish a National Graduate Competitiveness and Innovation Council to coordinate implementation of this strategic pillar.

The Council shall serve as the national coordination platform for graduate employability, skills development, entrepreneurship education, innovation ecosystems, industry partnerships, and workforce alignment.

Membership shall include representatives from:

- National Universities Commission
- Federal Ministry of Education
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment
- Industrial Training Fund (ITF)
- TETFund
- National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)
- Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)
- Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN)
- Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA)
- Professional bodies
- Technology and innovation firms
- Development partners
- Selected Vice-Chancellors
- Student and alumni representatives
- Diaspora experts and innovation stakeholders

The Council shall be responsible for:

- National policy coordination
- Skills forecasting and labour market alignment
- Monitoring graduate employability outcomes
- Coordination of industry partnerships
- Oversight of WIL implementation
- Graduate competitiveness benchmarking
- Entrepreneurship ecosystem development
- Periodic policy review and advisory services

The Council shall publish a biennial National Graduate Competitiveness Report beginning from 2027.



B. Strengthening Existing NUC Structures

Rather than creating unnecessary overlapping bureaucracies, implementation shall primarily leverage and strengthen existing statutory divisions within the NUC.

The Curriculum Development and Planning Division shall coordinate:

- Curriculum alignment
- Graduate competency mapping
- Outcome-based education implementation
- Skills integration frameworks
- Curriculum review cycles

The Qualification and Verification Framework Division shall coordinate:

- Qualification benchmarking
- Micro-credential standards
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Stackable certification systems
- National qualification alignment
- Flexible learning pathways

The Open Distance and e-Learning Division shall coordinate:

- Digital learning standards
- LMS benchmarks
- ODeL integration
- Online quality assurance
- Flexible learning systems

The Research, Innovation and Information Technology units shall coordinate:

- Innovation ecosystem development
- Graduate tracking systems
- digital monitoring platforms
- labour market analytics
- institutional innovation benchmarking

5.5.2 Graduate Outcome and Competency Framework Implementation

A. National Graduate Competency Framework (NGCF)

By 2027, the NUC shall develop and operationalise a National Graduate Competency Framework covering all undergraduate programmes.

The framework shall define measurable national graduate attributes including:

- Technical competence
- Communication skills
- Digital literacy
- Artificial intelligence awareness



- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Leadership
- Entrepreneurship
- Ethical reasoning
- Civic responsibility
- Teamwork
- Global citizenship
- Sustainability awareness
- Innovation capability

Universities shall be required to map all academic programmes to these competencies and demonstrate alignment during accreditation exercises.

Sector-specific competency maps shall also be developed for:

- STEM disciplines
- Health sciences
- Agriculture
- Humanities
- Education
- Creative industries
- Business and management
- Environmental sciences

B. Graduate Outcome-Based Education System

All universities shall progressively adopt Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Competency-Based Education (CBE) models beginning from the 2026/2027 academic session.

Implementation shall include:

- Curriculum redesign workshops
- Programme outcome mapping
- competency-based assessment models
- Capstone project integration
- Industry-based evaluation systems
- Practical demonstration assessments
- Digital portfolio systems

At least 40% of programme assessment shall progressively shift toward continuous competency-demonstrating evaluation methods including:

- Projects
- Simulations



- Fieldwork
- Case studies
- Design challenges
- Innovation assignments
- Industry-supervised activities

5.5.3 Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and Industry Engagement Framework

A. National Work-Integrated Learning Framework

The NUC, in partnership with ITF and industry stakeholders, shall establish a National Work-Integrated Learning Framework applicable across the NUS.

The framework shall transform SIWES into a modern, structured, digitally monitored, competency-based system.

Key features shall include:

- Credit-bearing industrial attachment
- Structured workplace learning outcomes
- Employer-based assessment
- Standardised supervision procedures
- Digital reporting systems
- Industry mentor engagement
- Competency tracking mechanisms

WIL shall progressively extend beyond traditional professional disciplines to include humanities, social sciences, creative industries, education, management sciences, and emerging interdisciplinary programmes.

B. National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform (NIAP)

The NUC shall establish the National Internship and Apprenticeship Platform as a national digital infrastructure for internship coordination and graduate placement support.

The platform shall:

- Match students with placement organisations
- Maintain national employer databases
- Track internship participation
- Monitor supervision activities
- Collect employer feedback
- Support placement analytics
- Facilitate virtual internships
- Integrate local and international opportunities



The platform shall also expand internship opportunities to include SMEs, Start-ups, Farms, Creative enterprises, Innovation hubs, NGOs, Technology firms, Informal sector enterprises, and Research institutes

Universities shall establish institutional WIL and Internship Coordination Units connected to NIAP.

C. Industry Advisory and Triple Helix Structures

Every university shall establish Institutional Industry Advisory Councils for major programme clusters.

The Councils shall include:

- Employers
- Industry practitioners
- Alumni
- Professional associations
- Innovation ecosystem actors
- Community development stakeholders

The Councils shall support:

- Curriculum review
- Skills forecasting
- Internship development
- Industry projects
- Collaborative research
- Start-up mentorship
- Technology transfer

The Blueprint shall also strengthen the Triple Helix model involving universities, industry, and government through formal collaborative frameworks and co-funded initiatives.

5.5.4 Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Enterprise Development

A. University Innovation and Enterprise Ecosystems

All universities shall establish or strengthen:

- Innovation hubs
- Start-up incubators
- Technology incubation parks
- Fabrication laboratories
- Maker spaces
- Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs)
- Intellectual Property (IP) Management Units



These structures shall support:

- Student start-ups
- Prototype development
- Enterprise incubation
- Patent support
- Innovation commercialisation
- Venture mentorship
- Community innovation projects

B. National University Innovation Support Programme

The Federal Government, through NUC, TETFund, Bank of Industry, and development partners, shall establish a National University Innovation Support Programme.

The programme shall provide:

- Seed grants
- Innovation challenge funds
- Start-up support financing
- commercialisation grants
- student enterprise competitions
- venture acceleration support

Priority sectors shall include:

- Agriculture
- Renewable energy
- Health innovation
- Climate technology
- Artificial intelligence
- Digital economy
- Manufacturing
- Creative industries
- Educational technology

C. Entrepreneurship Curriculum Reform

Entrepreneurship education shall move from theoretical instruction toward practical enterprise development.

Implementation shall include:

- Project-based entrepreneurship learning
- Industry mentorship
- Start-up incubation
- Enterprise simulations



- Social entrepreneurship models
- Community innovation projects
- Financial literacy training
- Venture management education

All programmes shall integrate entrepreneurship and innovation components relevant to their disciplines.

5.5.5 Digital Transformation and Flexible Learning Systems

A. Multi-Modal Learning Framework

Universities shall redesign curricula to support face-to-face learning, blended learning, online learning, asynchronous delivery, self-paced learning and lifelong learning pathways.

The NUC Open Distance and e-Learning Division shall issue national benchmarks for digital course delivery and LMS implementation.

B. Instructional Design and Digital Course Development

Every university shall establish an Instructional Design and Digital Learning Unit responsible for:

- Online course development
- Multimedia learning design
- Virtual laboratory systems
- Digital assessment support
- Faculty digital pedagogy support
- Open Educational Resource (OER) development

Academic staff shall receive continuous training in:

- Digital pedagogy
- AI-assisted teaching
- Virtual supervision
- Online assessment
- instructional design
- digital content development

C. Distributed and Flexible Learning Infrastructure

The Blueprint supports the development of distributed learning systems using:

- Community learning centres
- Public libraries
- innovation hubs
- co-working spaces
- digital access centres
- broadcast learning systems
- offline digital learning tools



This approach is intended to expand access while reducing pressure on physical infrastructure.

5.5.6 Graduate Tracking, Labour Market Intelligence, and Monitoring Systems

A. National Graduate Tracking System (NGTS)

The NUC shall establish a National Graduate Tracking System beginning from 2027.

The system shall collect data on:

- Employment outcomes
- Entrepreneurship activities
- Salary trends

Graduate destination surveys shall be conducted at 6 months, 12 months and 24 months after graduation. The data shall inform accreditation, funding decisions, curriculum review, manpower planning, institutional ranking and labour market policy

B. Labour Market Observatory System

The NUC shall institutionalise periodic Labour Market Observatory Surveys in partnership with:

- National Bureau of Statistics
- Postgraduate progression
- Professional certifications
- International mobility
- Sector distribution
- Ministry of Labour
- Industry groups
- private sector organisations
- development agencies

The surveys shall guide programme expansion, enrolment planning, skills forecasting, curriculum redesign and national manpower development

5.5.7 Postgraduate Reform and Research Competitiveness

The NUC shall undertake comprehensive postgraduate curriculum reform.

Implementation shall include:

- Development of postgraduate CCMAS guidelines
- Standardisation of postgraduate learning outcomes
- Grant writing integration
- IP and commercialisation training
- Advanced research methods
- interdisciplinary research systems
- doctoral supervision reforms
- automated postgraduate tracking systems



Universities shall also strengthen research ethics systems, industry-linked postgraduate research, collaborative doctoral programmes, and international research partnerships

5.5.8 Funding and Sustainability Framework

Implementation shall be supported through:

- Federal Government funding
- TETFund intervention support
- Public-private partnerships
- Industry contributions
- Donor partnerships
- International development support
- Competitive innovation grants

The NUC shall also coordinate donor-funded interventions to ensure alignment with Blueprint priorities.

Industry participation shall be encouraged through tax incentives, research rebates, innovation partnership schemes and internship support programmes

5.5.9 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

Implementation progress shall be monitored using measurable indicators including:

- Graduate employability rates
- WIL participation rates
- Start-up creation data
- Employer satisfaction indices
- Digital skills certification rates
- Innovation outputs
- Patent registrations
- Graduate global mobility indicators
- Research commercialisation outcomes
- Industry partnership levels

The NUC shall publish:

- Annual Graduate Competitiveness Reports
- Biennial Innovation and Skills Development Reviews
- National Employability Dashboard updates

Universities shall submit annual institutional performance reports linked to this strategic pillar.

5.5.10 Implementation Timeline

Short-Term Actions (2026–2027)

- Establish national coordination structures
- Develop NGCF and WIL frameworks
- Launch NIAP and NGTS



- Begin curriculum redesign
- Develop sector competency maps
- Strengthen digital learning systems
- Establish institutional advisory councils

Medium-Term Actions (2028–2029)

- Full rollout of competency-based curricula
- Expansion of WIL across disciplines
- Operationalisation of innovation ecosystems
- National labour market observatory deployment
- Postgraduate curriculum reform implementation

Long-Term Actions (2030)

- Full institutionalisation of graduate outcome systems
- Measurable employability improvements
- Increased graduate innovation outputs
- Stronger international competitiveness indicators
- System-wide integration of flexible and digital learning pathways

5.6 CONCLUSION

Blueprint 2.0 recognises that the future strength of the NUS will be determined not only by the number of graduates produced, but by the quality of their knowledge, the relevance of their skills, the strength of their character, and their capacity to solve genuine economic and societal problems. The reforms proposed in this section therefore seek to reposition Nigerian universities as institutions that produce competent graduates, generate innovation, support enterprise development, strengthen national productivity, and contribute meaningfully to global knowledge systems. The section advances a comprehensive transformation agenda that connects curriculum reform, graduate employability, entrepreneurship development, digital transformation, industry collaboration, flexible learning pathways, postgraduate quality, and innovation ecosystems into a coherent national framework.

It acknowledges that universities can no longer operate within isolated academic silos disconnected from labour market realities, technological change, and national development priorities. Instead, universities must become dynamic centres of learning, research, production, problem-solving, and talent development.

The reforms outlined in this Blueprint are designed to ensure that every Nigerian graduate acquires not only disciplinary knowledge, but also practical competence, digital capability, entrepreneurial orientation, ethical values, communication skills, critical thinking ability, and lifelong learning capacity.



Through strengthened Work-Integrated Learning systems, industry co-designed curricula, innovation hubs, flexible learning structures, competency-based education, and graduate tracking systems, the NUS will become more responsive to the realities of the modern economy.

The Blueprint also recognises the importance of balancing national coordination with institutional flexibility. While the NUC will continue to provide regulatory leadership, quality assurance, curriculum standards, and strategic direction, universities will be encouraged to innovate, respond to regional priorities, develop specialised strengths, and build partnerships that reflect their unique mandates and comparative advantages.

Particular attention is given to emerging national priorities such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, agriculture, health innovation, digital economy development, manufacturing, climate resilience, and creative industries. The reforms seek to ensure that universities contribute directly to national transformation by producing graduates and research outputs capable of supporting these sectors.

The section further acknowledges that sustainable reform requires strong implementation systems, adequate funding, faculty development, stakeholder collaboration, digital infrastructure, and effective monitoring mechanisms.

For this reason, the Blueprint proposes strengthened institutional coordination, labour market observatories, curriculum review systems, postgraduate reforms, innovation financing structures, and national accountability frameworks that will enable reforms to move beyond policy aspiration into measurable outcomes.

By 2030, the successful implementation of this agenda is expected to produce a NUS that is more innovative, more flexible, more digitally enabled, more globally competitive, and more closely aligned with national development goals. Nigerian graduates should be able to compete confidently within local, regional, and international labour markets, while also possessing the capacity to create enterprises, drive technological advancement, strengthen communities, and contribute to sustainable national growth.

Ultimately, this section of Blueprint 2.0 presents higher education not simply as a pathway to certification, but as a strategic national investment in human capital, economic transformation, innovation capacity, and long-term national development. The future competitiveness of Nigeria will depend significantly on the ability of its universities to produce graduates who are knowledgeable, skilled, adaptable, entrepreneurial, and capable of leading the country through an increasingly complex and technology-driven global environment





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6.0

IMPROVING RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY, EFFICIENCY, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

Overarching Goal

To strengthen the NUS by the end of the plan period, significantly enhancing research productivity and the effectiveness of postgraduate education through expanded faculty capacity, improved supervision quality, institutionalisation of quality assurance, performance-based systems, and an innovation-oriented research culture.



6.1 INTRODUCTION

Globally, universities play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of nations through their tripartite mandate of teaching, research, and community engagement. Beyond producing human capital as one of the most profound contributions to socio-economic development, research, development, and innovation (RD&I) functions as key drivers of economic growth for all countries. The impact of RD&I increases the volume of improved goods and services, transportation, housing, GDP growth, etc. The resultant effect fuels further public investment in academic R&D, which in turn causes "spillover effects" that attract new firms and stimulate existing businesses to innovate and expand.

In the United States of America, the significant federal investment in the past few decades on fundamental and applied research gave the world the internet and its numerous applications, improved military weaponry, state-of-the-art municipal infrastructure, medicines, hospital services, etc. One of the key success factors for the commercialisation of research results was the USA Patent and Trademark Law Amendments Act of 1980. This Patent Law empowered universities, small businesses, and national laboratories to patent and license inventions derived from government-funded research. This created an explosion of start-ups and the commercialisation of RD&I results.

China, in the past few decades, has maintained a massive and sustained, high-volume investment in university education and research that has resulted in huge numbers of global goods and services. China's peer-reviewed research publication volumes are now ranked more than twice those of the United States. South Korea and Japan are aggressively funding research in universities to surpass other leading nations. Japan maintains its manufacturing edge through deep university-industry linkages that supply the specialised knowledge and high-skilled talent essential for complex, high-quality production.

South Africa's major strides in research, development, and innovation over the past decades were driven by the 2022–2032 Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Plan. Through the coordinated interventions by the University of Cape Town (UCT), the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), and the National Innovation Fund (NIF), South Africa's innovation system has been closing the "valley of death", the high-risk gap between early-stage research and market-ready innovation. While TIA moves innovations from research to market by providing proof-of-concept funding, prototype development support, access to specialised facilities, and commercialisation advisory services, the National Innovation Fund provides follow-on funding that helps innovations move from prototype to market-entry stage. This South African framework has resulted in increased patenting, the rise of start-ups, and an innovation ecosystem that translates scientific excellence into economic and societal impact.



Nigeria's current socio-economic situation requires universities to lead in knowledge production, research, and innovation that directly address national priorities such as energy, agriculture, health, ICT, and climate resilience. Unfortunately, the NUS faces persistent challenges in faculty capacity, research productivity, and effective postgraduate education, preventing it from playing the required role in economic development and national transformation.

This Blueprint 2.0, for the period 2026 – 2030, provides a strategic framework for repositioning the NUS to meet global standards while addressing local development priorities. It identifies research productivity and postgraduate education as critical levers for institutional renewal, economic competitiveness, and societal impact. By strengthening faculty qualifications, enhancing supervision quality, modernising infrastructure, and embedding data-driven planning, the Blueprint 2.0 seeks to ensure that the Nigerian universities produce world-class research outputs and highly skilled graduates.

The document outlines a clear strategic goal supported by measurable objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It emphasises collaboration among universities, regulatory agencies, funding bodies, and industry partners to create a coherent system that fosters innovation, commercialisation, and internationalisation. Ultimately, Blueprint 2.0 aims to transform postgraduate education into a driver of national development, while positioning Nigerian universities as globally competitive centres of knowledge creation.

This chapter of Blueprint 2.0 is dedicated to issues related to enhancing research productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of postgraduate education, and will seek to answer the following questions:

- a. How can research in the Nigerian University system be improved to enhance productivity and relevance to national development?
- b. How do we make postgraduate education more efficient and effective?

6.2 JUSTIFICATION

Research is at the root of innovation, and a robust and productive research system will stand the nation in good stead in the drive towards socio-economic development. In today's knowledge economy, university research must play a critical role in Nigeria's National innovation system, both in the formulation of National Science Technology and Innovation (STI) regimes and policies, and in the intellectual contributions to the implementation of a solid national innovation scheme.



Research endeavours focused on relevance to industrial applications and the resolution of real-life challenges will have a more meaningful on economic growth, poverty alleviation, and overall national economic development, thereby addressing longstanding concerns about the relevance of universities to nation building. A university research system underpinned by best practices in research governance and ethics, particularly if substantially supported by capacity building in “grantsmanship” skills, will increase the ability of the universities and their researchers to attract funding, especially from external sources.

A robust, efficient, and effective system of postgraduate education and training across the NUS will guarantee a steady stream of well-trained and competent human capital to improve the current dearth of qualified academic staff occasioned by the less-than-optimal number of academic staff with PhD degrees and its implications for academic programme quality.

A well-coordinated, adequately funded national research system coupled with an efficient postgraduate system of education will together culminate in the production of good quality research outputs, especially patents and publications in high-impact journals. This will cause enhanced visibility of Nigerian universities and scholars, increasing the likelihood of our universities being better ranked globally.

6.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Nigeria’s research output remains disproportionately low relative to the size of its university system, contributing less than 1% of global publications despite having 307 universities as of 2025. This underperformance is compounded by the absence of a coordinated national research agenda or clearly defined priority clusters, leaving efforts fragmented and limiting the overall impact of research activities on national development.

Postgraduate programmes across many institutions in the country are characterised by inefficiencies, including lengthy timelines, poor supervision, outdated research methods, and inadequate laboratory facilities. The innovation ecosystem is also weak, with limited connections between research, industry, patents, and start-ups, alongside fragile adherence to research ethics. These challenges are further exacerbated by insufficient funding for research infrastructure and the lack of a national postgraduate education framework, both of which hinder the ability of universities to deliver high-quality, impactful research and innovation.



6.3.1 Successes and Achievements of Blueprint I:

The analysis of the nine strategic objectives and recommendations of NUC Blueprint I for the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education (2019-2023) revealed the following successes and achievements:

Research Governance

As at end of 2025, a good number of Nigerian universities have established Research Directorates as recommended by NUC in Blueprint I. Many universities have gone as far as adopting other institutional approaches to these by appointing a Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Research and Innovation. The NUC's efforts are further supported by TETFund's funding of some Centres of Excellence.

Despite this achievement, grant acquisition, effective research administration, research results, and patents are still insufficient to achieve the required socio-economic impact on Nigeria's development.

Research Grant Capacity Utilisation

As noted in Chapter 9, devoted to sustainable funding, prior to the establishment of the National Research Fund (NRF) under TETFund, research was being largely funded by a number of external funding agencies including, among several others:

- WHO (The World Health Organisation)
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation)
- NIH (National Institute of Health), USA
- World Bank
- African Development Bank

As noted in Chapter 9, the World Bank established 20 African Centres of Excellence (ACEs) with their research focus and the host universities as presented in Table 9.2. Through the ACE Project, the 20 ACEs created have collectively trained over 16,000 students in postgraduate programmes and short courses, with women representing about 35% of this number. They contributed to over 2,000 peer-reviewed publications, secured competitive research grants, and built modern laboratories that meet global standards.

The awareness and utilisation of research grants have improved in many Nigerian universities due to the support by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through progressive increase in funding for the National Research Fund (NRF) managed by TETFund. As shown in Table 13.2 in Chapter 13, a total N27.239 billion was committed to support the 1,020 grants awarded from 2012 to 2024.



It is pertinent to note that the above massive grants under NRF have been geared mainly towards the conduct of multidisciplinary research with considerable results in the various thematic areas under the three research categories: Science, Engineering, Technology and Innovation (SETI); Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS); and Cross-Cutting (CC). Several commercialisable research results currently exist in the system that require the operation of a National Innovation Fund by government, particularly TETFund, to take these results from the laboratory to the market/end-users.

Worthy of note in respect of innovation fund, is the proposed National Research Council (NRC) under the FGN-ASUU Agreement, as reported in Chapter 4. NRC is to be funded with not less than 1% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Council is expected to strengthen innovation, fund research, and support research universities and centres of excellence across the country. It is hoped that proper mechanism for the implementation of this noble idea will be put in place.

University-Industry Linkages

From Blueprint I, some minimal improvement has been achieved for this Strategic Objective. As at 2025, NUC has been consistent in supporting universities towards enhancing industry and public sector partnerships. The Commission has created a Department for Skills and Entrepreneurship that is targeting this objective, amongst others. NUC has also embedded mandatory industry and public sector partnerships for the establishment of Centres of Excellence. However, the efforts so far are grossly inadequate; the collaboration between universities and industry in Nigeria is still very weak, limiting the relevance of research outcomes to national development and value addition to goods and services.

Postgraduate Education

Postgraduate education plays a pivotal role in advancing applied research by equipping scholars with specialised skills to generate innovative solutions to real-world challenges. Through targeted research output, postgraduate programmes contribute directly to socio-economic development by driving industrial growth, informing public policy, and fostering sustainable national progress. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the completion times for postgraduate degrees remain protracted (3–5 years for Master's, 6–9 years for PhD), leading to low doctoral research output and an insufficient number of qualified academic staff.

Our postgraduate education system is expected to be interrogated through the consideration of the following critical features:

- I. Clear Purpose and Academic Orientation
- ii. Rigorous Admission and Selection Process
- iii. Strong Research Ecosystem



- iv. High-Quality Supervision and Mentorship
- v. Structured Curriculum and Training
- vi. Research Output and Publication Culture
- vii. Funding and Financial Support
- viii. Quality Assurance and Governance
- ix. Internationalization and Collaboration
- x. Time-to-Degree Efficiency and Completion Culture
- xi. Digital and Physical Infrastructure
- xii. Student Support and Wellbeing
- xiii. Linkages with Industry and Society
- xiv. Ethical Standards and Academic Integrity
- xv. Outcome-Based Performance Metrics

For the period 2026 -2030, Blueprint 2.0 seeks to deliver a well-coordinated national research ecosystem aligned to national priorities (health, agriculture, security, digital economy), a highly productive postgraduate training system with rigorous supervision standards, modern methods, and adequate funding, research commercialisation pipelines (IP management, incubators, innovation hubs), and an annual research performance reporting system.

6.4 SWOT ANALYSIS

Table 6.1 shows the SWOT analysis of the postgraduate education and research ecosystem in Nigeria as at 2025.

Table 6.1: SWOT Analysis of the Postgraduate Education and Research Ecosystem.

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Good number of Professors in all disciplines across the system. ▪ Availability of TETFund National Research Fund and other International Donor Agencies. ▪ Increased Government commitment to innovation.	▪ Weak research governance structures in NUS. ▪ Low research capacity at individual and institutional levels. ▪ Poor research grant -winning ability. ▪ Low postgraduate outputs. ▪ Unduly protracted postgraduate programmes. ▪ Weak University -Industry linkages.



Opportunities	Threats
▪ Establishment of Research Administration Directorates in universities to enhance research governance. ▪ The proposed NUC Research Excellence Framework. ▪ Formation of “Consortia” of universities to collaboratively optimise resources for the acceleration of PhD graduation rates in the NUS. ▪ Capacity building on Grantsmanship and Intellectual property (IP) and technology transfer. ▪ Strengthened university industry partnerships.	▪ Academic ambivalence ▪ Brain-drain of young Academics ▪ Poor research ethics ▪ Infrastructural deficits, especially electricity and Internet Access. ▪ Global competitiveness pressures.

6.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

From the strategic goal to strengthen the NUS by improving research productivity and postgraduate education quality, taking into consideration the achievements of Blueprint I and the SWOT analysis of the postgraduate research eco-space, seven strategic objectives were developed as follows:

Strategic Objective 1: Enhancing Research and Innovation Skills of Supervisors and Postgraduate Students

The NUS shall enhance the research and innovation capacity of both supervisors and postgraduate students by institutionalising high-quality mentorship, curriculum reform, and structured opportunities for scholarly engagement.

Mainstreaming Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Tools in Research and Postgraduate Training

The use of AI across all areas of human endeavours is greatly improving productivity and efficiency; hence, it has become crucial that adequate training on the use of AI tools for research, innovation and development be instituted in the NUS, with NUC endorsing a policy on the responsible use of AI in Education.

Supervisors' Capacity Building:

- Provide continuous professional development programmes for supervisors to strengthen their skills in research design, publication, mentorship, accountability, innovation management, and the use of AI for teaching and research.



- Encourage collaborative research groups and peer learning networks where postgraduate students share ideas and critique each other's work.

Incentivise Quality Research Output by:

- Linking promotions and funding to impactful publications, patents, and innovations; and
- Rewarding problem-solving research results that are aligned with Nigeria's development goals on energy, food security, health, digital economy, among others

Postgraduate Students Training:

- Provide training for postgraduate students and early career academics in research methodology, innovation management, entrepreneurship, and transferable skills (teaching, leadership, and communication).
- Equip students with skills to access, evaluate, and use scholarly databases, online journals, open-source repositories, and AI tools for research effectively.
- Provide capacity-building workshops to develop competencies in grantsmanship, academic writing and publishing, ethics and integrity, and responsible use of plagiarism software.
- Establish sponsored PhD programmes and post-doctoral research in areas of need as is practised in advanced countries, to attract brilliant students who will stay and do research without worrying about finances for fees and living expenses.
- Increase opportunities for Graduate Teaching and Graduate Research Assistantships under faculty supervision. These are reliable sources for recruiting capable PhD students.

Strategic Objective 2: Increasing Postgraduate Enrolment and Graduation Rate

Postgraduate Enrolment

Universities, especially the older ones, should embark on a massive expansion of their postgraduate programmes to enable them to produce the quantum of PhD graduates required to teach and supervise research in the various institutions. NUC has mandated first-generation universities to increase postgraduate enrolments to achieve a 60:40 postgraduate-to-undergraduate ratio.

Strengthen Establishment of Post-Doctoral positions: Strengthen existing and establish new relevant post-doctoral positions in Nigerian universities to strengthen research capacity, foster innovation, and retain highly skilled scholars within the academic system. Post-doctoral positions create a structured pathway for mentoring future academics for advanced knowledge production.



University Consortia: Expand and institutionalise collaborative postgraduate programmes across Nigerian universities by leveraging comparative advantages and pooling resources through research clusters and Centres of Excellence. This objective seeks to accelerate PhD completion rates, enhance research outputs, and build critical mass for quality postgraduate training. Under the leadership of NUC, university consortia will be promoted to jointly supervise postgraduate students, run specialised programmes, and award joint or split-site degrees within reasonable timeframes, thereby improving efficiency, fostering innovation, and generating sustainable income for participating institutions.

Split-Site PhD Programmes: Scale up cost-effective partnerships with foreign universities to expose Nigerian academics to global best practices. Efforts should be stepped up to facilitate split-site PhD arrangements between Nigerian universities and their foreign counterparts as a cost-effective means of fast-tracking the completion of PhD studies while ensuring the exposure of young academics to best practices abroad.

Diaspora Adjunct Supervisor Scheme: Establish a formal framework for Nigerian academics in the diaspora to co-supervise PhD students remotely, leveraging technology. This would not only reduce supervision burdens but also expose students and local supervisors to international best practices and research networks. This can facilitate fruitful partnerships with foreign universities and the split-site PhD programmes.

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening Research Governance

Research Governance and Administration: All universities shall establish and strengthen research administration directorates with clear policies on research management, intellectual property, and technology transfer. Universities shall establish robust research governance systems ensuring that research funds are managed in accordance with international best practices.

The NUC shall establish minimum standards and guidelines on postgraduate supervision incorporating clear performance indicators, milestones, and deliverables. NUC to monitor and evaluate progress according to the stipulated key performance indicators.

Digital Infrastructure for Research Excellence

The NUC shall enhance the NgREN network to ensure it is accessible, cost-effective, and capable of supporting the research and innovation activities of all universities across the NUS.



The NUC shall invest in a robust ICT platform, incorporating a regularly updated portal and dashboard, to monitor and evaluate progress on postgraduate research supervision against stipulated key performance indicators. The ICT platform shall incorporate functionalities supporting research collaboration, data sharing, and the publication of research findings generated within the NUS.

Knowledge Translation Mechanisms (IPs and Innovation Hubs):

The transformation of academic research into socio-economic value relies on sophisticated knowledge translation mechanisms, primarily intellectual property (IP) management and the creation of spin-off companies. Spin-offs, entities created to commercialise specific academic knowledge or technology, are recognised globally as a critical pathway for driving science- and technology-based economies. They are uniquely effective for commercialising inventions characterised by high uncertainty and for technologies based on tacit knowledge, where continued inventor involvement is crucial for subsequent development.

Since banks do not sponsor the commercialisation of inventions or the creation of spin-off companies, it is essential for the Nigerian Government to properly establish the proposed National Research Council (NRC) under the FGN-ASUU Agreement to undertake the proof-of-concept and commercialisation of research outputs that address the challenges of enterprises in the different sectors of the economy.

Strategic Objective 4: Establishment of Research Excellence Assessment Framework

The NUC shall establish a Research Excellence Assessment Framework designed to transform research quality, relevance, impact, and sustainability across the NUS. The framework shall provide a structured mechanism for assessing research performance, allocating competitive funding, strengthening accountability, and aligning university research with Nigeria's socio-economic development priorities.

The Assessment Framework shall build on existing regulatory instruments, including NUC standards and TETFund interventions, while introducing a coherent national approach to research assessment, benchmarking, and impact evaluation. Central to this framework shall be the National University Research Productivity Index (NURPI) - an annual evidence-based ranking of universities by research output, including publications, patents, citations, postgraduate completions, and research income, to promote healthy competition, celebrate excellence, and inform government investment decisions.

This Assessment Framework shall incorporate periodic accreditation exercise for postgraduate and research programmes, modelled on the structured visitation process that applies to undergraduate programmes.



Strategic Objective 5: Formalising University–Industry Collaboration

The Federal Government shall mandate diverse organisations, including the military, the organised private sector, and public sector, such as the NITDA, National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP) and PTDF, to domicile research projects within Nigerian universities. This will strengthen postgraduate programmes and ensure that research is demand-driven and directly relevant to national socio-economic challenges. This should be supported by tax incentives for private sector organisations. Incentivise National Research Institutes and University Linkages

The Federal Government shall incentivise collaboration programmes between National Research Institutes and universities, shifting focus from research output to research impact and utilisation. These research institutes include the following:

- National Research Institute for Chemical Technology
- Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO)
- National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI)
- Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR)
- National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT)
- Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR&T)
- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI)
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER)
- Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC)

Strategic Objective 6: Establishing a National Innovation Award Scheme

Recognise and reward impactful research that addresses national challenges. Government should establish a National Innovation Award Scheme to encourage the application of research findings in the country to the production of goods and services and the solution of national problems. An example is the science and literature prizes of the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) company.

Strategic Objective 7: Increasing Global Centres of Excellence

Establish, through competitive applications, more Centres of Excellence in priority areas (Artificial Intelligence, Renewable Energy, Biotechnology, Climate Change, Digital Economy) to complement the success achieved from establishment of the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACEs) and Sustainable Procurement Environmental and Social Standards (SPESSE) Centres of Excellence.

Implementation Roadmap

A recommended high-level implementation plan is presented in Table 6.2.



Table 6.2: Five-Year Implementation Roadmap

S/No.	Activity	Key Outputs	Timeline
Phase 1: Foundation and Baseline (Year 1)	· Establish a national postgraduate research framework. · Conduct baseline assessment of postgraduate programmes (completion rates, supervision load). · Deploy digital research management systems. · Launch Supervisor Training programmes. · Develop a mandatory training package for students on grantsmanship, academic writing and publishing, ethics/integrity, responsible use of AI, innovation, entrepreneurship and transferable skills (teaching, leadership and communication).	Baseline report, approved framework, digital tracking operational	2026- 2027
Phase 2: System Strengthening (Year 2)	· Introduce performance-based funding mechanisms. · Upgrade priority research infrastructure · Enforce milestone-based postgraduate progression. · Mid-term evaluation and course correction · Expand ethics and integrity systems.	Reduced delays, improved supervision metrics	2027
Phase 3: Expansion and Partnerships (Year 3)	· Align postgraduate research with national priority areas. · Introduce special topics seminar and co-supervision of research	Increased funded projects, partnership agreements	2027 - 2028



Phase 4: Consolidation and Quality Enhancement (Year 4)	· Deepen quality assurance and benchmarking. · Strengthen commercialisation and policy translation through the establishment of a National Innovation Fund. · Enhance postgraduate employability programmes.	Improved accreditation outcomes and higher-impact research.	2028 - 2029
Phase 5: Sustainability and Impact (Year 5)	· Conduct end-term evaluation. · Institutionalise best practices. · Review and update national postgraduate strategy.		2029 - 2030

6.6 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The recommended Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with the estimated Baseline as at 2025, the target for 2030, and the responsible institutions are listed in Table 6.3. The information in Table 6.3 will be useful for monitoring and tracking the progress of Blueprint 2.0.

Table 6.3: Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

Strategic Objective	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Baseline (2025)	Target (2030)	Responsible Institutions
1. Faculty Development and Capacity Building	% of faculty with PhD qualifications	~45%		NUC, Universities, TETFund
	% of staff in annual professional development	<30%	≥80%	NUC, University HR Units
	Increase in postgraduate supervision capacity	Limited, uneven	50%	Universities, NUC
2. Research Productivity and Quality Enhancement	Avg. publications per faculty per year	1–2	≥4	Universities, NUC, TETFund
	Growth in externally funded projects	Low (<15%)	30%	TETFund, Research Councils
	Citation impact factor	Below global average	20%	Universities, NUC



3. Postgraduate Supervision and Training Excellence	Completion rates	~60%	≥85%	Universities, NUC
	Adoption of supervision guidelines	Fragmented	100%	NUC, Senate Committees
	Structured mentorship frameworks	Few pilots	All PG programmes by 2028	Universities
4. Infrastructure and Resource Optimisation	% of labs/libraries upgraded	~25%	≥60%	Universities, TETFund, Ministry of Education
	Access to digital databases	Partial	Universal	NUC, Universities
	Resource equity index	~0.5	≥0.8	NUC, Ministry of Education
5. Data-Driven Planning and Monitoring	National PG dashboard	None	Established by 2027	NUC, Ministry of Education
	Compliance with annual reporting	None	100%	Universities, NUC
	Evidence-based resource allocation	Ad hoc	≥70%	NUC, Ministry of Education
6. Internationalisation and Collaboration	Growth in international collaborations	Few (<5%)	50%	Universities, NUC, Foreign Affairs Ministry
	% of PG students in exchange/joint programmes	<10%	≥30%	Universities, NUC
	International accreditation of PG programmes	Few (<5%)	≥25%	NUC, Universities
7. Innovation, Commercialisation, and Societal Impact	Innovation hubs established	<10%	≥50% of universities	Universities, TETFund
	Research outputs translated into products/policy	Minimal	20%	Universities, Industry Partners
	PG theses addressing national priorities	<15%	≥40%	Universities, NUC

6.7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure accountability, track progress, measure outcomes, and support evidence-based decision-making in the implementation of the Blueprint 2.0, specialised monitoring and evaluation programmes will need to be instituted to closely assess performance against the parameters and KPIs set. Strict adherence to quality assurance mandates, system-wide, will be required in setting standards with respect to clear-cut policies for driving efficiency. A detailed framework with specified protocols and timelines will need to be rolled out for the close monitoring of the overall process.

The Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be strengthened through the establishment of a dedicated M&E unit within NUC to oversee research and postgraduate



education. This unit will track annual performance indicators, including grant success rates, postgraduate completion rates, patents and publications, as well as the extent of industry partnerships. A comprehensive mid-term review will be conducted in 2028 to assess progress, identify gaps, and recalibrate strategies to ensure alignment with national goals.

6.8 RISK MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

Effective implementation of this Blueprint 2.0 requires proactive identification and management of risks that may undermine outcomes. The risk management framework will ensure resilience, continuity, and adaptive response throughout the implementation lifecycle. The NUC, with the relevant stakeholders, should organise annual institutional risk reviews. Some key risks and mitigation strategies are listed in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Key Risks and Mitigation Strategies.

Risk Category	Description of Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures	Responsible Actors
Policy & Governance	Policy discontinuity due to leadership changes	Medium	High	Institutionalise framework through regulation and Senate/Council approvals	Ministry of Education, NUC
Funding	Delays or insufficiency in research funding	High	High	Diversify funding sources; performance-based disbursement	TETFund, Universities
Human Capacity	Inadequate number of qualified supervisors	Medium	High	Supervisor training, workload caps, joint supervision	Universities
Cultural Resistance	Resistance to performance-based monitoring	Medium	Medium	Change management, incentives, stakeholder engagement	University Management
Infrastructure	Poor maintenance of research facilities	Medium	Medium	Lifecycle maintenance plans, usage-based budgeting	Universities, TETFund
Digital Systems	Failure or underutilisation of digital platforms	Low–Medium	Medium	Capacity building, ICT support units	Universities
Ethics and Integrity	Research misconduct and plagiarism	Medium	High	Strong IRBs, sanctions, mandatory ethics training	Universities
External Shocks	Economic downturns, strikes, insecurity	Medium	High	Flexible timelines, blended supervision models	Government, Universities



6.9 CONCLUSION

Improving postgraduate education and research productivity is a national imperative for Nigeria's socio-economic transformation. This Blueprint 2.0 considers the progress achieved and the outstanding gaps from the Blueprint I plan and proffered a clear pathway for strengthening research productivity and enhancing the effectiveness of postgraduate education during the plan period 2026–2030. By expanding faculty capacity, modernising infrastructure, embedding data-driven planning, and fostering international collaboration, the NUS can reposition itself as a driver of innovation, national development, and global competitiveness.

The strategic objectives and key performance indicators outlined herein establish a measurable framework for accountability and progress. Successful implementation will depend on the collective commitment of universities, regulatory agencies, funding bodies, industry partners, and government stakeholders. A robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework underpins the Blueprint, ensuring transparency, continuous learning, and evidence-based decision-making. This implementation will strengthen Nigeria's research capacity, improve postgraduate outcomes, and enhance global competitiveness.

With sustained investment, rigorous monitoring, and a shared vision of excellence, Nigerian universities can transform postgraduate education into a cornerstone of national renewal and a catalyst for socio-economic. Sustained commitment, disciplined implementation, and data-informed decision-making will be critical to success. If effectively executed, Blueprint 2.0 will deliver faster postgraduate education completions, higher-quality research, stronger partnerships, and a new generation of globally competitive Nigerian researchers.

By 2030, the University System will operate within a coordinated national research ecosystem, fully aligned with national priorities in health, agriculture, security, manufacturing and the digital economy. Postgraduate training will be highly productive, supported by rigorous supervision standards, modern pedagogical methods, and adequate funding to ensure quality outcomes. Robust research commercialisation pipelines, including intellectual property management systems, incubators, and innovation hubs, will translate knowledge into societal and economic value. A national R&D impact index, complemented by annual research performance reporting, will drive accountability and contribute to a measurable increase in citation impact across the Nigerian University system.





National Universities Commission

Monograph Series

Volume 2 No. 2

Exemplary Practices of University Councils

Peter A. Okebukola

Executive Secretary: Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed



7.0

IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

Monograph Series

Volume 2 No. 2

Overarching Goal

By 2028, NUC aims to introduce enforceable minimum standards that will ensure at least 80% increase in efficiency in the University System, measured using clear governance performance indicators.

Peter A. Okebukola

Executive Secretary: Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed



7.1 INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a derivative of purposeful leadership, that ensures the development and pursuit of strategic goals. It serves as an incentive for stability in various organisations. It also drives innovation and development and facilitates the attainment of excellence. Generally, to meet the demands of contemporary challenges, the need for improvement in governance, especially at the systemic level cannot be over-emphasised. Universities generally need constant revision and repositioning of their governance structures and processes to improve their efficiency and relevance in the global knowledge-production arena. Repositioning of the NUS for a more focused and efficient actualisation of its core mandate would require remarkable improvement of the current governance structures, processes, and interrelationships within the system. In this segment of the Blueprint, following a previous situation analysis conducted, as well as a SWOT analysis, strategic goals and objectives are identified, and an activity plan with its proposed implementation covering the period 2026-2030. It is important to stress that the cross-cutting issues on governance in the NUS are ongoing.

7.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

A review of the governance structures and processes in the NUS reveals a disturbing situation, characterised by underperformance, inefficiency, conflicts, poor leadership, corruption, abuse of office, and profound parochialism. The current governance and management operations in the NUS are driven by outdated logic and mentalities that are incongruent with new realities, thereby leading to severe constraints. It is resource-intensive, driven by stand-alone competing unarticulated entities, many of which have become special-purpose vehicles. Given this situation, even with the best funding profile, resources are bound to be squandered, stolen, misapplied, or spent on misplaced priorities. In such situations, meddlesomeness, quarrelsomeness, pettiness, and crises dissipate energy and undermine a conducive environment where learning, research, and innovation can thrive. Furthermore, dictatorial tendencies of university leaders undermine academic freedom and allow arbitrariness to flourish. There are three circumstances that could be said to be responsible for good governance in a university context, namely:

- i. A Vice-Chancellor/chief executive with good character, who can provide academic leadership, and fully utilise the university committee system;
- ii. An assertive and well-functioning Senate; and
- iii. A Governing Council that is composed of experienced persons with integrity.

The above are, regrettably, lacking in most Nigerian universities. While the selection process for vice-chancellors has improved significantly from the past, recent developments indicate a worrying situation, especially as it relates to the appointment of vice-chancellors of federal universities. In some instances, the processes have been marred by ethnic bias, and in recent times, by a lack of uniformity in the selection process across federal universities. There has been undue political interference in the process, and this has created numerous crises in the citadel of learning, leading to dysfunctional centres of knowledge generation, research, and skill development. Similarly, the Government's appointment of pro-chancellors and external members of council suffers from



inadequate diligence and vetting to ensure that only qualified and experienced persons with integrity are appointed to councils. There are no clear criteria for the selection of members of council. As a result, the majority of those appointed are partisan politicians who are being compensated for political support. Such persons come to the universities with great expectations for material benefits rather than for the rendering of service.

Additionally, the issue of university autonomy, which implies the capacity of a university to govern itself, lies at the heart of challenges facing the current governance and management structure of most public tertiary institutions. This problem persists because many of these institutions evolved under a government subvention system rather than on the basis of genuine financial autonomy for individual universities. Consequently, universities no longer fully determine whom to admit, how to teach, when to teach, and whom to employ. This has undermined the capacity of university managers to effectively govern the institutions. The recruitment process for staff has become cumbersome with bureaucratic bottlenecks created by several government agencies that federal universities should have no business with. The convergence of Vice-Chancellors of Federal Universities in Abuja for budget defence before the National Assembly creates yet another unnecessary waste of man-hours and scarce resources. In this regard, there is a need to revisit the NUC's role in the receipt of block grants from the Federal Government and the allocation to universities in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Government. This will resuscitate the University System Annual Review Meeting (USARM) and ensure prudent use of funds for university capital projects. In this regard, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) should interface with universities through the NUC.

As a result of similar crises in state universities, there is a need for the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act to be amended by expanding the scope of its applicability, to make it automatically regulate the autonomy component of all public-funded universities.

With few exceptions, the governance situation in private universities is even more deplorable. Institutional heads have authoritarian dispositions, the committee system is often truncated, councils or governing boards are not properly constituted, and proprietors undermine institutional autonomy and exert tremendous influence even on the day-to-day running of the universities. Promotion and recruitment processes are, in many cases, arbitrary, and academic freedom is stifled.

The consequences of poor leadership and bad governance structures and processes have combined to undermine the capacity of universities to actualise their core mandate of seeking knowledge, building character, driving innovation, and helping to build the national development potentials in academically free and relatively autonomous university environments. The challenges of poor leadership and bad governance have been aggravated by the acute crisis of poor and erratic funding, or chronic underfunding, as proprietors, especially federal and state governments, have failed to provide adequate funding for universities to grow into globally competitive centres of learning, teaching, and research. The funding situation has been compounded by the application of the treasury single account (TSA) to universities and institutions, making them unable to access generated funds for addressing critical needs of the universities. This has generated significant operational and academic constraints that require urgent policy review.



Universities should be allowed to retain a portion of their generated funds for their development and should establish very clear performance metrics linked to funding with regular audits and transparent reporting to stakeholders. In this regards, financial systems of the universities should be digitised to entrench accountability, reduce corruption and mismanagement.

To a large extent, many of the manifest problems in the Nigerian university system, such as dilapidated and inadequate facilities, are symptomatic of the larger and more serious problem of governance, both at the national level and especially at the individual university level. The lack of good leadership and governance in the university system is largely responsible for the enormity of the challenges bedevilling it. The misplacement of priorities at the national governance level is compounded by the lack of prioritisation and gross misallocation of priorities at the institutional levels. Additionally, the issue of frequent strike actions by university-based unions (reference the profile of the 251 weeks of national strikes by ASUU from 1993-2022 as presented in Fig. 9.5 in Chapter 9) occasioned by the failure of the Government to honour past agreements with university staff. This has compounded the problem of poor governance. The resulting unstable academic calendar has done serious damage to the NUS with a disproportionate impact on the main users of the university system - the students. These governance issues manifest as arbitrariness in dealing with student complaints and student discipline, rampant sexual harassment of students, and disrespect for and disregard of constitutionally guaranteed and protected human rights such as freedom of speech and worship. Universities also routinely ignore student admission quotas, leading to overcrowding and, in some cases, forced transfers of students into programmes they did not choose.

There is a need for a rejuvenation of governance in the present-day Nigerian university system with competent leadership, and with core values of honesty, integrity, accountability, inclusiveness, and openness. The introduction of Performance Management System (PMS) for university administration with measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPI) such as decision-making timelines, financial transparency, governance conflict resolution and service delivery should form the baseline to facilitate performance tracking. The appointment of members of governing councils should be guided by clear, objective criteria to ensure that only persons who are service-oriented, with experience, integrity, and knowledgeable with university traditions are appointed to councils. The introduction of minimum educational qualifications, along with specific years of experience in the administration and management of universities, will be required. In this regard, the NUC, in consultation with the Federal Government, should be the anchor to vet all nominees into the councils of Federal Universities to ensure that only qualified and competent persons are appointed to council. This will promote good practices in the policy direction of councils and have a positive impact on the governance of universities. The NUC should resuscitate the erstwhile annual retreat of NUC Management with Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian universities to acquaint them with their roles to foster a harmonious relationship between council and the university management. There is a need to introduce a uniform set of criteria for the appointment of vice-chancellors of federal universities. The advisory template developed by the FME and the NUC can be adopted by Councils as a policy document for the appointment of vice-chancellors.



The document contains minimum qualifications, experience, administrative track record, peer review, etc. This will ensure that the appointment process falls within the ambit of the law without intrusion into the autonomy of universities. The inclusion of representatives of the NUC on the Councils of Federal universities will provide the Commission with the opportunity to provide guidance to universities at the level of university governance. In line with extant laws, the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Act 2003, the Government is to ensure that when councils are dissolved, new councils are immediately reconstituted to avoid a vacuum in governance of universities. While universities in Nigeria have, from their inception, been repositories of these core values, over time, unethical practices have set in, undermining efficiency and effectiveness in the system. To drive excellence in teaching, learning, research, and innovation, the governance process in most universities needs revitalisation and upgrading. Universities should adopt digital systems for academic, administrative, and financial management.

This will reduce bottlenecks, opportunities for manipulation, and promote transparency, efficiency, and record integrity.

The NUC should strengthen its institutional accreditation mechanism to ensure the implementation of stronger monitoring frameworks to evaluate governance performance in universities, including periodic governance audits using a standardised instrument measuring council composition, vice-chancellor selection integrity, financial transparency, and academic freedom. This underscores the need for a national governance framework for the appropriate and effective repositioning of our universities towards excellence and global competitiveness in teaching, learning, and research.

7.3 JUSTIFICATION

Without a proper and well-functioning governance system in Nigerian universities, the aspiration for revitalisation and repositioning would be constrained, if not entirely undermined. Therefore, as Nigeria strives to deepen its democracy and pursue the national quest for good democratic governance, a commitment to institutionalise a robust governance system, with an enforceable national governance framework, that would drive reform and revitalisation of its universities, is imperative. The nation, therefore, needs to invest significantly in this area as a priority.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Well-established statutes and policies, specifying structures and processes of governance and operations, including leadership, recruitment, selection procedures, with appropriate checks and balances and a strong emphasis on administrative and financial accountability. Highly experienced and qualified professors with integrity within the university system, who, if given the opportunity, would provide the kind of leadership worthy of a university. Massive pool of talented technocrats, professionals, and others, with the requisite experience and integrity to give high-quality service as members of the councils of universities The NUC to enforce its regulatory powers by implementing policies that will entrench professionalism in the governance and management of universities.	Absence of an implementation framework, resulting in lack of respect for, and non-compliance with, established rules and regulations, especially in the period under military rule, created the foundation for perpetual crises in the system. Lack of adherence to clear standards in the appointment of principal officers Authoritarian and corrupt disposition of some vice-chancellors' breed resentment, opposition and conflicts, both within the Management and between Management/ Staff/ Students/Unions. Interference by proprietors of universities undermines the relative autonomy of the universities and contributes to the stifling of academic freedom. Hesitancy by the regulator (NUC) to use its oversight powers to correct some egregious behaviours of managers of universities. Quality of members of the Governing Councils
Opportunities	Threats
Instituting democratic governance that enhances efficient delivery of public goods and services across the University System. Accelerated pursuit of governance reforms in the Nigerian university system.	Seeming absence of political will to drive the reform process, especially by those in positions of authority at Government and university institutional levels. Flagrant disregard for institutional statutes, policies and protocols by proprietors of universities /vice-chancellors. Poor funding of universities by proprietors. Disruption of the system due to political/external influences



7.4: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. By 2030, build the capacity of all university managers in implementing best practices in university governance with a focus on accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, prudent management of financial resources and proactive management of relations with staff and students' unions.
2. Appoint members of governing councils based on their backgrounds and qualifications in higher education and capacities to play critical roles in the growth of the institutions.
3. Establish a national governance framework that will bring about lasting peace and stable growth and development of the universities, in terms of expanding access, promoting excellence in teaching, research, and innovation, and catalysing national socio-economic development. To advance this, NUC to advocate for and secure operational financial autonomy for universities through coordinated efforts with universities to engage government on exempting universities from Treasury Single Account (TSA) and stopping the deduction of internally generated revenues as these practices undermine the governance capacity of institutional leaders and contradict the principle of university autonomy.
4. By 2030, eliminate rancour and conflict between unions and management, and nurture unity, diversity, equity, national cohesiveness, and integration through harmonious coexistence of diverse groups and interests on campuses, united by the quest for knowledge and excellence in scholarship.
5. By 2028, NUC should introduce enforceable minimum standards in governance that will establish a national governance framework to ensure at least 80% increase in efficiency in the university system.
6. By 2030, the NUC should undertake a system wide review of the of the success of the national governance framework in our institutions.

7.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation plan would consist of the following activities targeted at meeting the challenges and achieving the defined strategic objectives:

1. Organise training for university managers on governance best practices.
2. Review the University (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1993 (as amended) (UMPA) to improve the governance process, especially in the aspects of the composition and constitution of the councils to improve merit-based appointment, prevent political interference and favouritism and also expand its scope to apply automatically to regulate the autonomy component of all publicly funded universities.
3. Promote the development of needs-based budget utilising an approved university-wide template.
4. Improve training on strategic planning and the execution of a strategic plan.
5. Improve collaborations, interactions, and engagements between university managers and university-based unions as well as university community relations.
6. Improve university-student relations.

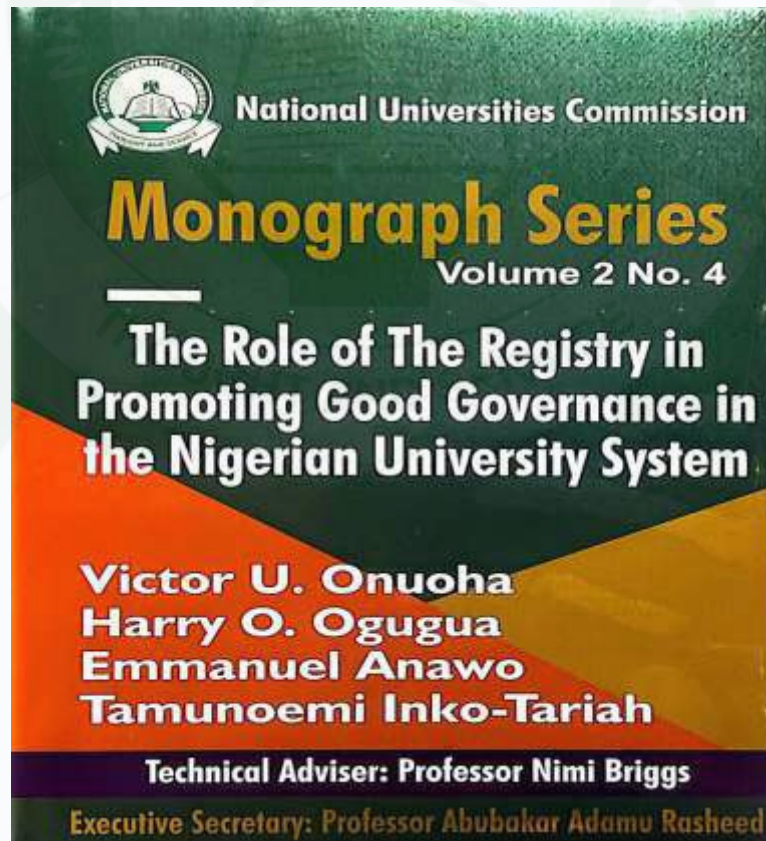


7. Improve university-industry relations.

Activities Under the Implementation Plan

The following activities are to be carried out to ensure the successful implementation of this strategic goal as follows:

1. Annual training workshop for all university managers on governance best practices, focusing on accountability, transparency, university law, ethics, prudent financial management and relations with university-based unions
2. Development of Manual of Best Practices in University Governance to incorporate key features of the national governance framework
3. Annual award to the best three vice-chancellors and councils in university governance (federal, state, private)
4. Setting up of a University Governance Peer Review mechanism and conduct of peer reviews
5. Annual workshop for leadership of university staff and student's unions
6. Annual Institutional Retreat on “Partnership for Development” for University Management together with leaders of university-based unions
7. Annual training for academic and non-academic staff on issues of university governance
8. Review the University (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1993 (as amended)

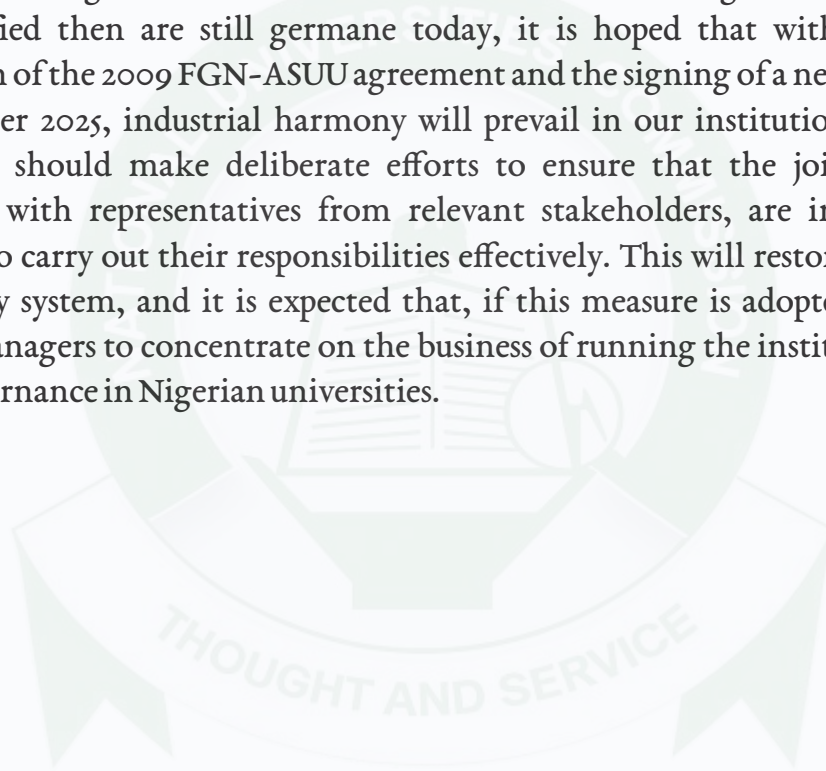




7.6 CONCLUSION

Investment in the reform of the governance system and processes in the Nigerian university system is desirable and necessary, as it is the foundation of getting the right kind of individuals in leadership positions that can competently drive the agenda for repositioning and revitalisation of the system for global competitiveness and meeting the human capital requirements for Nigeria's accelerated socioeconomic development. With substantial investment in this process from 2026 to 2030, the value addition will be tremendous, with the benefits outweighing the costs.

A system-wide survey was carried out in 2019 on the identification of major deficiencies in university governance in the country, with recommendations for improvement, including stemming the tide of strikes in our universities. Although the majority of these issues identified then are still germane today, it is hoped that with the successful renegotiation of the 2009 FGN-ASUU agreement and the signing of a new agreement on 23rd December 2025, industrial harmony will prevail in our institutions. The Federal Government should make deliberate efforts to ensure that the joint monitoring committees, with representatives from relevant stakeholders, are inaugurated and empowered to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This will restore confidence in the university system, and it is expected that, if this measure is adopted, it will allow university managers to concentrate on the business of running the institutions and help improve governance in Nigerian universities.







8.0

TACKLING ACADEMIC CORRUPTION

Overarching Goal

To have fully functional, transparent, and legally compliant anti-corruption mechanisms in 100% of Nigerian universities by 2027, leading to a measurable 25% reduction in reported incidents of academic corruption and a 50% increase in the prosecution of offenders by 2030.



8.1 INTRODUCTION

Academic corruption is dishonest or fraudulent conduct aimed at gaining undue advantage within the educational sphere. While it is largely a non-financial form of corruption, it often weaves into financial impropriety, blighting the fabric of academic quality and integrity. Nigerian universities, once globally renowned for excellence, now face a decline in quality, partially attributed to this scourge. As noted in the NUC Blueprint, if improvement of quality is the primary goal, tackling academic corruption is central to the revitalisation of the system.

To effectively tackle academic corruption, Nigeria's legal arsenal must be deployed beyond internal university disciplinary committees. Below are the relevant statutes and their application to the university context are presented in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Relevant Statutes and Application to NUS

Statute	Application to University Context
i. The Constitution of the FRN 1999 (as amended)	The "Ground Norm." Section 15(5) mandates the State to abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power, providing the constitutional basis for anti-corruption policies.
ii. Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (2000)	Empowers the ICPC to investigate and prosecute bribery, gratification, and abuse of office (e.g., "sex for grades" or extortion) within public institutions, including universities.
iii. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act (2004)	Applicable to financial crimes within the university, such as the embezzlement of research grants or fraudulent admission fees.
iv. Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions (Prohibition) Bill, 2016	Specifically targets the "non-financial" corruption of sexual exploitation, providing strict criminal penalties for educators who abuse their positions of authority.
v. Freedom of Information (FOI) Act (2011)	Can be leveraged by stakeholders to demand transparency in admission lists, budget allocations, and the criteria for awarding degrees.
vi. National Universities Commission (NUC) Act	Provides the regulatory framework for accreditation; allows NUC to sanction institutions that fail to maintain ethical standards



8.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS: THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

The NUC-ICPC University System Review identified several deep-seated corrupt practices across federal, state, and private universities:

Admissions and Enrolment: Non-adherence to NUC carrying capacity, political interference, and over-enrolment driven by a need for Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

Examination Administration: Sale of exam questions, swapping grades, cheating by proxy, and deliberate victimisation of students to delay graduation.

Teaching and Research: Non-completion of syllabi, lack of commitment to work, and defiance of bans on illegal satellite campuses.

Vices of Influence: Extortion of "big men" or politicians who receive degrees without attending classes or sitting for examinations.

Financial Impropriety: Financial impropriety in Nigerian universities is a persistent governance challenge that undermines institutional credibility, academic standards, and public trust. It is often linked to weak accountability systems, inadequate oversight by governing councils, political interference, and poor internal control mechanisms.

8.2.1 Baseline (Current State)

8.2.1.1 Strategic Instruments Status

The NUC Blueprint (2019–2023) recognises academic corruption as a "non-financial" but equally devastating variant of corruption that undermines the integrity of the entire university system. The document identifies that while financial corruption (embezzlement, procurement fraud) is often the focus of national agencies, academic corruption, encompassing "sex-for-grades," admissions racketeering, and plagiarism, is the most direct threat to the quality of Nigerian degrees.

8.2.1.2 Systemic Institutional Landscape

As of the 2019–2023 cycle, the Nigerian university landscape suffered from a "culture of silence" and deep-seated fears of victimisation. Internal disciplinary mechanisms were often viewed as compromised or ineffective. In 2012, an ICPC Systems Study and Review of the NUS revealed flagrant abuses in admissions, examination administration, and the falsification of academic records.

8.2.1.3 Policy Disruptions and Sector Realities

Recent legislative updates, such as the Sexual Harassment of Students (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2025, have fundamentally altered the policy landscape since the 2019 Blueprint was drafted. These disruptions highlight a shift from internal "administrative" handling of corruption to criminal prosecution with severe penalties (up to 14 years imprisonment).



8.2.2. Identified Corrupt Practices

Based on the Blueprint's pages 101–114 and subsequent ICPC findings, the following are the primary "corruption-prone" areas:

- Admissions Racketeering: Disregard for NUC "carrying capacity" and the sale of admission slots to unqualified candidates.
- Examination Malpractice: The "sorting" culture (cash-for-marks), swapping of grades, and prior knowledge of exam questions.
- Sexual Exploitation: The "sex-for-grades" pandemic, where lecturers use their fiduciary position to exploit students.
- Research and Plagiarism: "Syndicated plagiarism" and the unethical sale of handouts to students as a prerequisite for passing.
- Administrative Fraud: Delaying transcripts to extort students or the fraudulent receipt of money by non-teaching staff.

8.3 IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SYSTEM

Stakeholders, including Vice-Chancellors, Chairmen of Council, and other principal officers, have proposed several structural solutions:

Enhanced Monitoring: Implementation of "Peer Review" and external quality assurance programmes to minimise internal bias.

Technological Interventions: Using digital portals for anonymous reporting of sexual harassment and extortion to bypass the "culture of silence".

Disciplinary Dispatch: Ensuring that cases with overwhelming evidence of corruption (such as grade manipulation) are treated with dispatch through strict adherence to university laws.

Student Empowerment: Institutionalizing mechanisms where students assess their lecturers, with reports submitted directly to the Senate each semester.

8.4 THE WAY FORWARD: A STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

To bridge the gaps in the current approach, a multi-dimensional strategy is required:

Institutional Autonomy and Accountability: Granting universities the power to purge



themselves of "accidental academics"- those who entered the system through loose recruitment processes rather than through passion for scholarship.

Whistle blower Protection: Enshrining clear protection clauses to encourage staff and students to report predators and extortionists without fear of retaliation.

Curriculum of Integrity: Mainstreaming ethics and value-based education into the General Studies (GST) curriculum to foster a culture of honesty from the first year.

Judicial Activism: Increasing the use of the criminal justice system to prosecute academic offenders, rather than relying solely on internal administrative sanctions or minor internal penalties. Tackling academic corruption is not merely an administrative task but a moral necessity to save the NUS from severe deterioration. By aligning university regulations with national anti-corruption statutes (ICPC/EFCC) and fostering transparency, the NUC can restore the integrity of the Nigerian degree.

8.5 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths (Internal Positive Factors)	Weaknesses (Internal Negative Factors)
i. Existing Regulatory Frameworks • NUC oversight. • Institutional quality assurance units. • Anti-corruption agencies (EFCC, ICPC). ii. Formal Policies and Codes of Conduct • Staff and student handbooks. • Examination regulations and disciplinary committees. • Ethics and integrity guidelines in many institutions. iii. Growing Digitalisation • Computer-Based Testing (CBT). • Online result processing systems. • Biometric attendance systems in some institutions. iv. Academic Community Awareness • Increased discourse on integrity and accountability. • Student union and civil society advocacy. v. Professional Academic Standards • Peer review systems. • External examiners for postgraduate programmes.	i. Weak Enforcement of Rules • Selective punishment. • Political interference in disciplinary actions. • Delayed investigation processes. ii. Poor Remuneration and Welfare • Irregular salaries. • Poor working conditions. • Limited research funding. iii. Opaque Administrative Processes • Manual grading systems. • Lack of transparent procurement processes. • Discretionary power concentrated in few offices. iv. Cultural Normalisation of Corruption • “Sorting” (bribery for grades). • Sex-for-grades scandals. • Nepotism in admissions and employment. • Weak Whistle-blower Protection • Fear of victimisation. • Lack of anonymous reporting mechanisms.



Opportunities (External Positive Factors)	Threats (External Negative Factors)
i. Technological Innovations · Blockchain-based credential systems. · AI-powered plagiarism detection. · Digital complaint/reporting platforms. ii. Global Partnerships · International accreditation standards. · Collaboration with foreign universities. · Donor-funded integrity initiatives. iii. Policy Reforms at National Level · Strengthening anti-corruption legislation. · Education sector reform agendas. · Open government initiatives. iv. Youth Activism and Media Exposure · Investigative journalism. · Social media accountability campaigns. · Public demand for transparency. v. Performance-Based Funding Models · Linking funding to measurable governance standards. · Incentivizing compliance and integrity systems.	i. Political Interference · Governing council manipulation. · Appointment based on patronage. · Protection of corrupt officials. ii. Societal Corruption Norms · Broader systemic corruption influencing campuses. · Public tolerance of unethical practices. iii. Funding Constraints · Chronic underfunding of universities. · Infrastructure deficits. iv. Brain Drain · Ethical and competent academics leaving the system. · Loss of reform-minded leadership. v. Security Challenges · Campus insecurity disrupting oversight. · External criminal networks influencing campus politics.

8.6 JUSTIFICATION

Addressing academic corruption in Nigerian universities is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for national development. The justification can be viewed from multiple perspectives:

Academic corruption, such as examination malpractice, plagiarism, sexual harassment for grades (“sex-for-marks”), admission fraud, and certificate racketeering, undermines the core mission of universities: the pursuit of truth and knowledge. It devalues degrees and certifications, weakens academic quality and research credibility, and erodes meritocracy in admissions, grading, and promotions. Without integrity, universities lose their legitimacy as centres of excellence.



Universities produce the professionals who drive national growth. When corruption influences academic outcomes, unqualified graduates enter critical sectors, professional incompetence increases risks like medical errors, structural failures, and national productivity declines. Tackling academic corruption ensures the production of competent, and ethical graduates essential for sustainable development.

Persistent reports of academic corruption damage the global standing of universities, leading to reduced international partnerships and research collaborations, difficulty in global recognition for qualifications, and lower attraction of foreign students and funding opportunities. Combating corruption strengthens credibility, global rankings, and academic mobility.

In addition, academic corruption disproportionately affects disadvantaged students who lack financial or social influence, thus entrenching inequality and social injustice, breeding resentment and eroding trust in public institutions, and normalising unethical behaviour among youths. Addressing corruption promotes fairness, equal opportunity, and social cohesion.

Weak governance structures often enable corruption. Tackling it strengthens quality assurance mechanisms, improves transparency in admissions, procurement, and examinations, and enhances accountability of university leadership and governing councils. This aligns with global best practices in higher education governance.

Universities are moral communities tasked with shaping character and developing leadership. If corruption is tolerated, students internalise unethical norms, and future leaders may replicate corrupt practices in public and private sectors. Combating corruption reinforces ethical culture and responsible citizenship.

Tackling academic corruption in Nigerian universities is justified on grounds of quality assurance, national development, institutional credibility, social justice, ethical responsibility, and global competitiveness. It is not merely an administrative concern but a strategic necessity for rebuilding trust in higher education and ensuring that universities fulfil their mandate as engines of knowledge, innovation, and societal transformation.

8.7 SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

8.7.1 Digitisation of Academic Records

- Centralised Transcript Systems: Implementing digital, automated transcript processing to remove human interference and the opportunity for extortion.
- Online Grade Portals: Real-time grade entry by lecturers that becomes "locked" once submitted to the Senate, preventing later "sorting" or grade swapping.



8.7.2 Strengthening Internal Reporting Mechanisms

- Independent Anti-Corruption Units: Establishing units directly under the Vice-Chancellor's office (similar to the NOUN model) that operate in direct liaison with the ICPC.
- Anonymous Whistle blower Portals: Encrypted channels for students to report "sex-for-grades" or extortion without fear of department-level cover-ups.
- Establish an independent Office of the Student Academic Ombudsperson in every university. The office will have the mandate to receive, investigate, and mediate complaints from students related to sexual harassment, extortion, unfair grading, and other forms of academic corruption, providing a safe and powerful avenue for redress outside the traditional departmental or faculty structures. The staff in the office should be appointed by and report to the university management.
- Development of a "National Academic Integrity Database" managed by the NUC. This confidential database would contain records of staff dismissed or who resigned due to proven academic corruption (such as sexual harassment, grade manipulation etc.). This will prevent such individuals from getting a job at another university and continuing their unethical practices, a common loophole in the current system.

8.7.3 Building Ethical Capacity

- The NUC, in collaboration with anti-corruption agencies like ICPC, should "develop a credit-bearing module on 'Ethics and Anti-Corruption Studies' to be integrated into the General Studies (GST) curriculum for all undergraduate students by 2027." This will build a culture of integrity from the foundation.

8.7.4 Develop a National Academic Integrity Framework

The NUC should mandate a standardised academic integrity policy across all universities, addressing plagiarism, grade manipulation, research misconduct, and sexual harassment

8.7.5 Legal and Judicial Solutions

- Criminalisation of Administrative Neglect: Under the 2025 Bill, university heads who fail to act on reported cases can face fines of up to N5 million.
- Removal of "Consent" as a Defence: In cases of educator-student sexual relations, "mutual consent" is no longer a legal defence due to the fiduciary power imbalance.

8.8 THE WAY FORWARD: A STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

8.8.1 Institutionalising Ethics

Universities must move beyond "handbooks" that only regulate student conduct and create binding codes of conduct for academic staff, that mirror the Corrupt Practices Act.



Ethics and Anti-Corruption studies should be mandatory in the General Studies (GST) curriculum.

8.8.2 Strengthening the "Duty of Care"

Institutions should be held civilly liable for failing to protect students from known predators. Victims of academic corruption (including sexual harassment) should be empowered to seek civil redress in addition to criminal prosecution.

8.8.3 NUC Regulatory Overhaul

The NUC should integrate " Academic Integrity Scores" into the accreditation process. Any department with high rates of reported academic corruption or "sorting" should face the withdrawal of its accreditation.

8.9 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Derived from the overall goals are the following strategic objectives.

- i. Strengthen institutional governance and accountability
- ii. Enhance integrity in academic assessment and evaluation
- iii. Improve admission and Recruitment Processes
- iv. Build Ethical Capacity and professional conduct
- v. Strengthen regulatory oversight and compliance
- vi. Promote whistleblowing and protection mechanisms
- vii. Leverage digital technologies for transparency
- viii. Generate evidence for policy and practice
- ix. Foster stakeholder engagement and collective responsibility
- x. Ensuring financial transparency

8.10 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Strategic Objectives	Activities	Expected Outcomes	Timeline	Responsibility
Strengthen Institutional Governance and Accountability	· Governance and corruption risk assessments · Policy review workshops for councils and management · Development of accountability guidelines	Strengthened Governance and Accountability Mechanisms	2026 – 2030 (Continuous)	· Universities · NUC



Improve Integrity in Assessment and Examination Processes	· Review of examination policies · Introduction of secure digital assessment tools · Training for exam officers and lecturers	Improved Integrity in Assessment and Examination Processes	2026 - 2028	· Universities · NUC
Improve Admission and Recruitment Processes	· Audit of admission and recruitment practices · Development of transparent guidelines · Capacity-building workshops	Transparent Admissions and Staff Recruitment Systems	2026 - 2029	· Universities · NUC
Build Ethical Capacity and Professional Conduct	· Ethics and integrity training programmes · Integration of ethics into student orientation · Awareness campaigns	Enhanced Ethical Capacity of Staff and Students	2026 - 2028	· Universities · NUC
Promote Whistleblowing and Protection Mechanisms	· Development of whistleblowing policies · Establishment of confidential reporting channels · Sensitisation on whistleblower protection · Establishment of a "National Academic Integrity Database" managed by the NUC	- Functional Whistleblowing and Reporting Mechanisms - Confidential database containing records of staff dismissed or who resigned due to proven academic corruption in place	2027 - 2028	· Universities · NUC



Generate Evidence for Policy and Practice	· Research on patterns and drivers of academic corruption · Stakeholder consultations · Policy dialogues with regulators	Evidence-Based Policy and Regulatory Reforms	2026 - 2027	· NUC · Universities
Foster Stakeholder Engagement and Collective Responsibility	Convene biennial meetings of stakeholders – University Governing Councils and Management; Academic and Non-Academic Staff; Students and Student Unions; NUC; Anti-corruption agencies and civil society	Improved engagement with stakeholders	2026 – 2030 (Continuous)	· NUC · Universities · Anti-corruption agencies · Civil Societies
Ensuring financial transparency	Publish audited university accounts annually	Published audited accounts annually	2026 - 2030	· Universities · NUC · Auditor General
Integration of Technology in Management and Administration	Develop technology infrastructure across institutions	Efficient Collection, Management and dissemination of information	2026-2030	· NUC · Universities



8.II CONCLUSION

Tackling academic corruption requires more than just internal university committees; it requires the full weight of Nigerian law. By aligning university operations with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act (2004), Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (2000), and other relevant statutes capable of tackling academic corruption in Nigerian Universities, the NUS can transition from an environment characterised by exploitation to one of genuine academic merit.







9.0

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING OF THE SYSTEM

Overarching Goal

By 2030, a sustainable multi-stakeholder system of needs-based budget funding should have been adopted with universities utilising a computer-based enterprise resource planning model to manage financial resources and for decision support.



9.1 INTRODUCTION

The cost of university education is related to the cost of performing the basic functions of teaching, research, and community service. The pertinent question to ask in respect of cost is: Are our universities recovering the full cost of providing quality service in the delivery of their educational and training programmes? Do universities have access to sufficient funds to undertake research? To answer these questions faithfully, and several others, it must be assumed that every university has readily available figures of how much is needed for each of its programme offerings, and, by extension, a budget that reflects the income and expenditure of the university to perform its assigned functions creditably. This has turned out to be a problem in the NUS, with most public universities not preparing an appropriate budget as presented below. Presented herein are the findings on major sources of income and the nature of expenditure by universities. As expected, the public institutions are funded primarily by their owners – federal or state. This is because no significant tuition fees are charged for undergraduate programmes in the federal government-owned universities. Attention will be paid to the sources of income and expenditure and, also of importance, the mechanism for the management of financial resources to eliminate wastage.

9.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

At the outset, it is pertinent to note the present situation in which most public universities are not preparing the highly required needs-based budget of income and expenditure. Consequently, there is a high degree of ad hoc approaches in handling finances at the institutional level beyond the regular payment of salaries and wages. Let it be stated clearly in addressing the matter of sustainable funding of our universities that, although universities are not-for-profit institutions, i.e. they are not businesses, they have to be business-like in the management of resources to carry out their hallowed functions of teaching, research, and community service creditably. The era of administration of the usual more-than-adequate resource inflows from government, characteristic of most first-generation public universities in the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria, is gone. What it calls for now is the management of resources, both inflow and outflow, to achieve balance. Furthermore, as is to be expected, one cannot manage what one cannot measure. Towards this end, the identified major sources of income and the nature of expenditure by universities are presented below.

9.2.1 Major Sources of Income

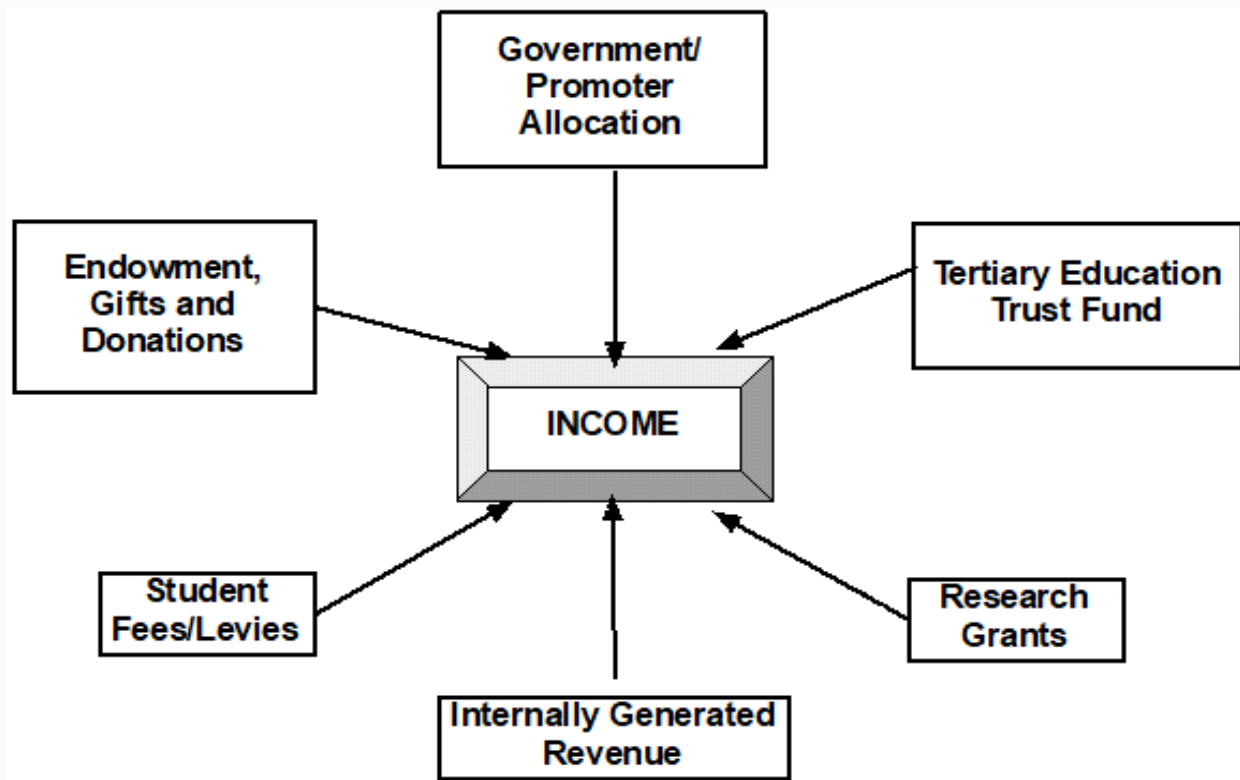
The major sources of income for a typical university, as presented in Fig. 9.1, are as follows:

- i. Government/Proprietor Allocation
- ii. TETFund
- iii. Student Fees/Levies
- iv. Endowments
- v. Grants
- vi. Internally generated revenue (IGR)



In what follows, we present the characteristics of each source as a necessary input to policy formulation.

FIGURE 9.1: MAJOR SOURCES OF FUNDS TO AN INSTITUTION



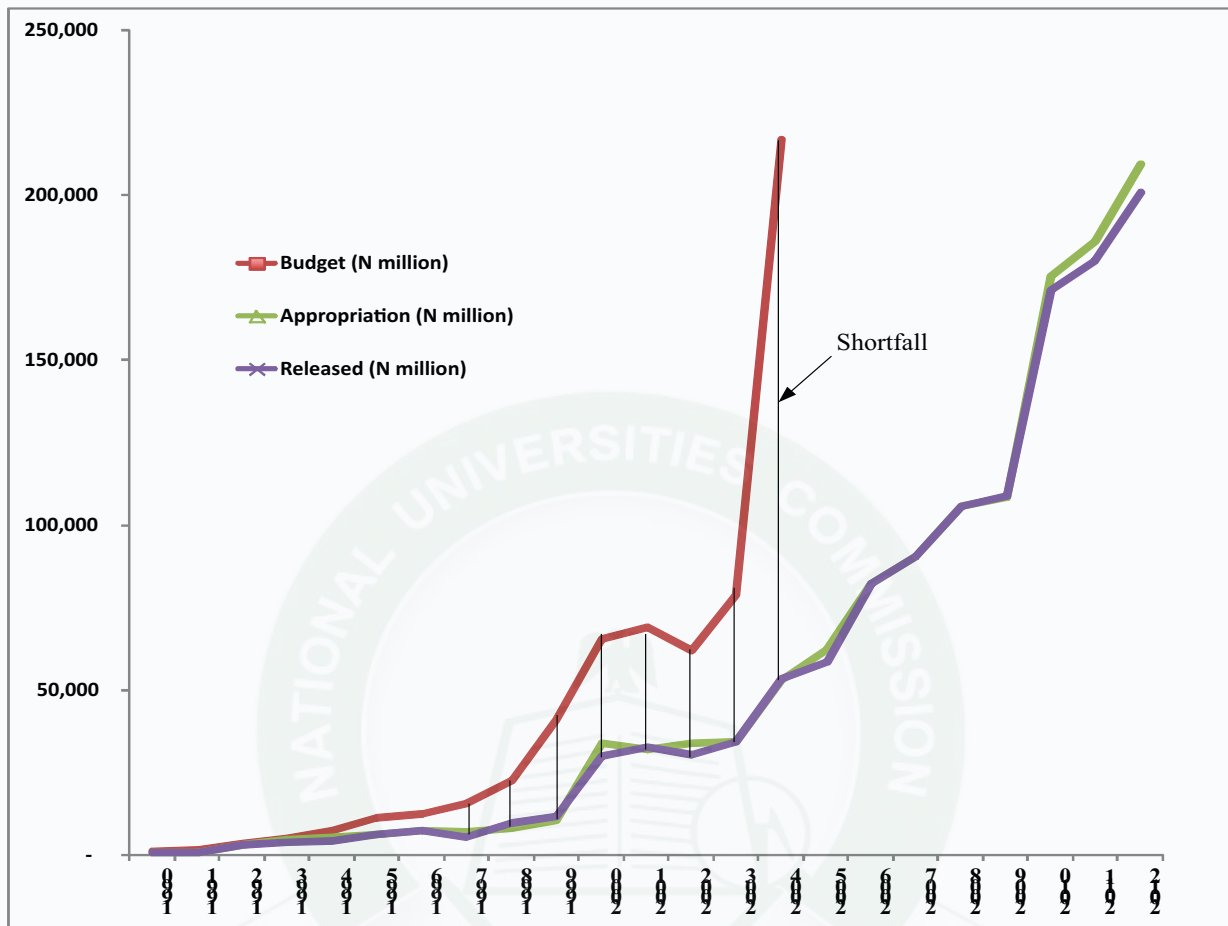
Government Allocation

Of particular interest is the Government appropriation and allocation to universities during the period when federal universities prepared and submitted their budgets to the Federal Government through the NUC. The Federal Government appropriation and amount eventually released to Nigerian universities in relation to their budgets between 1990 and 2012 are graphically illustrated in Fig. 9.2. The serious shortfall in 2024 led the Federal Government to introduce the "Envelope" system of fund allocation in 2025. In other words, the allocation had nothing to do with the actual budgets of the institutions, as was the case between 1990 and 2004. The envelope system for the years 2005 to 2012 is illustrated below.

The Federal Government tried as much as possible to release the amount stipulated in the envelope. Unfortunately, the Envelope system led to the institutions not to engage in proper budget preparation, as had previously been the case. The question that arises is: Were the universities able to cover their shortfalls from other sources? The answer is unequivocally no, thereby casting serious doubt on the quality of the service delivery.



Figure 9.2:Funding of Federal Universities (1990-2012)

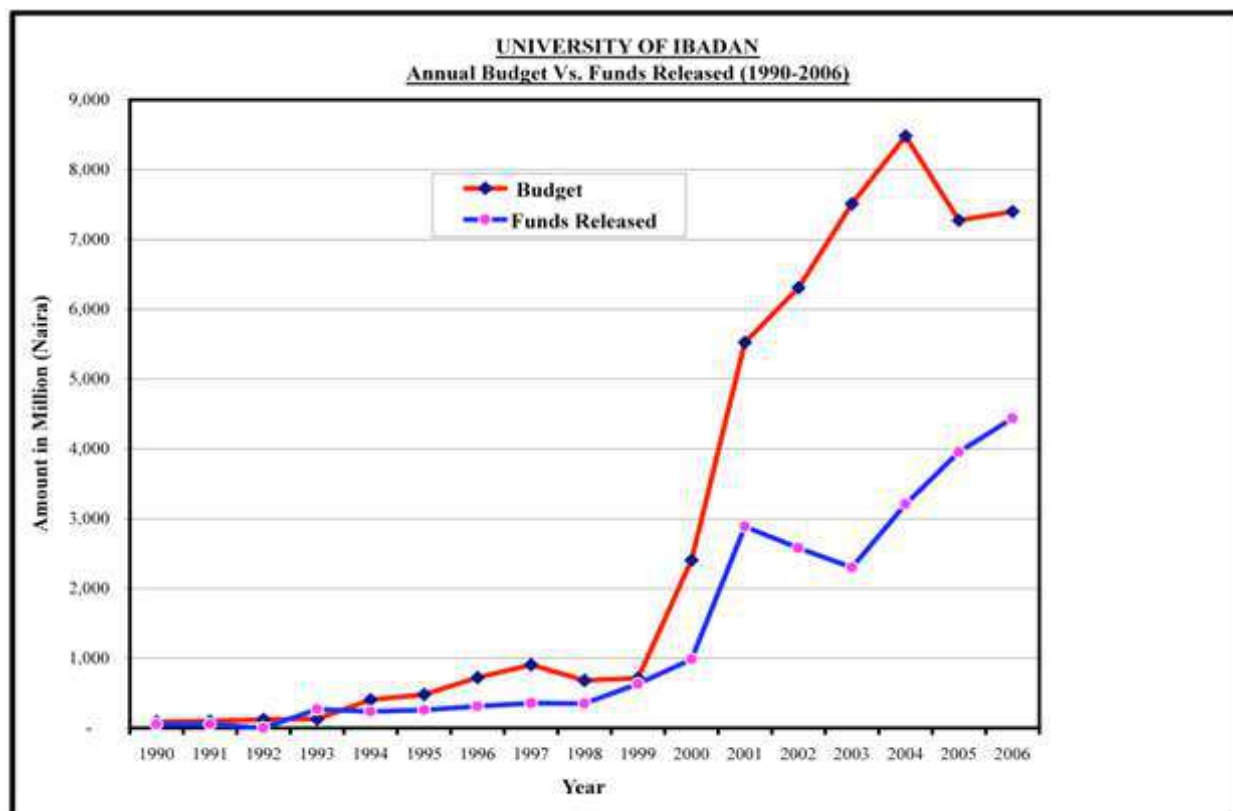


Of critical importance is the budget shortfall at the institutional level, as shown in Fig. 9.3 for the University of Ibadan from 1990 to 2006. This is what is referred to as '*service-level insolvency*' when an institution is unable to provide all services at the required or designed level of quality.

Most universities have been responding to the situation of underfunding through the following actions, among others, with a negative impact on the quality of the service delivery:

- * curtailment of laboratory and practical classes in science-based courses, in addition to a reduction in much-needed field trips in some programmes;
- * freezing of staff appointments despite poor students-staff ratio in most programmes;
- * reduction of allocation to staff attendance at academic conferences; and reduction, if not outright cancellation, of the traditional senate research grants to support young academics.

Figure 9.3: Budget Profile at Institutional Level



The dire situation was the object of the comprehensive analysis of the shortfalls in funding of the system, leading to the publication in 2012 of the report titled “*Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities*”. The report identified serious deficiencies in Nigerian public universities. In response to the situation, the government made a commitment in 2013 of N1.3 trillion over six years to address these challenges. Unfortunately, this commitment has not been implemented as agreed. Also of importance is the fact that the Federal Government’s total allocation accounts for almost 90% of the recurrent expenditure of the universities. Thus, federal universities rely heavily on government funding.

The allocation to the education sector as share of the total Federal Government budget from 2019 to 2025 is shown in Table 9.1. The 7.1% allocation to education in 2025 was relatively low compared to UNESCO’s recommendation that developing countries allocate between 15% and 20% of their national budgets to education.

Often hailed as the bedrock of societal progress, education plays an indispensable role in shaping the skills, values, and knowledge necessary for individuals to thrive in an increasingly complex world. It is, therefore, expected that attention will always focus on what proportion of the national appropriation is earmarked for education.



Table 9.1 Trends of Budgetary Allocations to the Education Sector (2019 – 2025)

Budget Year	Total Budget (Ntrn)	Education Allocation (Ntrn)	% Allocation to Education
2025	49.70	3.52	7.1
2024	27.50	1.54	5.6
2023	21.83	1.09	5.0
2022	17.12	1.18	6.9
2021	13.59	0.77	5.7
2020	10.59	0.67	6.3
2019	8.92	0.63	7.1

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)

The Education Tax Fund, later re-named the Education Trust Fund (ETF), and now referred to as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), was established under Act No. 7 of 1993 to undertake projects aimed at improving the quality of education in Nigeria. The Act imposed a 2% Education Tax on the assessable profit of all registered companies in Nigeria. This has now amounted to several billions of Naira to be deployed to the provision of funding support to public higher education institutions (HEIs), federal and state, in the following areas:

- i. Physical infrastructure/programme upgrade
- ii. Procurement of teaching and research equipment
- iii. Academic staff training and development
- iv. Library development
- v. Entrepreneurship Centre
- vi. Provision of ICT infrastructure
- vii. Conference attendance
- viii. Publication of journals and textbooks
- ix. National Research Fund
- x. Institution-based research
- xi. Journal publication

TETFund has spent considerably on physical infrastructure, National Research Fund, Academic Staff training and development. In 2009, the Federal Government allocated N33 billion through TETFund to 6 universities across the six geopolitical zones. On the part of the institutions, there is no doubt that a significant number did not display the expected capacity to package and manage projects, leading to delays in fund releases by



TETFund. TETFund has been publishing several billions of Naira that have been allocated but remain unspent by various institutions. This is indeed a paradox, bearing in mind the often-touted problem of underfunding of our HEIs. The response of TETFund to the problem was the decision of the Board to improve the productivity of the Administrators of its stakeholders (Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts, Directors of Academic Planning of tertiary institutions) for them to commit their intervention funds to long-term planning & project execution.

Consequently, TETFund, in December 2012, organised the 'Capacity Building Workshop on Institutional 5-year Strategic Plan and 2-year Operational Plan' with the following objectives:

- i. Expose and equip benefiting institutions with relevant skills to use in developing periodic strategic and operational plans.
- ii. Be able to support and monitor project delivery in tertiary institutions in Nigeria with a clear-cut understanding that all stakeholders are aware of the strategic expectations of them as Chief Executives of these institutions.

It was expected that beneficiaries would submit their 5-year Strategic Plan and 2-year Operational Plans to the Fund to enable them to access their funds. It is important to note that this should be the direction for meaningful utilisation of funds from TETFund for different projects.

Also worthy of mention is the operation of the National Research Fund by TETFund, through which many grants of close to N30.0 billion have been awarded between 2012 and 2024.

Student Fees/Levies

As earlier noted, all federal institutions, and a few state universities, are not allowed to charge tuition fees. They are only allowed limited charges and levies towards the provision of services such as accommodation in the halls of residence, sports, contribution to meeting the cost of municipal services (water and electricity), laboratory consumables in science-based programmes, among others. Consequently, undergraduate students registered in the various programmes in these universities end up paying between N30,000 and N50,000 per session, including accommodation. Attempts by federal institutions to increase levies have always been met with stiff opposition by students, leaving these institutions to operate within whatever fee levels can be mutually agreed upon with students.

The case of fees for accommodation in the halls of residence is, indeed, worthy of attention. Based on published data, the University of Ibadan, was subsidising students' accommodation in the halls of residence to the amount of N280 million per session, as far back as 2004. Fortunately, fees have since been adjusted to enable cost recovery.



However, non-payment of tuition fees in federal universities only applies to undergraduate programmes, while post-graduate students pay economic fees. Consequently, most universities run postgraduate programmes as a source of revenue generation and research capability enhancement of the university. Added to this is the operation of open and distance learning (ODL) programmes.

It is regrettable that our public universities have not been preparing their operational budgets, which would have facilitated the determination of the expected inflow from student fees and levies for the university to recover the full cost of operation. This is in contrast to private universities, where they determine the unit cost of training an undergraduate student per programme as a basis for determining the fees to be charged to recover costs.

Endowments, Gifts, and Donations

One of the traditional sources of income generation for universities is endowment. Endowment is in different forms: professorial chairs, scholarships for students, donations towards programmes of interest to donors, alumni involvement in projects, etc. For example, the PTDF established professorial Chairs at six universities - Ahmadu Bello University, University of Ibadan, University of Port-Harcourt, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, and University of Maiduguri, to undertake research relevant to capacity building in the oil and gas industry. The Chairs were funded in perpetuity using interests generated from the initial N360 million invested on behalf of all six universities (N60 million per university).

Most universities continue to get substantial support from individuals and organisations in different forms such as endowments, gifts, and donations. Several buildings, named after their donors, are found across our university system and have been helping such institutions to meet the serious shortfalls in capital funding by government. Several universities have begun establish Advancement Centres, with influential members of their boards helping them to raise funds from diverse sources such as alumni, foundations, governments, individuals, among others. For example, the University of Ibadan Endowment Fund operated as a separate entity to raise funds and invest as it deemed fit on behalf of the University. It started in 1975 with less than a million Naira and the investment fund grew to close to N1.4 billion in 2009. In 2010, it invested in the construction of an ultra-modern 5,000-seat international conference centre on the University campus. The operation of the latter is now a major source of income for the Institution.

In recognition of the vital role of Advancement, the Federal Government recently partnered with the Nigerian Higher Education Foundation (NHEF) to strengthen Advancement Offices in federal tertiary institutions as part of efforts to diversify university funding sources and improve the quality of education. This culminated into the launch of the National University Advancement Programme (NUAP). It will provide universities with practical toolkits and technical assistance, including guidance on setting



up boards of trustees, investment teams, governance frameworks, and reporting structures to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of endowment funds.

Although many universities already have Advancement Offices, they are yet to optimise their potential. The NUAP initiative will help them quickly adopt effective fundraising models that complement budgetary allocations from government, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and other sources.

Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)

Universities have developed different channels for generating funds. It varies from the establishment of part-time programmes to consultancy units. In practice, federal institutions are expected by the Federal Government to generate IGR equivalent to not less than 10% of the total allocation. This has led to diverse initiatives such as bread making, table water production, to mention a few, by these institutions with adverse impacts, in some cases, on the performance of their core research and academic functions.

As noted earlier, non-payment of tuition fees in federal universities applies only to undergraduate programmes, while postgraduate students pay fees. Consequently, most universities run postgraduate programmes as a source of revenue. Added to this is the operation of open and distance learning (ODL) programmes.

Grants

A major factor in improving the capacity of teachers is the availability of research grants to support development-oriented research and innovation. Our universities are to transform into developmental universities through the conduct of applied research that addresses our national developmental challenges, as well as basic research aimed at deepening knowledge in the disciplines. Prior to the establishment of the National Research Fund (NRF) by TETFund, research was being funded by a number of external funding agencies including, among several others:

- * WHO (The World Health Organisation)
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- * FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation)
- * NIH (National Institute of Health), USA
- * World Bank
- * African Development Bank

A number of universities have enjoyed grants from funding agencies such as John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Carnegie, Ford Foundation, World Health Organisation (WHO), among others. For example, the MacArthur Foundation, since its



Through the ACE Project, the 20 centres of excellence created have collectively trained over 16,000 students in postgraduate programmes and short courses, with women representing about 35% of this number. They contributed to over 2,000 peer-reviewed publications, secured competitive research grants, and built modern laboratories that meet global standards. The 20 centres, their research focus and the host universities are presented in Table 9.2. In addition, 6 centres, one per zone, have since launched, focusing on Sustainable Procurement, Environmental, and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE).

Table 9.2 World Bank African Centres of Excellence

S/N	NAME OF CENTRE	HOSTING UNIVERSITY
1	African Center of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID)	Redeemer's University
2	Africa Centre of Excellence for Neglected Tropical Diseases and Forensic Biotechnology (ACENTDFB)	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
3	Centre of Excellence in Reproductive Health Innovation (CERHI)	University of Benin
4	Centre for Dryland Agriculture (CDA)	Bayero University, Kano
5	Centre for Food Technology and Research (CEFTER)	Benue State University, Makurdi – Nigeria
6	ICT-Driven Knowledge Park (OAK-PARK)	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
7	Centre for Oilfields Chemicals Research (CEFOR)	University of Port Harcourt
8	Centre for Public Health and Toxicological Research (PUTOR)	University of Port Harcourt
9	Centre of Excellence for Population Health and Policy (ACEPHAP)	Bayero University, Kano
10	Centre for Applied Informatics and Communication (CAPIC)	Covenant University
11	Centre of Excellence on Technology Enhanced Learning (ACETEL)	National Open University of Nigeria
12	Centre of Excellence for Innovative and Transformative STEM Education (ACEITSE)	Lagos State University
13	Centre of Excellence for Mycotoxin and Food Safety (ACEMFS)	Federal University of Technology, Minna
14	Centre on Drug Research, Herbal Medicine Development and Regulatory Science (ACEDHARS)	University of Lagos
15	Centre on New Pedagogies in Engineering Education (ACENPEE)	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
16	Centre for Sustainable Power and Energy Development (ACE_SPED)	University of Nigeria, Nsukka
17	Centre of Excellence in Future Energies and Electrochemical Systems (ACE-FUELS)	Federal University of Technology Owerri
18	Pan African Materials Institute (PAMI)	African University of Science and Technology, Abuja
19	ACE in Phytomedicine Research and Development (ACEPRD)	University of Jos



9.2.1.1 Major Problems Impacting the Handling of Revenue:

Of particular concern are the following government interventions in the form of:

- Remittance of a percentage of IGR to Government; and
- The operation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) by Government.

Remittance of a percentage of IGR

Of crucial importance, and particularly undesirable, is the operational remittance of 25% of IGR generated by a university to government. Unfortunately, our federal universities have not been developing needs-based budgets to reflect their income and expenditure for consideration by government. If universities are to recover the cost of operation, it will be readily appreciated that no university can achieve the total projected income from government allocations. IGR is an important component of the budget income and should not be perceived as free additional income that can be utilised anyhow. This accentuates the need for universities to develop their needs-based budget for submission to government, as was previously the case several years ago before the introduction of the envelope system of allocation. Thus, the present practice of remitting 25% of IGR to government is detrimental to the operation of a balanced budget by our federal public universities.

Treasury Single Account (TSA)

While the Treasury Single Account, as implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Central Bank of Nigeria, has strengthened fiscal discipline and enhanced public sector accountability, its blanket application to Federal Universities has generated significant operational and academic constraints that require urgent policy review. Federal Universities in Nigeria are established by Acts of the National Assembly and are governed by statutory provisions that guarantee administrative and financial autonomy, subject to appropriate accountability mechanisms. The TSA policy centralises all revenues of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) into a single account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria, thereby restricting independent financial operations. Universities, by their nature and mandate, differ significantly from conventional MDAs in structure, funding architecture, and operational dynamics.

The distinctive structure of sources of income to federal universities, as earlier presented, comprise:

- i. Federal Government subventions
- ii. Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)
- iii. Endowments and philanthropic donations
- iv. Local and international research grants
- v. Consultancy and specialised academic services



A significant proportion of these funds, particularly research grants and endowments, are restricted funds governed by donor-specific conditions and timelines. The inclusion of such funds within the TSA structure has created procedural bottlenecks inconsistent with global academic best practices. Operational challenges arising from TSA implementation include, among others:

- * Delay in access to research funds for project implementation
- * Constraints on International Research Collaboration
- * Incompatibility with Statutory Autonomy

It is pertinent to note that Federal Universities are already subject to rigorous accountability mechanisms, including:

- Internal Audit Units
- Governing Council Financial Oversight
- External Audit Review
- Legislative scrutiny through the Public Accounts Committees

Arising from the above, the need for exemption of federal universities from TSA is based on the following submissions:

- i. Universities are not conventional revenue-generating MDAs but autonomous academic institutions.
- ii. Research and grant funds are restricted resources that require operational flexibility.
- iii. Delayed financial processes undermine academic excellence and national competitiveness.
- iv. International best practice supports financial autonomy for universities within a regulated accountability framework.
- v. University enabling laws grant Governing Councils authority over financial management, including operation of bank accounts, investment of funds, management of internally generated revenue, and administration of research grants

9.2.2 Major Items of Expenditure

The major items of expenditure in a university, as captured graphically in Fig. 9.4, comprise: recurrent expenditure (salaries and wages); capital projects; overhead (electricity and water supply, maintenance of facilities, etc.); research and development; staff development; staff and student welfare; academic support, and general administration.

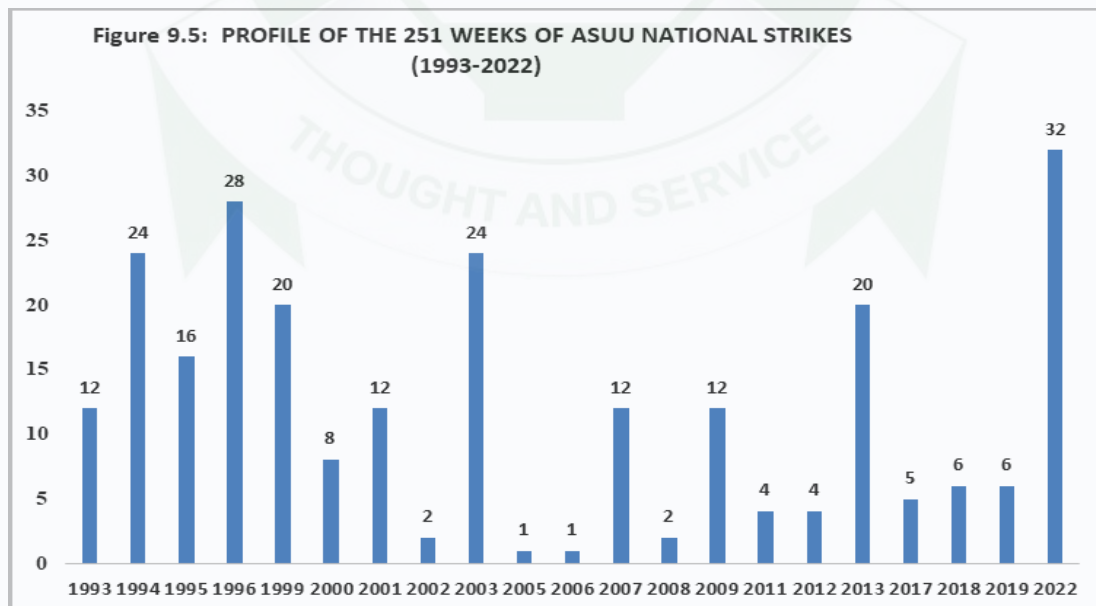


Figure 9.4: Major Items of Expenditure in the NUS

Salaries and Wages

Federal universities are fully supported in respect of salaries and wages through allocation under personnel cost. From available data, allocation to personnel cost accounted for 93% of the total allocation, with salaries and wages accounting for close to 80% of total expenditure. Before the advent of the current democratic governance in 1999, most universities used to borrow from banks to meet the perennial shortfalls in personnel costs. It was, therefore, a welcome relief to the system when the Federal Government funding policy committed to completely cover the personnel costs of universities after carrying out an audit of their nominal roll of staff, to arrive at realistic figures.

Since salaries and wages are by far the highest item of expenditure, it means that they should attract the greatest attention in managing expenditure. They account for the major source of disagreement between ASUU and the government, with the former agitating for an increase to reach a comparative salary level with institutions in other countries. Incidentally, the final agreed salaries, referred to as the 'African revenge' in 2009, were benchmarked against salary levels in sub-Saharan African countries where most Nigerian academics in the diaspora are employed. That the issue of salaries must be resolved urgently is underscored by the profile of 251 weeks of national strikes from 1993 to 2022, as presented in Fig. 9.5.





It is pertinent to note that staff salaries are now being paid directly from Abuja under the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). According to the Federal Government, this was for the following purposes:

- * Centralised payroll management for academic and non-academic staff
- * Elimination of ghost workers
- * Accurate personnel data management (appointments, promotions, retirements)
- * Transparency and accountability in salary payments
- * Reduction of payroll fraud and leakages

Overall, IPPIS is designed, according to the Federal Government, to improve efficiency and accountability. This represents a serious indictment of the federal universities in respect of their capacity to manage their financial resources. IPPIS has been a major policy issue, especially among university staff unions, because of concerns about:

- University autonomy
- Peculiarities of academic work (sabbaticals, adjunct appointments, earned allowances)
- Compatibility with university governance structures

It is pertinent to examine how the present academic salaries compare with remuneration of academics in other countries. The current Consolidated University Academic Salary Scheme, which emanated from the 2009 Federal Government agreement with ASUU formed the basis of the contribution by Bamiro (2012) to the project titled “*Paying the Professoriate: A global Comparison of Compensation and Contracts*” (Altbach et al, 2012) which involved 28 countries spread over the world. The study recognised the need to reflect the purchasing power that results from a salary in each country. A simple currency conversion, as is done in most of our discussions on the issue, is not enough, because it does not take into account the differences in the cost of living between countries. A more accurate basis of comparison is the usage of the *purchasing power parity* (PPP) index. The indices are based on an item or a set of items (basket of goods) whose prices are compared with the price of the same item or basket of goods in the reference country (typically the United States dollar), providing a uniform basis for comparison. Thus, the study referred to above adjusted the salaries in each local currency to the PPP index to get a comparable amount in USDPPP. Nigeria was in the 15th position out of the 28 countries surveyed in 2012. Given the intervening years, the current situation is likely to have deteriorated further.



Any discussion of salaries and wages in the NUS will be incomplete without reference to the recruitment policy of each university. The level of academic staff for each programme is expected to be determined using the NUC-prescribed students/staff ratio for each programme, with the students obtained as the Full-Time Equivalent Students, as presented in Chapter 4. Also prescribed are the norms for the recruitment of non-teaching staff in terms of Senior Administrative/Technical Staff and Junior Staff. Suffice it to note that a number of public universities have thrown caution to the wind in the recruitment of non-teaching staff, leading to bloated salaries and wages, even in situations where there is inadequate academic staff to support the programmes being run by the university. The need to control staff recruitment and profile cannot be overemphasised under the present situation of dwindling resource inflow to the system. Finally, it is encouraging to note the current FGN-ASUU Agreement culminating in a 40% upward review of academic staff emoluments, thereby bringing to an end the several years of dispute over the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement. There are, however, outstanding negotiations by the Federal Government with the non-teaching staff unions – SSANU, NASU, and NAAT - the outcome of which will determine whether the desired peace and stability in the system will be achieved.

Capital Expenditure

The requirements for capital expenditure for most institutions far exceed the usual capital allocation by government. Consequently, all institutions now depend on TETFund to execute most of the capital projects. First- and Second-generation universities require significant capital investment to rehabilitate academic and administrative buildings that have suffered from several years of neglect. The case of the University of Ibadan provides an appreciation of the serious shortfall in capital requirement and allocation by government. As at the time, ETF (now TETFund) allocated N5.5 billion to the University of Ibadan in 2009, an allocation that was subsequently reduced to N3.0 billion; the total estimated requirement of the University was N13.872 billion. This was subsequently prioritised against the diverse projects in the University's 5-year strategic plan.

Overheads

The amount being allocated under overheads is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the universities for electric power supply, water supply. The allocation could not even cover the cost of electric power supply, i.e., the settlement of the monthly bills from the electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) and the purchase of diesel fuel for independent power generation during the frequent power outages. Overall, most universities deploy their IGR to meet the needs of municipal functions that they have to undertake.



Research and Development

Research is funded from various sources: the university's internal resources, government allocations, grants from funding agencies, support from institutional research partnerships. Most universities rely on external funding since government allocations are indeed small. Most of the research grant-providing agencies have been mentioned earlier. Notably, such research projects are in the areas defined by these agencies. Also, most agencies now demand institutional guarantee of proper management of research funds and project execution.

It is pertinent to note the limited funding for the development of research ideas beyond the laboratory stage. Only a few institutions have been able to secure funding for the commercialisation of some of their research results. Worthy of note is the Institution-Based Research (IBR) grants awarded by TETFund to our public institutions. According to TETFund, the IBR Intervention is aimed at supporting and enhancing basic academic research activities in our public tertiary educational institutions, which had been abandoned due to paucity of funds. The intervention has restored the culture of research and development as a core mandate of the institutions. Under this intervention, TETFund disburses funds to institutions annually to support basic research projects by lecturers. As at April 2018, over 2,000 IBR projects have been funded from inception with a total allocation of close to N5.03 billion, distributed as follows: N2.47 billion for the universities; N1.41 billion for the polytechnics; and N1.145 billion for the colleges of education.

It is also noted herein the Federal Government's commitment to strengthening research and development by ensuring universities benefit from the proposed National Research Council (NRC) interventions and companies and multinationals which are to be encouraged to fund research in tertiary institutions. NRC, based on the FGN-ASUU Agreement, as reported in Chapter 4, will be funded with not less than 1% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Council is expected to strengthen innovation, fund research, and support research universities and centres of excellence across the country. It is hoped that the proper mechanism for the implementation of this noble idea will be put in place.

Staff Development

Staff development is in different forms: support for junior academics to undertake research leading to the award of a postgraduate degree; sponsorship of staff under linkage programmes to other institutions for general exposure to teaching and research; attendance of conferences (local and overseas); participation in professional training courses, particularly by technical support staff. Most universities rely on funding agencies (as earlier identified) and IGR for financial support. It is only recently that the TETFund created a window for staff development through the allocation of close to N30 million per session per university.



Staff/Student Welfare

Most universities, especially the First- and Second-Generation universities, built hostels to accommodate their students and several housing units for staff. For example, at the University of Ibadan, there are 12 student hostels built over a period of 50 years, with a capacity to accommodate about 10,000 students out of the total student population of close to 20,000. Undergraduate students used to pay only N4,000 before the University increased the accommodation fee to N14,000 per session. The University was spending close to N35,000 per bed space, leading to a subsidy of N21,000 per undergraduate student accommodated. The subsidy, of course, was borne from the University's IGR, since the Federal Government had asked universities to hand off the management of hostel accommodation. The University has been able to increase accommodation fees for undergraduate students to achieve almost total cost recovery. Postgraduate students are charged economic fees ranging from N40,000 to N70,000. It is important that universities recover the full cost of maintaining students in hostels as a matter of deliberate policy.

Although the staff are expected to pay economic fees for their accommodation in university quarters, it is pertinent to note that they too enjoy some form of subsidy since their rents are much lower than the amount being paid by the vast majority of staff in rented accommodation outside the campus. Thus, there is considerable pressure on the universities to provide accommodation for both students and staff. The operational policy of the Government is that universities attract private investors to build hostels for students under the build-operate-and-transfer (BOT) scheme. This has started to yield results in some universities.

9.2.3 Resource Planning and Management (RPM)

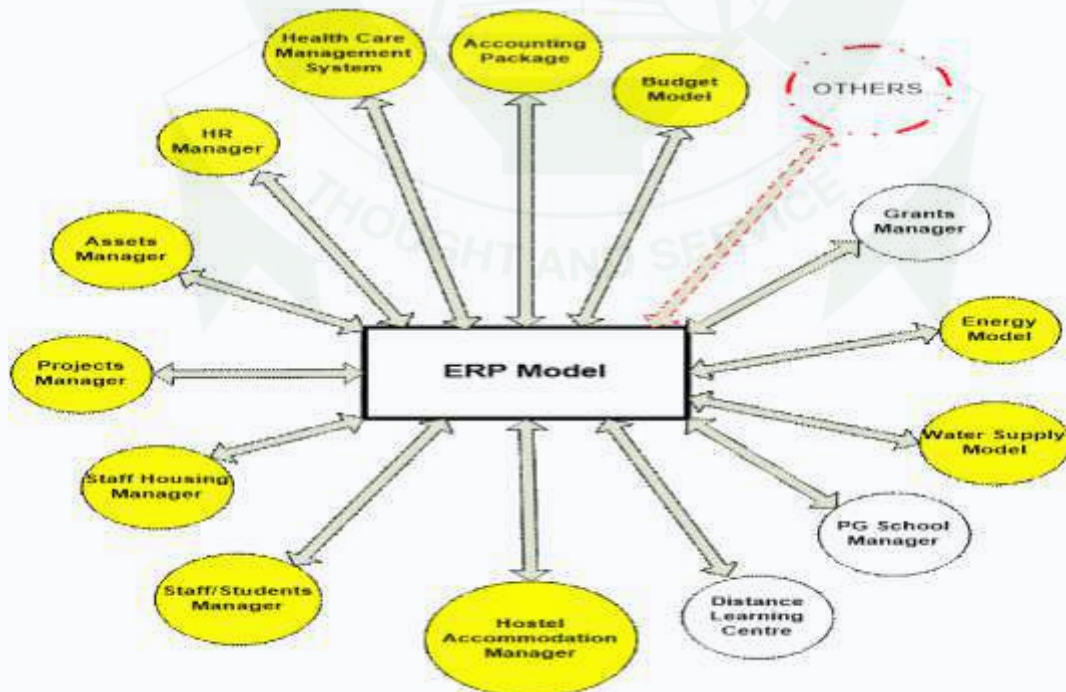
The age characterised by relatively unlimited resource inflow and little demand for rigorous management practices now belongs to the past. The need for critical management of resources in the face of dwindling resources cannot be overemphasised. That it can no longer be business as usual is illustrated, for example, by the increasingly unpredictable inflow of resources to our universities. It is often said that public universities are not in business and therefore can operate from the viewpoint of less rigorous management practices. The belief is that they probably cannot run out of business in an atmosphere devoid of performance measures but with guaranteed income to survive. Surely, this is no longer tenable as institutions are now being increasingly challenged to justify the resources being ploughed into them, while such resources are dwindling by the day. Thus, in proposing the RPM, it is posited that though public institutions are, in general, not in business, they must, however, be business-like in their operations by accounting for and managing resource inflows and outflows in a sustainable manner.



It is pertinent to note that the implementation of RPM is through the development and deployment of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system which can only be contemplated in an institution that is ready for the openness engendered in the operation of such system. An ERP involves the development and deployment of computer-based modules to capture all the data on resource inflows and outflows of the institutions. The required sub-modules, as presented in Fig. 9.6, capture the dynamics of all the resource inflows and outflows of the university and are to be installed at different units in the university where they are to be utilised for the performance of their specific functions while generating pre-determined aggregated management data and information for transmission to a central server. The latter is accessible to top management for data to aid decision-making and system management. Impacts of various policy scenarios – real or aspirational – can be evaluated towards to inform better evidence-based policies and policy implementation.

Of crucial importance is the availability of critical operational data for transmission to the NUC database, towards the management of the system. An important module of the ERP is the needs-based budget module, which connects all the elements of income and expenditure to generate the required needs-based budget. The module also facilitates the determination of budget performance for the attention of the Governing Council during its quarterly meetings.

Figure 9.6: The Enterprise Resource Planning Model (ERP)





9.3 STRATEGIC GOALS

A wide range of strategic activities is presented below towards achieving the overarching goals of ensuring adequate and sustainable funding of our universities to perform, creditably, the key functions of teaching, research, and community service during the plan period of 2026-2030.

1. Creation of an operational environment for the increased autonomy of the universities in managing their financial operations through the removal/modification of restrictive policies such as the TSA and deduction from IGR generated by the universities.
2. Support the design of an appropriate university-wide template for the preparation of a needs-based budget of a university.
3. Support the training of relevant staff of each university on the preparation of a needs-based budget.
4. Development of a Performance-Based Funding (PBF) model tied to measurable outcomes such as research output, graduate employment rates, equity metrics, etc.
5. Submission of the needs-based budgets of the federal universities to NUC for onward transmission to the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning and the National Assembly for consideration during the National Budget Allocation exercise.
6. Exploration of additional sources of income to improve the internally-generated revenue (IGR) through transparent and academically consistent activities.
7. Increase in education budget to a minimum of 15% of the total annual budget by government – Federal and State.
8. Proper and regular audit of university accounts with feedback towards efficient use of available resources and the tackling of corruption and wastage.
9. Development of policy incentives to support philanthropic and corporate contributions to funding of university education.
10. Engagement with the Staff Unions of universities and other stakeholders on best approaches to cost sharing in higher education
11. Development of a 5-year Strategic Plan and a 2-year Operational Plan towards projects packaging for access to funding by TETFund and other funding agencies.
12. Increase of the regulated Education Tax to TETFund from 2% to 4% coupled with the inclusion of private universities in the award of the National Research Fund towards the conduct of national development-oriented research projects.
13. Development of a Scheme for the determination of unit cost of course delivery per programme as an input to the quick determination of the adequacy of total income from all sources in public universities.
14. Operations of funding schemes for the support of indigent students with particular reference to the current National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND).
15. Synergistic operation of the Triple Helix Partnership involving Government, Academia and Industry in addressing the challenges of funding key projects such as collaboration with industry to support research funding, innovation, and commercialisation of research outputs.



16. Promotion of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for handling key projects such as hostels, energy supply, ICT, etc.
17. Endowment and fundraising culture institutionalised through the operation of the National University Advancement Programme (NUAP).
18. Creation of a Nigeria Higher Education International Funding Compact, a formal framework for engaging multilateral banks (World Bank, AfDB, Islamic Development Bank) and bilateral donors (EU, UK, France, Japan, among others) with development-oriented projects.
19. Development and use of enterprise resource planning module (ERPM) towards data-driven management of the university's financial resources.
20. Pocket statistics of the financial status of the university towards achieving Financial Transparency Requirements.
21. Development of annual budget performance for submission to NUC and also as an input to the development of the annual needs-based budget.

9.4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Due cognisance must be taken of the outcome of the SWOT Analysis of the situation as identified below in Table 9.2 in relation to the design of the implementation plan.

Table 9.2:SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Current FME/NUC Policies and Minimum Academic Standards geared towards · Availability of greater resources for investments in infrastructure and teaching-learning resources. · Developing world -class infrastructure, facilities and human capacity · Intensification of funding for research programmes relevant to national and societal needs · Education outcome s that matche s the needs of society.	Weak institutional capacity for the development and operation of new funding models geared towards the generation and proper management of financial resources.
Opportunities	Threats
▪ Leveraging on technology to improve the management of resources ▪ Triple Helix Partnerships involving Government, Industry and Acad emia in addressing socio-economic issues through corporate, alumni, donor partnerships and philanthropy.	▪ Lack of political will to implement the identified policy changes towards the efficient management of the system. ▪ Unstable institutional governance system including short-term political considerations.?



The implementation of the above 21 Strategic Goals is predicated on a multi-stakeholder strategy involving key stakeholders – Government, NUC, TETFund, Universities, Funding Agencies, Parents/Guardians, Industry, University Staff Unions. Of crucial importance is the operation of a data-driven system towards fund generation and management. The ultimate goal is an operational management system that guarantees adequate funding of the universities to enable them to: first, perform the key function of teaching for the production of employable graduates to meet the demands of the world of work; and second, through research, development and innovation, transform into developmental institutions to address the national socio-economic challenges of a knowledge economy (K-Economy).

In what follows, the implementation strategy, timeline, executors, and take-off grant are presented in Table 9.3. The latter is presented only in a few cases while in others the designated executing units are expected to provide a realistic implementation budget.

Table 9.3: Table of Strategic Goals Implementation

STRATEGIC GOALS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
1. Creation of an operational environment for the increased autonomy of the universities in managing their financial operations through the removal/modification of restrictive policies such as the TSA and deduction from IGR generated by the universities.	Creation of an operational environment for the increased autonomy of the universities in managing their financial operations through the removal/modification of restrictive policies such as the TSA and deduction from IGR generated by the universities	NUC, FME (FME) and Universities to pursue the matter with the National Assembly (NASS)	0-3 months in 2026
2. Support the design of appropriate university-wide template for the preparation of a needs-based budget of a university.	Design of appropriate university-wide template for the preparation of a needs-based budget of a university.	NUC, Vice-Chancellors and University Bursars to design the template followed by consultations of appropriate key stakeholders before adopting it.	0-3 months in 2026
3. Support the training of relevant staff of each university in the preparation of needs-based budget.	Training of relevant staff of each university on the preparation of needs-based budget, based on the developed university-wide template.	NUC, Vice-Chancellors and University Bursars.	0-6 months in 2026



4. Development of Performance-based funding (PBF) model tied to measurable outcomes such as research output, graduate employment rates, equity metrics, etc.	Development of Performance-based funding (PBF) model tied to measurable outcomes such as: ➤ Graduate employment ➤ Research output ➤ Financial governance ➤ Equity metrics	NUC, Universities	0-6 months in 2026
5. Submission of the needs-based budgets of the federal universities to NUC for onward transmission to the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning and the National Assembly for consideration during the National Budget Allocation exercise	Submission of the needs - based budgets of the federal universities to NUC for preliminary analysis followed by onward transmission to the FME for consideration during the National Budget Allocation exercise.	NUC & FME	0-6 months in 2026
6. Exploration of additional sources of income to improve the internally generated revenue (IGR) through transparent and academically consistent activities.	Exploration of additional sources of income to improve the internally generated revenue (IGR) through transparent and academically consistent activities, such as establishment of enterprises: ➤ Agricultural farms; ➤ Research and innovation hubs; ➤ Students vocational centres; and ➤ Consultancy services.	Universities	0 – 6 months in 2026 and subsequent years



7. Increase in education budget to a minimum of 15% of the total annual budget by government – Federal and State.	Increase in allocation to Education to a minimum of 15% of the total Annual Budget by government – Federal and State.	NUC & FME in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Budget and Planning	o – 6 months in 2026 and subsequent years
8. Proper and regular audit of university accounts with feedback towards efficient use of available resources and the tackling of corruption and wastage.	Proper and regular audit of university accounts with feedback towards efficient use of available resources and the tackling of corruption and wastage.	NUC & Auditor General of the Federation	o – 6 months in 2026 and subsequent years
9. Development of policy incentives to support philanthropic and corporate contributions to funding university education.	Development of policy incentives to support philanthropic and corporate contributions to funding of university education.	NUC & Universities	o – 6 months in 2026
10. Engagement with the Staff Unions of universities and other stakeholders on best approaches to cost sharing in higher education	Engagement with the University Staff Unions and similar stakeholders on best approaches to cost sharing in higher education. The current FGN –ASUU agreement is a good starting point.	NUC, Vice-Chancellors, FME, Representatives of the University Staff Unions	o-6 months in 2026
11. Development of a 5 - year Strategic Plan and a 2-year Operational Plan towards projects packaging for access to funding by TETFund and other funding agencies.	Development of a 5 - year Strategic Plan and 2-year operational plan for packaging projects for possible funding by TETFund and other funding agencies.	Universities to develop the Plans as basis of packaging various projects for funding by TETFund and other funding agencies.	2026



12. Increase of the regulated Education Tax to TETFund from 2% to 4% coupled with inclusion of private universities in the award of the National Research Fund towards the conduct of national development-oriented research projects.	Increase of Education Tax to TETFund through the change of the 2% Stipulation in the Act gradually to 4% from 2026 –2030. This will promote the expansion of participation by our research institutions, most especially the inclusion of private universities in the award of the National Research Fund for national development-oriented research projects.	NUC, Board of TETFund and Hon. Minister of Education to pursue the change of the Act with the National Assembly	0 – 6 months in 2026
13. Development of a Scheme for the determination of unit cost of course delivery per programme as an input to the quick determination of the adequacy of total income from all sources in public universities	Development of a Scheme for the determination of unit cost of course delivery per programme as an input to the quick determination of the adequacy of total income from all sources in public universities.	At each university, Vice-Chancellor, University Bursar, Deans of Faculties and Director of Academic Planning & Monitoring. NUC to use the outcomes for data-driven engagement with government towards policy change.	0 – 6 months in 2026
14. Operations of funding schemes for the support of indigent students with particular reference to the current National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND)	Operations of funding schemes for the support of indigent students with particular reference to the provision of bursary and the strengthening of the current National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND).	FME, NUC, Board of NELFUND and Vice-Chancellors and Bursars	0 – 6 months in 2026



15. Synergetic operation of the Triple Helix Partnership involving Government, Academia and Industry in addressing the challenges of funding key projects such as collaboration with industry to support research funding, innovation, and commercialisation of research outputs.	Synergetic operation of the Triple Helix Partnership involving Government, Academia and Industry in addressing the challenges of research funding, innovation, and commercialisation of research outputs as well as the funding of key projects such as the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).	NUC, Vice-Chancellors, Bursars, Directors of Research Management Office (RMO), SIWES, Industrial Training Fund (ITF).	Yearly event
16. Promotion of Public Private Partnership (PPP) for handling key projects such as hostels, energy supply, ICT, etc.	Promoting the utilisation of Public Private Partnership (PPP) for handling key projects such as construction of hostels, energy supply, ICT, etc.	FME, NUC, Universities (Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Bursar, Director of Works) to explore various schemes.	Yearly event
17. Endowment and fundraising culture institutionalised through the operation of the National University Advancement Programme (NUAP)	(i) Establishment or strengthening of existing Endowment Fund and fundraising activities as well as training by the newly established National University Advancement Programme (NUAP). (ii) Establishment of a “Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI) Desk with potential for securing investments from successful alumni in the diaspora, targeting specific projects like endowment of professorial chairs, funding for research labs, or scholarship schemes.	The Vice-Chancellor, the Chairman of the University Advancement Centre, the Endowment Fund, President of the Alumni Association, Deans of Faculties, NUC and the Nigerian Higher Education Foundation (NHEF)	Yearly event



18. Creation of a Nigeria Higher Education International Funding Compact, a formal framework for engaging multilateral banks (World Bank, AfDB, Islamic Development Bank) and bilateral donors (EU, UK, France, Japan etc.) with development-oriented projects.	Creation of a Nigeria Higher Education International Funding Compact, a formal framework for engaging multilateral banks (World Bank, AfDB, Islamic Development Bank, etc.) and bilateral donors (EU, UK, France, Japan.) with development-oriented projects.	NUC, FME and the Federal Ministry of Finance	6-12 months in 2026
19. Development and use of enterprise resource planning module (ERP) towards data-driven management of the university's financial resources.	Development and use of a computer -based Enterprise Resource Planning Module (ERP) towards data-driven management of the university's resource inflow and outflow to ensure transparency and accountability of interest to donors and funding partners.	Vice-Chancellor, Bursar, Director of University Management Information System (MIS), Endowment Fund, Head Department Computer Science (External Software Development Consultants, if required)	6-12 months in 2026
20. Pocket statistics of the financial status of the university towards achieving Financial Transparency Requirements.	Development of computer-based Pocket statistics on key financial parameters of the university towards achieving Financial Transparency Requirements.	NUC, Vice-Chancellor, Director of Management Information System (MIS), Bursar, Chief Internal Auditor	Yearly Event
21. Development of annual budget performance for submission to NUC and also as an input to the development of the annual needs-based budget.	Provision of annual report of budget performance for submission to NUC and also as a critical input to the development of the needs-based budget.	NUC to prescribe the required format of presentation while the Universities (Vice-Chancellor, Bursar) are to present to NUC	Yearly event



9.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Specialised monitoring and evaluation programmes will have to be instituted to ascertain budget performance closely, along the lines identified above. Strict adherence to quality assurance mandates will be required in setting standards with respect to clear-cut policies for driving efficiency. A detailed framework with specified protocols and timelines as well as key performance indicators (KPIs) will need to be developed by National University Commission's Policy Development and Advisory Committee (PDAC) and rolled out for the close monitoring of the overall process. At the initial stage, there should be continuous engagement with those involved in implementation, including the Federal and State Governments, universities, as well as students. This will enable regular review and reporting as input to decision-making.

9.6 CONCLUSION

Envisaging the NUS for global competitiveness and readiness for the 21st-century knowledge economy (k-Economy) dictates that our universities are to be supported through adequate and sustainable funding to transform into agents of national socio-economic development. It is a situation that calls for multi-stakeholder funding and the development and operation of a data-driven decision-making system that promotes measurable performance of the basic functions of teaching, research, and community service. Also of crucial importance, as identified herein, is the need for engagement with the political authorities towards reforming the financing mechanism for Nigerian public universities as well as the operation of a high degree of autonomy by the institutions in managing their resources and the performance of their key functions.





10.0

TOWARDS ICT-DRIVEN UNIVERSITIES

Overarching Goal

By 2030, the level of ICT adoption and use in Nigerian universities should have improved by at least 25% of its 2025 level.



10.1 INTRODUCTION

The ICT vision and its strategic goal in this revised Blueprint 2.0 derive from a painstaking review of the ICT provisions in Blueprint 1.0, its implementation, and critical challenges that limited the anticipated outcome. Some of the key observations include:

- a) some critical aspects of a holistic ICT-driven system were not adequately factored into Blueprint 1.0.
- b) there was a complete absence of a well-defined implementation structure and plan, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL) plan and a performance measurement framework (PMF), which were indispensable for results-based monitoring, reporting and subsequent impact evaluation, much like the Blueprint 1.0.
- c) the absence of adequate funding for the overarching ICT initiative through 2019 to 2023, which now necessitates identification of proper funding sources for this edition; there is gratifying information that a project proposal developed for funding support, eventually taken up by the French Development Agency (AFD), is currently on-going in ten universities with a commitment of €38 million.
- d) the disproportionate provision for students, though the special focus on digital literacy was commendable. A streamlined and more appropriate budget is now provided for digital literacy.
- e) there is an overarching need for government to fund the ICT initiative intentionally and optimally, in harmony with other pressing needs in the education sector.
- f) lastly, it has become evident that a viable NgREN is indispensable to the strategic intent to make Nigerian universities practically ICT-driven, digitally and AI-compliant. This priority is prominently reflected in this edition.

Conversely, however, it was acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic further strengthened the case for improving ICT infrastructure to support teaching and learning in Nigerian universities and to specially support online/distance/blended learning, which have now become somewhat pervasive in higher education. Many universities in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, especially the public ones, lagged far behind in adjusting to the “new normal” and bringing their students back into learning in 2020-2021. Hence, the support envisaged in the Blueprint 2.0 is being targeted at reversing this trend through intense system-wide digital literacy to be preceded by vigorous provision of basic ICT facilities.

It is reaffirmed that the social and economic development of any nation-state in the 21st century is directly tied to science and technology (S&T) knowledge that can be harnessed within that nation. It has been proven that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the engine rooms for the supply of middle and high-level manpower needs of a nation. They are major contributors to economic development, ranging from Research, Development



and Innovation (RDI) to the provision of high-quality training for professionals from fields as diverse as engineering, medicine, education, and finance. In recognition of this, countries like the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, and many others leveraged innovations arising from S&T to overcome limitations in the availability of natural resources within their borders. In almost all these cases, these innovations are driven by the activities of their HEIs.

Thus, innovation, knowledge acquisition, sharing, and collaboration would all be thwarted when the required platforms and networks to support them are absent or expensive to deploy. Nigerian HEIs face specific challenges in terms of limited quality teaching resources, science and technology teaching facilities and tools, carrying capacity, among others challenges, which have necessitated the reform that was championed by the NUC. ICT, therefore, remains the fulcrum on which the various elements of Blueprint 2.0 for the system's reform, lie. Nigerian HEIs must be ready to deploy and use ICT for effective teaching, learning, and research.

Going forward, there should be a mandatory digital competency framework for staff and students to attain minimum proficiency in digital literacy, data analytics, and virtual collaboration tools as a graduation and professional requirement. Also, there is need for a comprehensive cybersecurity framework to safeguard academic records, research data, and institutional platforms against cyber threats, ensuring data integrity and system resilience, while universities would be encouraged to adopt artificial intelligence tools to support admissions processing, student performance analytics, academic advising, and administrative decision-making, to improve efficiency and service delivery.

10.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria and indeed most parts of the developing world are finding it difficult to catch up with the rest of the world in their efforts to fulfil the role of producers of trained manpower to meet the needs of the country. This difficulty could be linked to their inability to deploy new technologies that propel global development.

Various stakeholders' consultations, surveys and analysis of the state of ICT in Nigerian universities have been carried out by the NUC and many others, including Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF), NITDA, and TETFund (Needs assessment survey). The results all point to the fact that the state of ICT (knowledge, infrastructure, services and applications) falls far short of world-class standards.



Most ICT practitioners in the system are not core professionals and many do not have the requisite background and knowledge on which proper capacity-building interventions can be made. Such background and knowledge requirements range from network administration, software development, use of basic applications and tools to enhance services, laboratory and simulations applications among others. Establishing such a system calls for a holistic approach towards developing the requisite human capital that will drive the system.

The state of ICT infrastructure is also largely poor, ranging from inadequate campus network infrastructure to inter-campus connectivity infrastructure, data centre infrastructure, internet bandwidth, power supply, super computing infrastructure, and network attached storage infrastructure. Furthermore, ICT services are not rendered in a manner that will support the development of a 21st century higher education system. Services like video-driven lectures and video conferencing, IP addressing, IP telephony, document management system, institutional emails, web hosting, domain name service, data storage/backup services/identity federation and roaming services, telemedicine services and high-performance computing services, are either non-existent or poorly rendered.

The application of ICT for knowledge generation and management is also in a bad state. Application areas include open and distance education, repositories and open educational resources, records management system (for students, staff, and facilities), resource allocation (scheduling, timetable, lecture hall/hostel allocation) inventory management, and accounting/financial management.

Another issue is the perceived reluctance to adopt ICT as a tool for enhancing operational efficiency among many administrators and managers. Though this has somewhat improved, many HEI administrators and managers in the country lack confidence in using ICT tools due to a general fear of technology, fear of being deceived or the misconception about the wide-ranging of uses of ICT and now AI. This is also related to the fact that many ICT practitioners are unable to proffer quality advice that would convince administrators of the value and efficiency of ICT investments.

However, in the last few years, the NUC and the universities (under the auspices of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors) have adopted a more centrally coordinated initiative that addresses the issue of connectivity and services. They have established the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and have made conscious efforts to sustain it, but this remains a challenge. NgREN is a broadband Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS)-based network, providing a robust infrastructure backbone to interconnect all Research and Education Institutions in Nigeria and link them with other Research and Education Networks worldwide.



This is aimed at ensuring a seamless data and knowledge flow between Nigerian researchers and educational institutions and their counterparts around the world. Like all other Research and Education Networks (RENs) worldwide, NgREN is designed as a private network that seeks to connect education and research institutions directly to (i) each other, (ii) other RENs, and (iii) the “Commercial” or “Commodity” Internet. NgREN serves all universities, and the coordination is currently through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (CVCNU), with the NUC hosting the facilities and chairing the Board. The need for the NgREN to be fully reactivated and strengthened has become more obvious than ever.

10.2.1 SWOT Analysis

S/N	Strengths	How to enhance it
1.	Human Resources in the NUS	Ensure that staff with the requisite competencies are appropriately engaged and deployed
2.	Existence of some ICT infrastructure in all universities, though inadequate	Universities should ensure that they have elaborate ICT strategic plans, which would detail their ICT infrastructural needs.
3.	Nigeria Research and Education Network (NgREN)	The NgREN needs to be strengthened as a national asset, and the NUS should be made to subscribe to it with incentives.

S/N	Weaknesses	How to mitigate it
1.	Non-utilisation of existing ICT infrastructure	Universities should ensure that they have elaborate ICT strategic plans, which would detail their ICT infrastructural needs, location of these infrastructure and individual(s) to utilise such equipment
2.	Lack of periodic capacity building	Universities should be encouraged to organise more regular capacity -building programmes for their staff
3.	Absence of a minimum ICT standards document for the NUS	The NUC to develop a minimum ICT standards document to guide the usage of ICT in the NUS

S/N	Opportunities	Strategies for exploration
1.	Collaboration with donor agencies	Universities should be encouraged to explore more collaborations with donor agencies
2.	Leveraging on the ICT savviness of students.	Lecturers should be encouraged to use more ICT tools in teaching, learning, and research
3.	Global visibility	Universities should be encouraged to subscribe to NgREN. This would place them in the national federated repository which in turn, increases their webometric ranking.
4.	A vibrant, savvy and innovative national ICT ecosystem	Collaboration is key, especially with active alumni networks



S/N	Threats	How to elimin ate it
1.	Inadequate funding	Universities should look inwards for more avenues of boosting their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)
2.	Poor attitude of universities' management and teaching staff towards embracing usage of ICT tools	Sensitisation and tra ining workshops should be organised for university management and teaching staff as a way of encouraging them to embrace the advantages of ICT tools in teaching, learning and research
3.	Poor service delivery by Internet Service Providers	In implementing their ICT strategic plans, universities should take cognisance of poor service delivery from Internet Service Providers and make appropriate contingency provisions.
4.	Vandalism of ICT infrastructure	Universities should put in place adequate security to guard their ICT infrastructure.

10.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR ICT-DRIVEN UNIVERSITIES

Given the same opportunities, Nigerians have proven that they can match the very best in the world. However, while other nations are advancing education, particularly S&T education, through widespread deployment of ICT resources, Nigeria has witnessed a decline in educational output and, consequently, in economic development.

Nigeria's competitiveness continues to be severely eroded as countries like South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda increasingly leverage technology services and infrastructure to support learning, research, and development. The increasing scarcity of human resources, like the shortage of qualified teaching staff, would have been mitigated if knowledge-sharing and resource-sharing infrastructure and technology were in place. In the absence of this infrastructure, resources, both human and technological resources, have not been maximised, and human capacity has not been fully realised.

These factors have also impacted human capacity development across multiple levels, progressing at uneven paces, often determined by the level of funding and innovation available in individual institutions. Furthermore, the leadership of these institutions has not been motivated to champion technological innovations as there has been a less-than-adequate exposure to modern learning and knowledge-sharing tools. Over time, growing disconnect between institutional leadership and the rapid advancement of technology. This gap, in many cases, has created a vacuum in innovative ICT deployment



that would undoubtedly drive advancements in S&T education through enhanced teaching methods, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. With this growing disconnect, the awareness of the trends elsewhere in the world was also lost. To summarise, Nigeria's HEIs are falling behind, increasingly widening the digital divide despite their vast potential.

A major impediment, as already noted, is the persistent unwillingness to invest commensurately in ICT infrastructure and systems. There can be no justification for this situation; hence, government and all concerned, especially the private sector, must invest heavily in ICT provisions in the education sector, as a deliberate national development strategy. Universities should invest in reliable infrastructure such as high-speed internet, smart classrooms, learning management systems, and well-equipped computer laboratories to support modern education. The adoption of e-learning platforms that enhance access to course materials, enable virtual classes, and support blended learning.

10.4 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Blueprint with respect to the goal of ICT-Driven Universities is to promote the deployment of harmonised and properly coordinated Technology Platforms for collaborative teaching, learning, and research under three broad headings:

- (a) Provision of a high-capacity inter- and intra-institutional network and collaboration and communication network resources as well as other ICT infrastructure;
- (b) Deployment and management of state-of-the-art ICT services relevant to the transformation of the Nigerian higher education system;
- (c) Integration of ICT into the day-to-day activities of the HEIs for the purpose of learning, administration, and research;
- (d) Technical and managerial human capacity development to ensure that all solutions, services, and infrastructure deployed meet international standards, as well as provides institutional managers the requisite knowledge on the nature and type of services and solutions to be deployed.

Other objectives include:

- (e) Develop minimum standards for Institutional ICT deployments that will ensure the sustenance of the objectives of the reform
- (f) Encourage individual institutions to adhere to the minimum standards.
- (g) Close digital divides among students and universities, and foster collaboration between universities and the private sector (public-private partnerships),
- (h) Use ICT for e-learning purposes, and foster ICT-driven human capital development,



- (i) Take cognisance of the new Artificial Intelligence ecosystem requirements, and providing for cybersecurity, standardisation and ethical guidelines across the system.
- (j) A noble objective would entail turning the NUS from a consumer of ICT products to a developer of indigenous capacity in to produce and deploy ICT devices and systems, through a deliberate policy of embracing homegrown technology. This would lead to, for example, a nationally LMS and other hardware/software, thereby saving money and enhancing self-reliance and wealth creation.

10.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementation will be addressed broadly under two categories:

(A) The Cross-cutting Issues

There are cross-cutting issues that can be addressed centrally, since they are common to all and are more cost-effective when implemented centrally.

- (i) The NgREN model, which addresses internet bandwidth, has driven down the cost significantly.
- (ii) Services like video conferencing enable communication within and outside the networks and are better implemented using common standards and costs.
- (iii) Centrally coordinated subscription to library resources (e-books and e-journals)
- (iv) Development of ICT policies and standards, and
- (v) Implementation of an Information Management System solution for the purpose of data/statistics, planning, etc.

The institution-specific issues

These are specific infrastructure, services, or human resource issues to be addressed by each institution. These range from data-centre infrastructure, campus networks (wired and wireless), power, recruitment of competent staff and staff capacity enhancement, software solutions for inventory, planning, management, financial records, as well as other issues that may be locally relevant.

10.5.1 Recalibrating the Capacity Needs of ICT-Driven Universities

Based on the responses of stakeholders to a needs assessment survey, and critical analysis of current state of facilities in our universities, we itemise the capacity needs/requirements of universities that want to be ICT-Driven as follows:

- (i) All HEIs should, ideally, be provided with e-Learning infrastructure and capacities that will provide interactive teaching and learning for faculty and students.



However, with resource constraints, this initiative can be phased to match available funds while additional resources are being sought. Leveraging the support of the funding sources identified (see later) and, in particular, prioritising private sector engagement, the following parameters are established, while those that fall short must be upgraded

- i. Each physical student class does not exceed 500 at the lower levels (100-200), and is much smaller at higher levels (<200). This is a theoretical limit for on-site multimedia learning environments.
 - ii. All faculty (teaching staff) have their personal laptop computer
 - iii. All faculty (teaching staff) have above average literacy in word processing and presentation software (MS Office or equivalent) and internet use.
 - iv. All institutions have existing basic internet backbone termination equipment that allows an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to provide last-mile (fibre optic cable or microwave radio) internet bandwidth connectivity.
- (2) All HEIs should have adequate e-learning capacities (skills) that will require:
- i. Each institution to provide a functional website, which may be hosted locally or in the cloud.
 - ii. Each institutional website to provide personalised web spaces for each staff and student (portal).
 - iii. All faculty (staff) to maintain a personal website, or an electronic notice board which shall provide at a minimum the following content:
 - a) list of courses being taught
 - b) detailed syllabus for each course to be taught
 - c) assignments/homework for each course taught
 - iv. All faculty (staff) to provide electronic versions of their lecture notes.
- (3) Each HEI should have an e-learning infrastructure that will require:
- i. The guarantee of electricity to power ICT infrastructure for e-learning for at least six (6) hours each day – 8 am – 2 pm. Eight (8) to twelve (12) hours will be ideal in academic areas.
 - ii. Access to at least 155 Mbps of Internet bandwidth for dedicated E-Learning access across the institution.
 - iii. The provision of Wi-Fi network connectivity for at least 80% of faculty (staff) and at least 50% of students. Network access must be available at staff offices, teaching and learning spaces to facilitate ubiquitous and unhindered learning.
 - iv. All wireless access points must support Gigabit Ethernet, dual-band 802.11ac, WPA-2 encryption, and VLAN segmentation at a minimum.
 - v. The provision of smart ICT multimedia bundles: projector (s) or flat screens, smart (IP) camera (s), class PA systems, and smart boards.
 - vi. Access to a local or cloud-based learning management system (LMS). This may be institutionally owned or provided by the NgREN or Regional REN (WACREN or AFRINIC).
 - vii. Development of e-hosting capability or subscription to available platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle, and similar platforms, as found in the study).



(4) **Reworking Organisational Cultures to Adopt Technology for Teaching and Learning.**

Policy advocacy must be aimed at ensuring that teachers and learners in higher education institution (HEI) spaces embrace new paradigms inspired by the possibilities that ICT provides. The traditional ways of extensive note writing on blackboards, dictation, and photocopied notes must give way to PowerPoint slides, web links to online research materials, online libraries, and so on. Physical lectures must be enhanced and enriched with multimedia content – video and audio content. Interactive platforms will provide “virtual reality” experiences to remote students. HEIs must realise that educational technology allows enrolment to triple or even quadruple through the deployment of Learning Management Systems (LMS). With fresh opportunities come new responsibilities. e-learning platforms require that faculty be accountable not just to their institutions, but also to students. They are required to review assessments on time and “attend” lectures at all scheduled time. The lecture notes are also subject to increased scrutiny. These responsibilities must not be avoided; rather, they should be embraced.

(5) **Capacity Building in Essential ICT, Digital, and Internet Application Skills**

Most ICT practitioners in the system are not core professionals and many do not have the requisite background on which any capacity-building intervention can be made. It calls for a holistic approach towards developing the requisite human capital that will drive the system. Such knowledge requirements range from Network Administration, Software development, use of basic applications/tools to enhance services, laboratory and simulations applications, among others, that will form the content of VICBHE-type training programmes.

(6) **Strengthen Cybersecurity and Data Governance**

Comprehensive cybersecurity policies and data protection frameworks must be developed to safeguard institutional information systems, research data, and digital learning platforms from cyber threats. NUC should provide a clear regulatory roadmap that balances technological advancement with the ethical imperatives of data privacy and intellectual property integrity.



10.5.2 Activity Matrix

The following Table summarises the envisaged activities for accomplishing the goals, outputs and expected outcomes:

S/No	Activity	Execution domain (Central or On - Site)	Execution strategy
1	Interconnectivity (one-time infrastructure connection for each institution)	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	one time, over time. at start
2	Annual interconnectivity and maintenance of leased lines and managed services	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	annual with Monitoring and Evaluation
3	Renewal of annual centrally coordinated subscriptions to library resources (e-books and e-journals):	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	annual
4	Installation of storage area networks and central storage/platforms for easy access/retrieval of Open Education Resources, institutional repositories, data backup, etc.	Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	one time, over time
5	High Performance/Supercomputing Computing infrastructure to be strategically located for the entire NUS	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	One time, over time
6	NUS Registry (staff, students and facilities) - Application, Processes and Infrastructure	Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	One time, over time
7	Biometric-based audit/data capture for the NUS Registry (equipment)	Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and institutions	One time, over time
8	Biometric-based audit /data capture for the NUS Registry (processes)	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	One time, over time
9	Procurement/upgrade and maintenance of ICT facilities in all universities to attain at least 70% of institutional need (including Data centre infrastructure, campus networks (fibre, copper and wireless), power backup systems, and software and applications)	On-site at institutions. Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	over three years
10	Capacity building of all staff and students to attain a good degree of digital literacy, using viable and certified training platforms.	Central/Regional/On-site Jointly coordinated by the central NUC implementation consortium and institution task forces	Clear backlog in Yr1; subsequently, 500,000 in-take
11	Capacity development for technical and managerial staff of ICT Directorates	Central/Regional/On-site Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	Clear backlog in Yr1; subsequently, 10x160 =1600 intake



12	Managed services and infrastructure co-locations	On-site at the institutions Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	annual
13	Procurement of multimedia, video conferencing, IP telephony services	On-site at Institutions Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	one time, over time
14	Development and installation of repositories, OER, and Digitisation	On-site at institutions Jointly coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium and the institutions	annual
15	Development of Identity Federation and roaming services	Central - coordinated by the NUC implementation consortium	One time, over time
16	Development of policies and guidelines, such as those on ICT, accreditation, employment, career progression, etc.	Coordinated by the NUC in collaboration with relevant stakeholders	One time, over time

10.5.3 Implementation Phasing

Phase 1: Foundation and Piloting (2026-2027)

Objective: Establish the foundational elements necessary for system-wide transformation while piloting innovative approaches in selected institutions.

Key Activities:

1. Comprehensive baseline assessment (Q2 2026)
2. Policy and standards development (Q2-Q3 2026)
3. Blueprint project expansion (Q3 2026 - Q4 2027)
4. Capacity building launch (Q3 2026)
5. NgREN connectivity acceleration (Q4 2026 - Q4 2027)
6. Content development initiation (Q1 2027)

Deliverables by End of Phase 1:

- Verified baseline data for all institutions.
- Minimum ICT standards published and communicated.
- Digital literacy course implemented in all federal universities.
- 25 additional universities benefiting from interventions similar to the Blueprint.
- 20,000 staff trained in digital skills.



- 50 additional universities connected to NgREN.

Phase 2: Acceleration and Scaling (2028-2029)

Objective: Scale successful interventions across the entire university system while deepening integration and fostering innovation.

Key Activities:

- 1 Universal connectivity (Q1 2028 - Q2 2029)
- 1 Adopt the smart campus initiative (Q2 2028 - Q4 2029)
- 1 AI research infrastructure (Q3 2028 - Q4 2029)
- 1 Digital resource development (Q1 2028)
- 1 Public-Private Partnership expansion (Q1 2028)
- 1 Digital administration rollout (Q2 2028 - Q4 2029)

Deliverables by End of Phase 2:

- 100% university connectivity to NgREN.
- 30 universities achieving "Smart Campus" designation.
- Six operational AI research centres.
- 5,000 OERs developed and available in the national repository.
- System-wide memoranda of understanding signed with at least five major technology companies.
- 60% of administrative processes digitised.

Phase 3: Consolidation and Optimisation (2030)

Objective: Evaluate progress, consolidate gains, optimise systems, and plan for post-2030 sustainability and advancement.

Key Activities:

- * Impact assessment (Q1-Q2 2030)
- * Best practice documentation (Q2-Q3 2030)
- * Sustainability planning (Q3-Q4 2030)
- * Global benchmarking (Q4 2030)
- * Post-2030 visioning (Q4 2030)

Deliverables by End of Phase 3:

- Verified achievement of the 25% improvement target.
- Comprehensive impact assessment report.
- Sustainability framework for all institutions.
- Global benchmarking report.
- Post-2030 strategic framework.



10.5.4 Entrenching Sustainability

A comprehensive sustainability framework is proposed to include the following principles:

- 1 Maintenance planning: Establishing preventive maintenance schedules, budgeting a percentage of capital cost for maintenance and for training local technical staff.
- 1 Technology refresh cycles: Planning for regular hardware and software upgrades, adopting leasing models where appropriate, and phasing investments to avoid simultaneous obsolescence.
- 1 Recurrent budget allocation: Mandating that a minimum percentage of institutional budgets be set aside for ICT recurrent expenditure and creating ICT reserve funds.
- 1 Capacity retention: Developing clear career paths for technical ICT staff and providing continuous professional development.
- 1 Energy sustainability: Investing in alternative energy solutions (solar, inverters) and implementing energy-efficient technologies.

10.6 FUNDING

For the cross-cutting issues above, indicative figures of cost are provided below just for guidance of those who will be charged with the responsibility for implementation:

- (i) Interconnectivity (one-time infrastructure cost): N20 million per institution
- (ii) Annual interconnectivity cost for leased lines and managed services: N18 million per institution per annum. (Some institutions may require more capacity and should make adequate provisions accordingly)
- (iii) Annual centrally coordinated subscriptions to library resources (e-books and e-journals): average of N10 million per institution per annum for access to state-of-the-art e-resources, including ScienceDirect, EBSCO, lawscope, and Medline.
- (iv) Storage area networks and central storage/platforms for easy access/retrieval of Open Education Resources, institutional repositories, data backup: N200 million

For the institution-specific issues above

- (i) Technical staff capacity development: N50 million per institution
- (ii) Managerial staff capacity development: N20 million per institution
- (iii) Datacentre infrastructure: N80 million per institution
- (iv) Campus networks (fibre, copper and wireless): N200 million per institution
- (v) Power backup systems: N80 million per institution
- (vi) Software and applications: N200 million per institution



10.6.1 Re-Thinking Funding of HEIs for ICT Needs in Nigeria

As earlier indicated, achieving the goals outlined in this effort to recalibrate the ICT needs of the education system requires urgent coordination and integration across the Ministry of Education and its agencies. The objectives set by the regulatory agencies for tertiary education institutions should align with the funding priorities of TETFund, which administers and controls the bulk of the sector's intervention funds. Better alignment between policy direction and funding mechanisms is essential for effective implementation.

The essential pillars of the proposed recalibration are a robust learning management system (LMS) that integrates elements of financial and administrative management and Monitoring and Evaluation; and the NgREN as the backbone for connectivity and network services, while also supporting a Research and Innovation Management System/platform (RIMS). TETFund has a platform, known as the Tertiary Education Research and Application Service (TERAS), which serves as a centralised hub for digital educational resources designed to enhance institutional performance, including plagiarism monitoring. The platform also featured tools for research and innovation management and support, with access to high-speed internet and networked digital infrastructure. There is an evident need for collaboration and integration between TERAS and NgREN. We, therefore, propose an implementation framework that secures an integrated coordination of both platforms to optimise the use of limited resources in the system.

TETFund currently funds only public universities, which are 140, but this plan is for all 30 universities in Nigeria, because we believe that funding all universities by the concerted efforts of governments at all levels, the private sector and development partners is the way forward. It is important that the outputs of private universities be viewed as national assets rather than purely institutional achievements. Research breakthroughs from Centres such as the Africa Centre of Excellence for Infectious Diseases at Redeemer's University, Ede, have transcended the boundaries of the university and proven to be beneficial to the entire country and the global community.

10.6.2 Possible funding options for the ICT Initiative

The need for special funding for this initiative has been articulated in the justification provided earlier. There is a need for Nigeria's universities to deliver on their mandates as drivers of development. Being ICT-driven is fundamental to this goal. The following sources of funding are thus identified:

- a. Internal sources: Both the NUC and the institutions must commit to funding NgREN.
- b. International sources: Development agencies and partners (World Bank, AFD, TICHAD/JICA, etc)



c. National sources:

- TETFund – special allocations and deliberate strategic support must be specially advocated. The ultimate is an integrated funding system that will see TETFund responding to the strategic needs of all tertiary institutions under the purview of NUC, NBTE and NCCE.
- Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy
- NCC, specifically through the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF)
- National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA),
- Nigeria Communication Satellite (NigComSat): NigComSat can provide internet connectivity at low cost, especially to institutions situated in 'rural' areas with poor connectivity.
- Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)
- Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF)
- IT companies and banks. Some positive consortium initiatives are now emerging.

10.7 MONITORING, EVALUATION, ANALYSIS AND LEARNING (MEAL) PLAN

Objective of the M&E Plan

Without prejudice to the overall MEAL provisions for the entire Blueprint 2.0, a MEAL plan is indicated here essentially to gather quantitative data from the universities over a specified time.

- * Inventory
- * Bandwidth capacity to include hotspots across campuses
- * Classrooms/lecture halls with functional teaching and learning aids (projectors, public address systems, whiteboards, video conferencing systems, etc.)
- * E-resources
- * ICT utilisation/access
- * Cost implication

Some Guiding Thoughts

Quick Wins

- ICT baseline rapid audit to benchmark start of 2026.
- Rollout of Digital Pedagogy TOT via identified ICT capacity building platforms.

Risks & Mitigation

- Cyber-attacks: require cybersecurity protocols and training.
- Vendor capture: introduce e-procurement frameworks.

KPIs as M&E Metrics

- % universities with LMS.
- Bandwidth per student.
- Staff digital literacy certification rate.



Reporting

Performance Dashboard - a publicly accessible digital performance dashboard displaying real-time progress against KPIs above, and connectivity status, digital literacy attainment rates, course digitisation percentages, ICT investment levels, and research output metrics.

Annual Reporting

1. Annual institutional ICT reports: Each university submits an annual ICT progress report to the NUC.
2. Annual NUC consolidated report: The NUC publishes an annual system-wide progress report.
3. Stakeholder engagement: A stakeholder forum should be held to review progress and gather inputs as part of the mid-term review, as deemed necessary.

Independent Evaluation

- A mid-term evaluation in 2028 to assess progress and recommend adjustments.
- A final evaluation in 2030 to verify the achievement of targets and document lessons learned.

10.8 CONCLUSION

- Universities should ensure that they have elaborate ICT strategic plans, which would detail their ICT infrastructural needs.
- The NUC to develop a minimum ICT standards document to guide the usage of ICT in the NUS.
- The NUC should establish benchmarks for ICT deployment in universities.
- Universities should be encouraged to subscribe to NgREN. This would place them in the national federated repository, which, in turn, increases their webometric ranking.
- Sensitisation and training workshops should be organised for university management and teaching staff as a way of encouraging them to embrace the advantages of ICT tools in teaching, learning and research.
- A comprehensive digital literacy programme must be put in place
- Development of an implementation framework that secures the integrated coordination of efforts by key stakeholders (NUC, NBTE, NCCE, and TETFund) in the education sector to optimise the use of the limited resources in the system (all HEIs).

Towards ensuring effective implementation, NUC should adopt the following policy recommendations:

1. Institutionalise Professional ICT Governance, by establishing a national ICT governance framework for the Nigerian University System.
2. Embed ICT into Regulatory and Accreditation Systems by:
 - a. Integrating ICT maturity and National Data Protection Act (NDPA) compliance into the NUC accreditation criteria, and;
 - b. Requiring Universities to submit annual digital transformation and data protection reports.
3. Develop a National ICT Workforce Framework for the Nigerian University System by:



- a. Creating a structured career pathway and certification requirements in ICT, and;
 - b. Institutionalising continuous professional development for ICT staff.
4. Establish Centralised Monitoring and Accountability Systems by developing an NUC digital dashboard for (i) performance monitoring, (ii) compliance tracking, and (iii) incident reporting, with the following KPIs - uptime, service delivery, and compliance rates.
5. Constitution of Nigerian University System Computer Security Incident Response Team (NUS-CSIRT), in alignment with the Nigeria National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy 2021, which mandates sectoral incident response structures to strengthen national cyber resilience and ensure collaboration with the National Computer Emergency Response Team (ngCERT). This also requires the development of a framework to strengthen cybersecurity governance and coordinated incident response across Nigerian Universities.
6. Review the University Academic Brief, such that the ICT Policy and Development Plan currently contained in Chapter 6 of Volume I is separated and reissued as a standalone document. This shall facilitate more effective implementation, periodic review, and timely updates in response to the rapidly evolving information technology landscape, thereby supporting comprehensive digital transformation in the era of Artificial Intelligence.







11.0

STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION FOR IMPROVED REGULATORY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE FUNCTIONS

Overarching Goal

By 2030, NUC should have been restructured and empowered to deliver better on its regulatory and quality assurance functions



11.1 INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the NUC was essentially advisory at inception in 1962, but has since been expanded over the years, as a statutory body with both regulatory and quality assurance functions (National Universities Commission Act Cap N81 LFN 2004 and Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act Cap E3, LFN 2004.)

The power to lay down minimum standards for all universities and other institutions of higher learning and the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards is vested in the Commission. Among other functions performed by NUC are to:

- (i) advise the President and State Governors, through the Minister of Education, on the creation of new universities and other degree-awarding institutions in Nigeria;
- (ii) prepare, after consultation with the State Governments, the universities and such other bodies as it considers appropriate, periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of all universities in Nigeria;
- (iii) lay down Minimum Academic Standards in universities and degree-awarding institutions in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to accredit their degrees and other academic programmes;
- (iv) ensure that quality is maintained within academic programmes in the NUS;
- (v) make such other investigations relating to higher education as the Commission may consider necessary in the national interest;
- (vi) inquire into and advise the Federal and State Governments on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital, of university education in Nigeria and, in particular, to investigate and study the financial needs of university research and to ensure that adequate provision is made for this in the universities;
- (vii) take into account, in advising the Federal and State Governments on university finances, such as grants as may be made to the universities by the Federal and State Governments, private proprietors and by persons and institutions in and outside Nigeria;
- (viii) manage the investment of funds made available to the Commission as grants to the universities;
- (ix) undertake periodic reviews of the terms and conditions of service of personnel engaged in the universities and to make recommendations thereon to the Federal Government, where appropriate;
- (x) recommend to the Visitor of a university that a visitation be made to such university as and when it considers it necessary;
- (xi) act as the agency for channelling all external aid to the universities in Nigeria; and
- (xii) receive block grants from the Federal Government and allocate them to federal universities in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the National Council of Ministers.



11.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

The NUC was established in the wake of a desired expansion of the university system between 1960 and 1962; although its development started with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan, in 1948. Six federal universities were established between then and 1970, including those of the regions taken over by the Federal Government, and now referred to as the 1st generation universities. Subsequently, seven more (2nd generation) universities were established.

Currently, the federal government has established 74 conventional and specialised universities. State-owned universities are now 68, while private universities have grown to 168. Overall, there are 309 universities with temporal and geographical spreads as shown in Figs. 1.1 and 1.2 respectively. The phenomenal increase (77%) in the number of universities took place in the last two decades.

Consequently, the experience and responsibilities of the Commission have significantly increased, with attendant pressure on its regulatory and quality assurance functions.

11.3 JUSTIFICATION

The sharp increase in the number of universities has exerted a great deal of pressure on the quality assurance and regulatory activities of NUC. Thus, it has been difficult to apply appropriate sanctions on the promoters of degree mills as well as those who run unapproved programmes. There is also the absence of a legal framework to revoke the operational licences of authorised government and private universities and address other actions that debase academic and professional activities in the NUS. There is a need to modernise the current NUC accreditation methodology from input-based to a combination of input-based and outcomes-based.

Currently, the NUC lacks an external accountability framework necessary for the discharge of its responsibility of holding universities accountable. The need for international regulatory benchmarking, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Office for Fair Access (both in the UK) should be addressed. A regulatory framework should be provided for cross-border higher education providers (foreign universities operating in Nigeria), while NUC's role as the authoritative source of sector-wide data (enrolment, staffing, funding, graduate outcomes) should be strengthened. The NUC requires an institutional capacity plan specifying required staffing levels, budget, and technology systems with a costed proposal.



SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weakness
i. An agency of government created to regulate degree-awarding institutions, and quality assure. ii. It has institutional expertise representing over 60 years of regulatory and quality assurance experience. iii. It is internationally recognised as a centre for strategic coordination and planning for the development of Nigerian universities. iv. It is the sole agency empowered by the Education Act to lay down minimum academic standards at all levels of university education.	i. Inadequate legal provisions to regulate ii. Large/increasing number of universities iii. Inadequate capacity building/trained officers to man the universities iv. Poor internal financial generation to support its activities v. Poor ICT infrastructure vi. Weak accreditation processes vii. Lack of up -to-date data on students, staff and infrastructure in universities. viii. Absence of an external accountability framework.
Opportunities	Threats
i. Federally funded through budget ii. Access to a pool of academic staff available in the universities iii. Concurrent powers to regulate, given to other professional bodies if synergistically deployed iv. Opportunities for networking with international quality assurance and regulatory agencies.	i. Activities of <i>degree mills</i> ii. Concurrent powers given to some professional bodies that appear to conflict with those of the NUC. iii. Inadequate financial budget from Federal Government iv. Poor response by universities to data generation and dissemination



11.4 STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goal 1: By the end of 2026, all legal instruments that would enable NUC to perform optimally should be passed into Law.

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome
1.	A review of all legal instruments to enable the NUC to perform optimally, in particular: - The prescription of sanctions for promoters of <i>degree mills</i>. - The prescription of sanctions for violations of regulatory guidelines, such as mounting unapproved programmes. - Provisions for NUC's power to grant and revoke operational licences of private universities. - Increasing the bank guarantee sum to ₦1 billion for newly licensed universities. - Making provisions for the NUC's powers to suspend licences. - Empowering NUC to intervene where there is a breakdown of the administrative structure in private universities. - Provisions of expansive powers to search, seize and arrest while enforcing regulatory compliance. - Exclusively giving NUC the power of approvals and accreditation of programmes in universities. - Provisions that make NUC the authoritative source of sector-wide data on student enrolment, staffing, funding and graduate outcomes. - Provisions regulating cross-border higher education providers (foreign universities) operating in Nigeria. - Establishing an NUC External Governance Review Board that publishes an annual public accountability report.	- Eradication of <i>degree mills</i> and fake honours. - High entry barrier and financial stability. - NUC given absolute regulatory control of programme approval and accreditation. - Granting NUC powers of enforcement. - NUC will have the power to suspend or revoke operational licences for mounting unapproved programme or failing to meet requisite standards. - Empowering NUC to intervene during administrative breakdown to prevent disruptions to academic activities within the universities. - Improved data quality and reliability. - Enhanced accountability and transparency. - An external Governance Review Board, comprising education experts (local & international), private sector representatives, and civil society that publishes an annual public accountability report on the activities of NUC to enhance accountability.
2.	Production of documents, interaction with NASS to facilitate passage of bill into Law.	- Repeal and re-enactment of the NUC Act. - Empower NUC to legally prosecute promoters of <i>degree mills</i> and those issuing fake honorary degrees. - Grant NUC powers to officially suspend or revoke operational licences when violations occur. - Empower NUC to legally intervene and take over the management of private universities facing total breakdown in administrative functions. - An expanded NUC Board that accommodates representation from ASUU and the student union body. - Consolidating the powers of accreditation exclusively in the NUC.
		June – Dec 2026 NUC FME FMJ NASS FEC



Strategic Goal 2: By the end of 2027, all universities should have well-documented strategic, academic, and Master Plan documents.

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome
1.	Training of NUC staff in the art of preparing strategic documents, including the Academic Brief and Physical Master Plan and the University Law.	i) NUC will have enhanced regulatory expertise in quality benchmarking of academic brief or physical master plan. ii) NUC's strategic map will be professionally drafted with Key Performance Indicators. iii) Standardised templates for universities' growth. iv) Ensure that new universities align their academic plans with the national manpower needs. v) In-house consultancy by NUC and older universities for new private, state and federal universities. vi) Crisis management by staff trained in strategic planning. vii) Integration of digital plans with the electronic NUC portal.
2.	Training of university staff in the art of preparing strategic documents, such as the Academic Brief and Physical Master Plan, through zonal workshops.	i) It will enable university leaders to make informed, strategic decisions. ii) Assist universities to reposition for autonomy. iii) Enhance staff productivity. iv) Ensure standardisation through integrated academic master planning. v) Guarantee a well-coordinated and productive university system. vi) Universities will anticipate challenges and create plans around potential roadblocks. vii) Ensuring that university-level plans align with national priorities of employability and internationalisation.
3.	Monitoring of institutions to ensure compliance.	i) Ensure that infrastructure (laboratories, libraries and hostels) are in consonance with NUC-approved guidelines. ii) Staff audit to verify the required mix and quality of academic staff. iii) Impromptu monitoring to eliminate academic window dressing. iv) Imposition of regulatory sanctions on universities that violate guidelines. v) Detection and closing of <i>degree mills</i> and unapproved affiliations. vi) Monitoring and validation certificates issued by NUC. vii) Technical advisory reports to universities by NUC. viii) Monitoring the quality of governance and management practices by NUC.

Strategic Goal 3: Capacity Building for NUC and University Staff on Quality Assurance Issues

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Annual workshop of NUC Management with University Managers	i) The workshop will ensure strategic alignment and synergy of university administrators with the NUC's new thinking. ii) It provides a feedback loop for organic and long-term progress.	Annually 2026 - 2030	NUC and the universities
2.	Reviving and revamping the Nigerian Universities Quality Assurance Network (NUQAN) to be managed by the universities	i) Shift in ownership to the universities. ii) Peer benchmarking iii) Standardisation with international peers. iv) Improvement in the quality of input and output. v) Monitoring of new programmes for high delivery standards. vi) Improve accountability in the management of financial resources and maintenance of physical facilities. vii) Improve training and better staff recruitment criteria across member institutions. viii) Automation of quality assurance processes. ix) Restoring confidence of stakeholders (employers, students and international partners) in the credibility of Nigerian university degrees.	October 2026	NUC and the universities





3.	Capacity Building Workshops for NUC staff and Directors of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance of Universities	i) Common interpretation of standards by NUC and Directors of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (DAP/QA) of universities. ii) Training of DAP/QA on NUC requirements during resource verification and accreditation exercises will reduce friction during inspection. iii) Accurate data collection by DAP/QA. iv) Effective use of digital tools, such as electronic management dashboards, by staff. v) Strengthening the culture of continuous quality assurance. vi) Effective monitoring of input and output. vii) Expansion of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and e-Learning mastery through the acquisition of skills to plan, develop and deliver high-quality ODL programmes. viii) Integrating ICT into teaching and learning. ix) Aligning Academic Briefs and Physical Master Plans with national manpower requirements. x) Compliance with international academic standards, national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	Annually 2026 – 2030	NUC and Universities

Strategic Goal 4: By the end of 2026, NUC to launch guidelines on various policies

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Research, postgraduate, Open and Distance Learning, staff training, ICT, internationalisation of education, outcomes -based accreditation, OER policies to be developed.	Research and postgraduate: i) Increased knowledge output. ii) Boost Nigeria's contribution to global research output. iii) Providing a structured framework for innovation and local problem-solving Open and Distance Learning and OER: i) Expand access by providing flexible, affordable education to those limited by geography, resources or employment. ii) ODL policies safeguard the equivalence of distance learning and conventional qualifications, ensuring that both qualifications are assessed on equal footing in the labour market. iii) Reuse and remix of digital textbooks and modules significantly lowers the financial burden on students. Staff training and ICT: i) Building the capacity of academic staff to be digitally competent to effectively deliver blended and online learning. ii) NUC transitioning to an e-NUC for automatic quality assurance, data collection and administrative reporting. Internationalisation of education: i) Facilitating transnational education. ii) Collaboration with foreign universities to improve institutional reputation and ranking. iii) Facilitating student and staff mobility. Institutional Synergy i) Universities develop their versions of these policies. ii) NUC ensures a coordinated approach to university governance and academic delivery nationwide.	February 2027	NUC





2.	Production and distribution of policy documents	August 2027	NUC
3.	Advocacy and domestication of various policy documents	Oct. – December 2027	NUC and the universities



4.	Periodic review of existing master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of new universities and existing universities in Nigeria.	i) Ensure that campus development follows approved urban and regional planning standards. ii) Ensure that new universities possess a minimum of 100 hectares of land for conventional universities. iii) Efficient utilisation of land by existing universities for the provision of roads, water and power supply. iv) Ensure that the expansion of universities addresses the national labour requirements. v) Coordinated growth of universities to avoid an over-concentration of certain courses. vi) Ensure that laboratories, libraries and workshops are scaled up to address increased enrolment. vii) Ensure that universities move from reactive to proactive maintenance of physical facilities. viii) NUC to prepare accurate capital grant estimates and a rolling plan for the National Planning Commission and the Federal Ministry of Finance. ix) Master plans target long-term sustainability. x) Employ digital mapping (GIS-based) for monitoring campus growth remotely by NUC.	July – Sept. 2026	NUC and all relevant agencies

Strategic Goal 5: Additional Administrative Structures within NUC for Improved Funding and Data Management.

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Implementer
1.	Revive and revamp the Division in charge of statistics in the Directorate of Research, Innovation and Information Technology	i) Eliminate conflicting data regarding student enrolment, staff strength and programme count. ii) Accurate data for the entire NUS. iii) Real-time and automated data reporting. iv) Evidence-based policy formulation with accurate statistics. v) More equitable distribution of resources and grants. vi) Improved global ranking of Nigerian universities based on reliable data. vii) Improved visibility of the NUS to international partners and investors. viii) Monitoring universities' performance remotely, thereby saving costs. ix) It will provide an early warning system for programmes and institutions that are at risk before they reach the crisis point. x) Will support the national development plan by aligning university output with national manpower needs.	Annually 2026 - 2030	NUC
2.	Upgrade and revamp the Division in charge of Information Technology to a Directorate.	i) Enhanced regulatory oversight. ii) Advanced and modernised IT systems that ensure secure data management. iii) Automated, streamlined, faster and more accurate university performance metrics. iv) Timely evidence-based policy decisions. v) Facilitate e-NUC implementation. vi) Trained ICT staff with professional skills and functional partnerships with technology providers. vii) Functional cybersecurity and compliance with national and international information management standards.	December 2026	





3.	ICT training for NUC staff	i) Strengthening of NUC administrative processes. ii) Improved digital literacy among NUC staff. iii) Advanced competence in the use of information and communication technologies. iv) Improved efficiency in the management of regulatory and quality assurance activities. v) Better collaboration among NUC staff and with universities, stakeholders and the public.	2026 - 2030	
4.	Operationalise the Treasury Management Division in the Directorate of Finance and Accounts to invest the NUC's funds, including the Stabilisation Fund	i) Ensuring financial sustainability of the Commission. ii) Reduce dependency on direct federal budgetary allocations, which are often subject to delays and shortfalls. iii) Identify and execute investment opportunities that provide a steady stream of non-governmental income. iv) Centralised fund management ensures tighter control and more rigorous auditing. v) The centralised structure facilitates prompt preparation and submission of financial reports. vi) Managed investments can act as buffers for both NUC and the universities during broader economic fluctuations and natural disasters. vii) It allows the Department to engage experts to manage the portfolio. viii) Improving NUC and universities' staff welfare, especially serious health challenges requiring urgent intervention.	Annually 2026 - 2030	NUC



5.	Acquisition of a university -wide real-time Management Information System (MIS) domiciled in NUC.	i) Verification of real-time student and staff population. ii) Identify lecturers with simultaneous full-time employment in multiple universities. iii) Implement a unique national student identification system for tracking academic progress and transcript verification. iv) Remote monitoring of universities' activities by NUC, ensuring faster resource verification and accreditation, making them more transparent. v) Instant compliance checks on universities' carrying capacity or staff-student ratio. vi) Data-driven decision-making by NUC and universities. vii) Improved resource allocation. viii) The backbone of the e-NUC initiative. ix) Seamless report by Vice-Chancellors using the data from the MIS. x) To provide a credible, audited data source for enhanced visibility and ranking of Nigerian universities.	Annually 2026 – 2030	NUC



6.	Training of NUC staff on the development and use of the Management Information System (MIS).	i) Ability to use MIS data for short-term and long-term planning, budgeting and resource allocation within the NUS. ii) Ensuring that staff managing the MIS maintain high data integrity. iii) Task automation, such as iv) accreditation results and annual report compilation. v) Real-time monitoring to identify potential problems in universities as they happen. vi) Improve digital proficiency of NUC staff, enhancing overall job performance. vii) Trained staff will ensure the in-house sustainability of the MIS at NUC. viii) Improve regulatory oversight by providing decision-makers with cold, hard data for resource verification and accreditation exercises. ix) Better information dissemination between the NUC, university administrators/managers and other stakeholders. x) The training should be a prerequisite for the roll-out of the e-NUC project.	July 2026	NUC



7.	Training of university staff on the development and use of the Management Information System (MIS).	i) Improve processing speed in student admission, transcript preparation and the collation of examination results by staff. ii) Reduction in data entry error. iii) Informed decision-making using real-time data by university administrators, Heads of Departments, and Directors. iv) Improve forecast trends on students' dropout rate, student accommodation and academic facilities. v) Bridge digital gaps among staff. vi) Enhance professional growth by equipping staff with high-demand technical skills. vii) Transparent tracking of expenditure and revenue in real-time, reducing leakages and ensuring that funds are targeted towards high-impact areas. viii) Effective management of staff mix, physical facilities, automated inventory and human resources. ix) Seamless integration with the e-NUC.	July – Sept 2026	NUC and the universities

Strategic Goal 6: Establishing Operational Guidelines for Budgetary Allocation and Disbursement of Grants to Universities.

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Allocate 5% of TETFund collections to the NUC to ensure the availability of resources to carry out expanded regulatory functions relating to the degree-awarding statuses of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education	Ensuring that regulatory functions are carried out as and when due	2027	Presidency, FME, TETFund
2.	Developing operational guidelines for budgetary preparation, collation and presentation to the National Assembly on behalf of federal universities.	i) Standardised framework and template for preparing budget proposals for ease of collation and reducing errors. ii) Enhanced transparency through clear rules for internally generated revenue and expenditure reporting. iii) Standardised budgeting improves the collective bargaining power of NUC for increased university funding at the National Assembly. iv) It simplifies the budget defence process where NUC leads the presentation on behalf of universities. v) Data-driven budgeting enables actual resource utilisation across universities. vi) Improve budgeting focus on priority areas such as quality assurance activities, infrastructure maintenance and staff promotion. vii) Ensure compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the integrated government payment platform that will reduce friction with the Budget Office of the Federation. viii) Establish clear and predictable timelines for budgetary collation and submission to meet the National Assembly's budget calendar. ix) Ensure that Vice -Chancellors are shielded from the opaque lobbying in the National Assembly that could undermine their role as Chairmen of the university Senate that awards degrees in character and learning.	June 2026	NUC and the National Assembly





3.	Developing operational guidelines for grant disbursement to universities.	i) Enhanced accountability and transparency will be achieved with the development of guidelines, such that grants are used for approved research, infrastructure or staff development. ii) Restoring trust among donors and government agencies (TETFund, Needs Assessment) by formalising funds retirement processes. iii) Increase efficiency in funds access by minimising back-and-forth communication between funding bodies and universities. iv) Simplified application format. v) Equitable distribution across geopolitical zones and states. vi) Implementation of a strategic allocation template that recognises NUC-mandated balance between personnel, overhead and Research and Development. vii) Improve academic quality by incentivising accreditation performance and research output. viii) Resource optimisation by ensuring an alignment with the academic calendar.	June 2026	NUC



Strategic Goal 7: Combining input-based and outcomes-based academic programme accreditation processes, leveraging digitisation to attain full national and international accreditation standards.

S/N	Activity	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Responsibility
1.	Creating a digital data repository	i) Centralisation and standardisation of data from various universities across the country. ii) Enhanced data management and quality. iii) Increased security and compliance using centralised access control. iv) Compliance with data protection regulations. v)	2026-2030	NUC, universities
2.	Implementing online portals	i) Provide self-service capability. ii) Automation of routine tasks. iii) Centralised access streamlining internal and external workflows. iv) Improved internal communication and external collaboration. v) Reduced paperwork.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities
3.	Automating data collection and analysis	i) Increased efficiency and speed in data processing. ii) Enhanced accuracy and consistency in data handling. iii) Better decision-making based on real-time data. iv) Cost reduction and scalability. v) Enhanced security and compliance.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities



4.	Benchmarking and data analytics	i) University ranking and performance monitoring. ii) Enhanced evaluation of academic programmes, library quality, staffing, and physical facilities during accreditation. iii) Verification of personnel. iv) Identification of resource gaps for urgent improvement.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities
5.	Stakeholder participation	i) Establishing a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) to determine the labour requirement for courses. ii) Engagement with educators, alumni, and the private sector in developing and reviewing curricula. iii) Enhanced partnership between universities and industries, NGOs, alumni and government. iv) Promoting non-discriminatory policies on gender. v) Provision of valuable feedback for improved decision-making and mutual trust.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities
6.	Stakeholder training	i) Improved regulatory compliance. ii) Enhanced quality assurance. iii) Strengthened collaboration between universities, industries, and government. iv) Improved feedback mechanisms.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities

7.	Implementing a digital governance framework	i) Workflow automation by reducing manual paper-based processes. ii) Optimised accreditation process. iii) Reduced operational cost. iv) Real-time data access. v) Data-driven policy formulation. vi) Enhanced accountability in accreditation. vii) Improved connectivity via NgREN.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities
8.	Ensuring data security and accuracy	i) Enhanced cybersecurity strategies for university staff and students. ii) Provision of accurate staff, students and facilities data. iii) Established and secure e-Learning environment. iv) Improved accountability with accreditation programmes. v) Facilitation of foreign investment and partnerships.	2027-2030	NUC, Universities



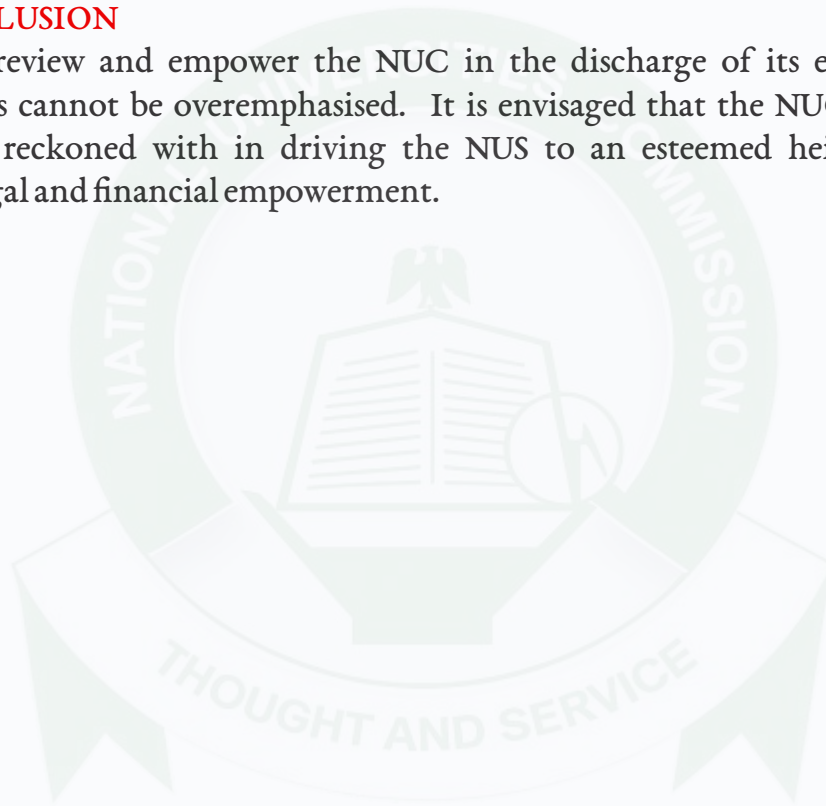


II.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Training of all NUC staff is advocated irrespective of Directorate of domicile, to enable proper internalisation by each staff, of the role and relevance of NUC in achieving the orderly development of university education. Relevant Directorates and Committees (particularly, Directorates of Inspection and Monitoring, Public Affairs, Academic Planning, Accreditation, Research, Innovation and Information Technology) would, however, continue to monitor and reward compliance, while appropriate sanctions would be meted against erring institutions and agencies of Government, as contained in the amended Act.

II.6 CONCLUSION

The need to review and empower the NUC in the discharge of its ever-expanding responsibilities cannot be overemphasised. It is envisaged that the NUC would be an agency to be reckoned with in driving the NUS to an esteemed height, with the appropriate legal and financial empowerment.







ES Meets Technical Team on Integrating GBV in CCMAS



L-R: The Executive Secretary, NUC, Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf, Rhadu, right listening to the a presentation by the World Bank Focal Officer on Gender-Based Violence, Ms. Pamela Tuoye, while the Bank's Social Team Lead in Nigeria, Mr. Elijah Ineero with right attention.



ES Meets Technical Team on Integrating Gender in CCMAS

12.0

GENDER ISSUES

Overarching Goal

By 2030, achieve gender parity (48–52%) in student enrolment, ensure a minimum of 35% female academic staff representation, attain 30% female leadership (Vice-Chancellors, Council Chairs), and institutionalise gender equity as a mandatory accreditation requirement across the NUS.



12.1 INTRODUCTION

Nigerian universities, historically viewed as the "Ivory Tower" of enlightenment, are unfortunately not immune to the patriarchal structures that define the broader Nigerian society. Gender issues in these institutions are not merely "women's problems" but are fundamental human rights concerns that impede national development. Despite the 1999 Constitution's guarantee of equality, the academic space remains fraught with disparities in representation, safety, and opportunity.

Gender equity remains a strategic imperative for the revitalisation of the NUS. While Nigeria has made measurable progress in female enrolment, approaching 48% nationally, systemic inequalities persist in access, programme choice, leadership representation, safety, and career progression. These disparities undermine national human capital development and contradict constitutional guarantees, national gender policies, and international commitments. The strategic goal of this section is to institutionalise gender equity as a core quality, governance, and accreditation requirement of the NUS.

12.2: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK: CURRENT STATUTES AND SOLUTIONS

Nigeria possesses a robust, albeit fragmented, legal framework that can be leveraged to address these issues

Statute	Application to University Context
I. The Constitution of the FRN 1999 (as amended)	Section 42 prohibits discrimination based on sex. This is the "Ground Norm" for any legal challenge against biased university policies.
II. Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015	Defines and criminalises sexual harassment, stalking, and physical violence. It applies directly to incidents on campus (currently domesticated in 30+ states).
III. National Gender Policy (2006/2021)	Mandates 35% "Affirmative Action" in all public appointments, including university governing councils and management.
IV. Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions (Prohibition) Bill	Specifically targets the "educator -student" power dynamic, making sexual advances a criminal offence with strict penalties.
V. ICPC Act / EFCC Act	"Sex-for-grades" is increasingly classified as Sexual Corruption —the use of an official position to demand a "benefit" (sexual gratification) in exchange for an advantage (grades).

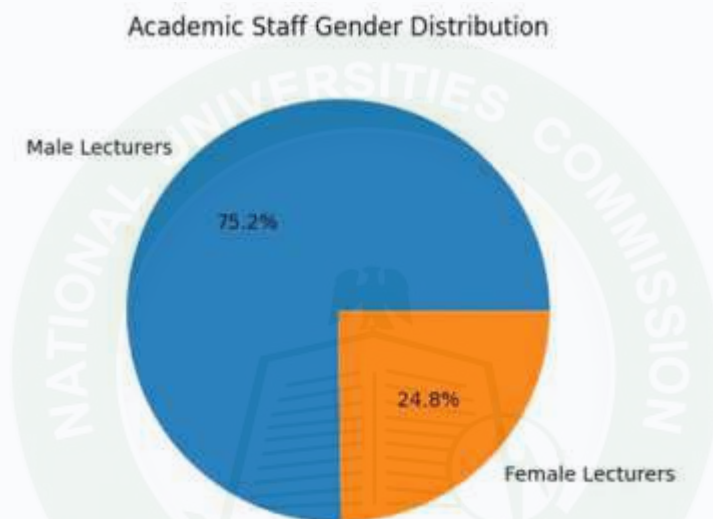


12.3 BASELINE (CURRENT STATE)

12.3.1 Disparities:

Enrolment Disparities: As of the 2017 baseline established in the Blueprint, the Nigerian university system is characterised by a significant gender imbalance. In Federal Universities, out of a total enrolment of 1,260,410 students, 59.1% (744,713) were males while females constituted only 40.9% (515,697).

Gender Gap Statistics: The system recorded a Gender Gap of 1.44 in favour of male students and a gender disparity index of 0.69 regarding female enrolment. This falls below the 50% population benchmark.



12.3.2 Staffing Imbalances:

Academic Staff: The disparity is most acute in academic staffing. Out of 37,119 lecturers, males constituted 75.2% (27,923) while females represented a paltry 24.8% (9,196). The recruitment gender gap stood at 3.04.

Senior Non-Teaching Staff: Males constituted 66.2% compared to 35.8% females.

Junior Staff: Heavily dominated by males at 71.8% versus 28.2% females.

Regional Disparities: The imbalance is noted to be more pronounced in universities in the Northern parts of the country where girl-child enrolment for basic education remains a major challenge.

STEM Representation: Women remain significantly underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programmes, despite a marginal increase in overall female enrolment.

Institutional Culture: The system is plagued by the stereotyping of jobs as "male preserves", a paucity of female role models in Science and Technology, and a culture of male domination often accepted by female staff due to cultural beliefs.

Social Vices: Sexual harassment and the "bastardisation of femininity" are identified as critical weaknesses affecting the system.



12.4 DESIRED/STANDARD STATE (2026–2030 TARGET)

Gender Parity in Admissions: A university system that has achieved a female enrolment target of approximately 50% (parity), moving up from the projected 49.4% target set for 2023.

Equity in Employment: Implementation of affirmative action in employment, specifically targeting a 35% representation for women in human capacity development and IT training.

Safe Learning Environment: A system with zero tolerance for sexual harassment and gender-based violence, supported by enacted policies, special counselling programmes, and survivor care centres in every university.

STEM Dominance: Successful remedial programmes ensuring equal opportunities (50%) for females in science subjects and the production of female science teachers to serve as role models.

Institutional Frameworks: All universities to have established functional centres for Gender Security Studies to promote equity and empowerment.

Leadership Representation: A significant increase in gender representation in university leadership positions (Vice-Chancellors, Council Members, Deans).

While female enrolment is rising, a significant gap remains in specific disciplines and academic ranks.

Regional Disparities

Data shows a "North-South Divide". In universities like the University of Lagos (UNILAG) or the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), female enrolment in certain faculties (like Law or Medicine) often matches or exceeds male enrolment. Conversely, in several Northern state-owned universities, female enrolment remains below 35% due to cultural and security barriers.

Area	Gap Description
Enrolment Parity	The 2017 baseline showed a 40.9% female enrolment. The gap to achieving the 50/50 parity required by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains significant (approx. 9.1% deficit).
Academic Staffing	A massive gap exists in academic staffing, with women occupying only 24.8% of positions. The system is far from the 35% affirmative action target.
STEM Participation	Persistent under-representation of women in science and technology courses compared to Arts/Humanities.
Policy Implementation	While draft guidelines for gender parity exist, there is a gap in the <i>formalisation</i> and <i>enforcement</i> of these guidelines across all 309 universities.
Safety & Protection	Lack of standardised, enforceable policies against sexual harassment in many institutions; survivor care centres are largely absent.
Data & Monitoring	Lack of adequate statistics on qualified women available for recruitment into the university system.



The following table represents the estimated gender distribution based on the 2024/2025 NUC Statistical Digest and institutional reports.

Category	Male (%)	Female (%)	Key Observation
Total student enrolment	56.9%	43.1%	Gap is narrowing in universities in Southern Nigeria.
STEM disciplines	72.0%	28.0%	Heavy male dominance in Engineering/Tech.
Arts & Education	41.0%	59.0%	Female dominance in teaching and language paths.
Academic staff (Professors)	78.5%	21.5%	Significant "glass ceiling" in senior faculty.
Non-academic staff	52.0%	48.0%	Near parity in administrative roles.

12.5 ROOT CAUSES

- I. Cultural & Societal Factors: The "culture of early marriage", prevalent in some societies and the stereotyping of university jobs as a "male preserve".
- II. Management Structure: Inappropriate management structures within universities that perpetuate gender inequity.
- III. Lack of Role Models: A scarcity of female role models, particularly in Science and Technology, which discourages female students from pursuing these paths.
- IV. Weak Enforcement: Non-implementation of affirmative action in employment and non-formalisation of draft guidelines for gender parity in admissions.
- V. Psychological Barriers: Acceptance of a culture of male domination by some female staff due to ingrained cultural beliefs regarding the status of women.
- VI. Security Issues: Prevalence of sexual harassment and a lack of secure environments, which hinders female participation and progression.
- VII. Lack of Support System: Poor support system from basic education levels to enhance the progression of girls to higher education.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Institutional and Legal Frameworks

- I. Constitutional Backing: Section 42 of the 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom from discrimination.
- II. Existing Policies: NUC guidelines on student welfare, sexual harassment, and equity.
- III. National Laws: The VAPP Act, labour laws, and the Child Rights Act support gender protection.

Growing Awareness and Advocacy

- I. Increased gender sensitisation programmes within universities.
- II. Active civil society and NGOs promoting gender equity.
- III. Emergence of Gender Units/Desks in some institutions.



Educational Access Improvements

- I. Rising female enrolment rates, especially in non-STEM disciplines.
- II. Expanding scholarship opportunities for women.

International Influence

- I. Alignment with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and global academic standards.
- II. Access to international funding and partnerships promoting inclusion.

Weaknesses

Policy Implementation Gaps

- I. Weak enforcement of existing gender policies.
- II. Lack of institutional accountability mechanisms.
- III. Gender policies often exist only on paper.
- IV. Cultural and Institutional Bias
- V. Persistent patriarchal norms affecting:
 - Leadership opportunities
 - Task allocation (stereotyping roles)
 - Underrepresentation of women in STEM and senior academic positions.

Inadequate Infrastructure

- I. Limited crèche facilities for staff.
- II. Insufficient female hostel accommodation.
- III. Poor campus safety measures in some institutions.

Sexual Harassment and Reporting Barriers

- I. Fear of victimisation or stigma discourages reporting.
- II. Allegations of institutional cover-ups.
- III. Weak or compromised disciplinary processes.

Data Deficiency

- I. Lack of reliable gender-disaggregated data for planning and evaluation.

Opportunities

Policy Reform and Institutional Strengthening

- I. NUC can integrate gender compliance into accreditation criteria.
- II. Development of comprehensive institutional gender policies.

Funding and Partnerships

Access to TETFund, donor agencies, and international grants.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for:

- a) Hostels
- b) Crèches
- c) Security infrastructure

STEM Inclusion Initiatives

- I. Targeted programmes to increase female participation in STEM.
- II. Mentorship and leadership development pipelines.

Technology and Innovation

- I. Use of e-learning platforms to support flexible learning (especially for nursing mothers).
- II. Digital reporting systems for harassment and abuse cases.



Cultural Reorientation

- I. Increased acceptance of gender equity discourse among younger populations.
- II. Integration of gender studies into GST curricula.

Threats

Socio-Cultural Resistance

- I. Deep-rooted traditional beliefs opposing gender equality reforms.
- II. Misinterpretation of gender initiatives as cultural imposition.

Legal and Policy Sensitivities

- I. Tensions between human rights discourse and local legal frameworks (e.g., LGBTQIA+ issues under Nigerian law).
- II. Risk of institutional misalignment with national laws.

Funding Constraints

- I. Insufficient budget allocation for gender-related infrastructure and programmes.
- II. Competing institutional priorities.

Security Challenges

- I. General insecurity affecting campuses (harassment, assault risks).
- II. Weak enforcement of safety protocols.

Institutional Corruption and Governance Failures

- I. Cover-up of misconduct cases.
- II. Lack of transparency in disciplinary processes.

12.6 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

To move from analysis to action, institutions and regulators (NUC) should:

1. Leverage Strengths

- I. Build on existing legal frameworks and policy instruments.
- II. Scale up successful gender programmes across institutions.

2. Address Weaknesses

- I. Enforce compliance through monitoring and sanctions.
- II. Invest in infrastructure and institutional capacity.

3. Maximise Opportunities

- I. Utilise funding channels and partnerships strategically.
- II. Embed gender considerations into core university planning.

4. Mitigate Threats

- I. Engage in stakeholder dialogue (community, religious, and cultural leaders).
- II. Ensure policies are legally compliant and context-sensitive.
- III. Strengthen governance and transparency systems.

The Way Forward: A Strategic Blueprint

To bridge the gaps, a multi-dimensional approach is required:

- I. Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure: Universities must provide safe spaces, including well-lit campuses, accessible female-only hostels, and on-campus crèches for staff and student-mothers.
- II. Affirmative Action in Promotion: Redefining "Academic Merit" to include gender-responsive metrics. For instance, extending the "tenure clock" for researchers who proceed on maternity leave.



- III. Curriculum Reform: Mainstreaming gender studies into the General Studies (GST) curriculum for all students to foster a culture of mutual respect from the first year of study.
- IV. Digital Reporting Systems: Implementing anonymous, encrypted reporting portals (like "SGBV Response" apps) to bypass the "culture of silence" and local department-level cover-ups.
- V. Mentoring of Schools by Universities: Universities should work closely with basic and secondary schools within their communities to encourage progression of girls. Apart from serving as part of their social responsibility, this will also promote girls' enrolment.

12.7 PROFFERED SOLUTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Action	Practical Implementation
Whistle blower Protection	Guaranteeing that a student who reports a lecturer can complete their programme under a different supervisor without any academic penalty.
Case Transparency	Publishing the names of dismissed/convicted staff in the NUC Bulletin to prevent them from simply moving to another university (blacklisting).
Orientation 2.0	Moving beyond "don't dress provocatively" to "Consent Education" for students and "Professional Boundaries" training for all staff.

12.8 GENDER ISSUES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: ANALYSIS AND POLICY SOLUTIONS

i. Establishment of Creche Facilities

The absence of institutional childcare support disproportionately affects female academics, particularly early-career lecturers. This impacts the following:

- I. Research productivity
- II. Conference participation
- III. Career progression (promotion timelines)

NUC's emphasis on inclusive academic environments and staff welfare aligns with the need for institutional childcare systems.

The NUC's Gender Policy emphasises creating an enabling environment for female staff. Balancing motherhood and academia is a primary factor in the "leaky pipeline" of female researchers.

- I. Discussion: Without on-campus childcare, female lecturers often face higher



The Executive Secretery, NUC, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu with the Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUA), Umudike, Professor Ursula N. Akanwa

rates of burnout or delayed career progression when compared to their male counterparts.

- II. Proffered Solution: Institutions should integrate Early Childcare Development (ECD) centres into their physical planning. This can be subsidised by the university or run as a public-private partnership, ensuring proximity to faculty buildings to allow for breastfeeding and reduced commuting stress.
- III. Mandatory Crèche Policy: NUC should require all federal and state universities to establish on-campus crèches as part of accreditation benchmarks.
- IV. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Universities can outsource management to certified childcare providers.
- V. Flexible Work Arrangements: Hybrid teaching, adjusted lecture schedules for nursing mothers.
- VI. Funding Mechanisms: Explore TETFund intervention lines for staff welfare infrastructure.

2. Intentional Engagement in STEM

Despite rising enrolment, women remain underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) due to cultural stereotypes and a lack of mentorship.

- I. Discussion: NUC encourages "Affirmative Action" to bridge gender gaps in specific disciplines.
- II. Proffered Solution: Scholarship Schemes: Targeted financial aid for female



students in Engineering and Physics.

III. Mentorship Programmes: Pairing female undergraduates with established female professors in STEM to provide visible role models.

IV. Curriculum Review: Ensuring STEM pedagogy is inclusive and lacks gender bias.

3. Addressing the "Tyranny of Biological Challenges"

This refers to the societal expectation that female academics must perform domestic-style labour (hosting, catering, cleaning) during departmental functions or within the academic hierarchy.

I. Discussion: Professionalism should supersede gender roles. Forcing female academics into domestic roles devalues their intellectual contributions.

II. Proffered Solution: Formalisation of Duties: Departments must strictly adopt professional criteria for task allocation.

III. Outsourcing: Universities should outsource catering and cleaning services for events rather than relying on staff or students.

4. Enhanced Accommodation for Female Students

Security and comfort are paramount for female students, who are statistically more vulnerable to off-campus harassment.

I. Discussion: The NUC Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) emphasises a conducive living environment. Lack of on-campus housing often exposes female students to "survivalist" behaviours or security risks.

II. Proffered Solution: Priority Allocation: Female students should receive priority for on-campus housing.

III. Security Infrastructure: Modernised hostels with perimeter fencing, biometric access, and 24-hour security patrols.

5. LGBTQIA+ Concerns, Culture, and Legal Framework

Nigeria's legal and cultural landscape remains clear on this issue, primarily guided by the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act of 2014.

I. Discussion: While global human rights discourse is evolving, Nigerian institutions operate under the laws of the Federation. The NUC adheres to national laws which do not recognise LGBTQIA+ rights.

II. Proffered Solution: Legal Compliance: Institutions must align their codes of conduct with the Laws of the Federation.

III. Focus on Universal Respect: While prohibiting unlawful acts, institutions should maintain a focus on academic discipline and safety for all students, ensuring that the enforcement of laws does not devolve into vigilantism or chaos.

6. Combatting Sexual Violence and Institutional Cover-ups

Sexual harassment and "sex for marks" remain significant blots on the reputation of the NUS.

· Discussion: The NUC recently moved toward a "Zero Tolerance" policy. Institutional cover-ups occur when "Internal Disciplinary Committees" prioritise the university's reputation over justice for the victim.



The "Sexual Harassment of Students Bill" (2025/2026 Update)

The Senate approved the Sexual Harassment of Students (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill in November 2025. This is a landmark legislation specifically designed to end the era of "internal cover-ups".

- I. **Strict Penalties:** The law now prescribes a jail term of up to 14 years (with a minimum of 5 years) for educators convicted of sexual harassment. Crucially, there is no option of a fine for the most serious offences, ensuring that wealthy or influential perpetrators cannot simply pay their way out of justice.
- II. **Consent is Not a Defence:** In a major shift, the law establishes that consent is not a valid defence where a power imbalance exists (e.g., between a lecturer and their student).
- III. **Fiduciary Duty:** The relationship is legally defined as one of "authority and trust", making any sexual advancement a breach of professional duty.

Mandatory "Independent Sexual Harassment Prohibition Committees"

To solve the problem of institutions protecting their own, the new guidelines mandate the creation of independent committees.

- I. **Composition:** These committees must include external members and representatives from civil society to prevent "brotherhood" protectionism among faculty.
- II. **Supremacy of the Bill:** The provisions of this federal bill now supersede any internal university policies or regulations. An institution can no longer "settle" a case internally if it meets the criteria for criminal prosecution.

NUC's Gender-Responsive Justice System

The NUC, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Justice and UN agencies, has called for a Gender-Responsive Justice System within universities.

- I. **Technology Integration:** Use of anonymous, encrypted reporting portals to reduce the fear of retaliation.
- II. **Specialised Units:** Establishing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Units that report directly to the Vice-Chancellor's office and external regulators, rather than Departmental Heads.

12.9 STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goal 1: Achieve Gender Equity in Access and Participation in University Education

Strategic Objective:

To ensure equitable access to university education for women and men, with the long-term objective of attaining gender parity in student admissions and participation across all programmes.

Activities:

1. Introduce phased annual targets for increased female enrolment across universities.
2. Establish remedial and bridge programmes, particularly in science and mathematics, for female candidates.



4. Expand scholarships, bursaries, and fee waivers targeted at indigent female students.
5. Adhere to the 35% affirmative action policy in admission processes.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Progressive movement toward 50/50 gender parity in student enrolment.
2. Reduced loss of qualified female candidates in the admission pipeline.
3. Improved retention and completion rates for female students.

Timeline: 2026–2030

Responsibilities:

NUC, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Federal and State Ministries of Education, and University Managements.

Strategic Goal 2: Strengthen Women's Representation in Academic Leadership and Staffing

Strategic Objective:

To increase women's participation and representation in academic, administrative, and governance/leadership positions within Nigerian universities.

Activities:

Enforce a minimum of 35% affirmative action for women in senior academic and management positions.

Review recruitment, promotion, and appraisal criteria to accommodate maternity and caregiving responsibilities.

Establish leadership mentoring, coaching, and succession programmes for female academics and administrators.

Ensure balanced gender representation on university councils, senates, and faculty boards.

Expected Outcomes:

At least 35% female representation in leadership and decision-making structures.

Reduced gender imbalance in senior academic and administrative positions.

Improved institutional governance through inclusive leadership.

Timeline: 2026–2028

Responsibilities

NUC, University Councils, Governing Boards, Vice-Chancellors, Registrars.

Strategic Goal 3: Eliminate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation in Universities

Strategic Objective:

To eradicate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including sex-for-grades and related abuses, and to ensure safe learning and working environments across the NUS.

Activities:

Align university disciplinary procedures with the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act. Let perpetrators know that they are dealing with a criminal offence.

Criminalise sex-for-grades and related practices through enforceable institutional regulations.

Establish confidential, independent, and survivor-centred reporting and investigation

mechanisms.

Implement compulsory ethics, consent, and professional conduct training for staff and students.

Expected Outcomes:

Zero-tolerance institutional culture toward sexual harassment and exploitation.

Increased reporting and timely prosecution of offenders.

Enhanced confidence in institutional justice and protection systems.

Timeline: 2026–2030 (Immediate and continuous implementation)

Responsibilities:

University Managements, NUC, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and law enforcement agencies.

The Commission should be strengthened to adequately respond to and investigate issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in universities. The Commission's statutory regulatory framework should also be expanded to grant the Commission power to sanction errant universities via a mechanism of administrative fines on a sliding, escalatory scale.

Strategic Goal 4: Bridge the Gender Gap in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Strategic Objective:

To increase female participation, retention, and performance in STEM disciplines where women remain significantly underrepresented.

Activities:

Introduce targeted scholarships, fellowships, and research grants for female students and academics in STEM fields.

Establish mentoring and role-model programmes linking female students with professionals in academia and industry.

Implement pre-university and undergraduate STEM bridge programmes to address early skill gaps.

Promote gender-sensitive teaching and learning approaches in STEM faculties.

Expected Outcomes:

Increased enrolment and completion of female students in STEM programmes.

Improved research diversity and innovation capacity.

Enhanced national competitiveness in science and technology.

Timeline: 2026–2030

Responsibilities:

TETFund, NUC, universities, industry and private sector partners.

Strategic Goal 5: Institutionalise Gender Governance, Security, and Accountability Mechanisms

Strategic Objective:

To mainstream gender equity into university governance, regulatory compliance, and campus security through dedicated institutional structures.

Activities:

Establish fully functional Gender Units in all universities to oversee policy implementation and monitoring.

Create independent Gender Security and survivor care centres providing psychological, legal, and medical support.



Integrate gender equity indicators into NUC accreditation, quality assurance, and performance reviews.
Publish annual gender compliance and performance reports at institutional and system levels.

Expected Outcomes:

Institutionalised gender mainstreaming across the NUS.

Safer campuses with trusted, survivor-centred support systems.

Gender equity embedded as a core quality and accreditation requirement.

Timeline: 2026–2027 (Establishment), continuous enforcement through 2030

Responsibilities:

NUC, University Councils, Vice-Chancellors, Gender Units, TETFund.

12.10 CONCLUSION

These five Strategic Goals provide a coherent, implementable framework for addressing gender issues in Nigerian universities. When fully implemented, they will enhance access, safety, leadership equity, academic excellence, and institutional credibility within the NUS. Gender equity is not a peripheral social concern but a strategic driver of quality, competitiveness, and national development. By operating active inclusion through enforceable objectives, dedicated financing, and regulatory accountability, Blueprint 2.0 positions Nigerian universities as safe, inclusive, and globally credible institutions. The successful implementation of this Gender Strategy will unlock suppressed talent, strengthen governance, and contribute decisively to Nigeria's socio-economic transformation.

To ensure that the NUS aligns with the National Gender Policy (2021) and the Gender and Equal Opportunities (GEO) Bill (as domesticated in various states), the following should be integrated:

1. **Mainstreaming and Compliance:** Establish mandatory Gender Units in all universities to monitor compliance with the 35% affirmative action for both academic and administrative leadership roles.
2. **Safe Learning Environments:** Strict enforcement of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) 2015 to address sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) on campuses.
3. **STEM Incentives:** Implement targeted scholarship schemes and mentorship programmes specifically designed to bridge the gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

In line with the submission of updated draft guidelines to include strategic objectives and updated outcomes, activities, timeline and responsibilities on Gender Issues and "gender equity in the Nigerian University System" are as follows:

1. **Achieve Gender Parity:** Target 50/50 student enrolment through phased annual targets and remedial bridge programmes.
2. **Promote Inclusive Access:** Review admission policies and expand scholarships



for indigent female students to reduce pipeline loss.

3. Enforce Affirmative Action: Implement a minimum 35% female representation in senior academic and administrative leadership roles.
4. Support Career Progression: Adapt promotion criteria for caregiving responsibilities and establish leadership mentoring for female staff.
5. Eradicate Sexual Gender-based Violence (SGBV): Enforce zero tolerance for "sex-for-grades" by aligning disciplinary procedures with the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015.
6. Protect Survivors: Establish confidential, survivor-centred reporting mechanisms and provide specialised psychological and legal support.
7. Bridge the STEM Gap: Increase female participation in technical fields through targeted fellowships and gender-sensitive teaching.
8. Institutionalise Governance: Mandate the establishment of producing functional Gender Units and integrate equity indicators into the NUC accreditation process.
9. Ensure Accountability: Require annual gender compliance reports to track institutional progress and regulatory adherence.
10. Drive National Development: Leverage gender equity as a strategic tool to enhance academic excellence and global competitiveness. The strategy is to move towards the target of 50% female enrolment and 35% academic staffing by 2030.



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13.0

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION FOR WEALTH CREATION AND SELF-RELIANCE

Overarching Goal

By the end of 2028, Nigeria would have a viable and vibrant Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) ecosystem that would move the nation along the path of abundant wealth creation and robust national self-reliance



13.1 INTRODUCTION



The UN Sustainable Development Goal 9 encompasses three important aspects of sustainable development, namely, resilient *infrastructure*, *sustainable industrialisation*, and *creative innovation*. These three factors, together, form a strong foundation for economic growth, job creation, improved living standards and increased sense of well-being.

It has become an indisputable fact that a nation's investment in Research and Development (R and D) has a direct link to its achieving the necessary and sufficient conditions that would foster economic growth and wealth creation. Indeed, investment in R and D leads to a virtuous cycle of wealth creation which, in turn, enables more investment in R and D, and so on.

As a matter of definition, self-reliance is a value system that is rooted in the mindset that nations and their inhabitants can cater to their economic and developmental needs without much assistance from external sources. On the other hand, wealth creation is the use of creative innovation with available human and natural resources to build a viable economic and socially valued system that ensures a high standard of living and an enhanced sense of well-being. The sectors that readily come to mind towards achieving objectives of self-reliance and wealth creation include: energy, agriculture, housing, telecommunication, ICT, transport, and marine economy.

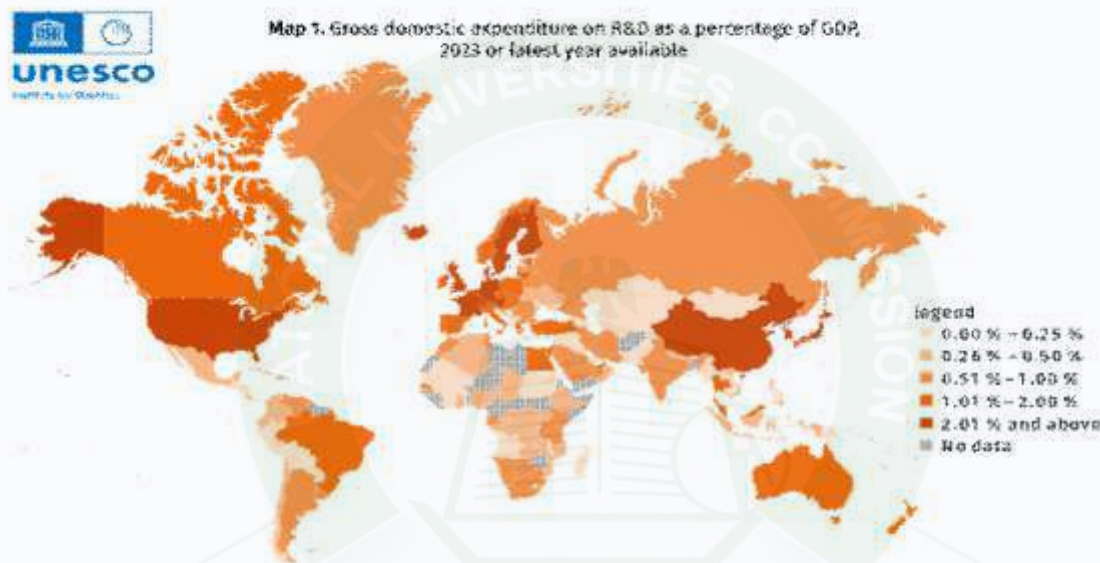
Accordingly, the objective of this chapter is to delineate a strategic blueprint and goals that place R&D as a major tool for achieving national self-reliance and wealth creation.



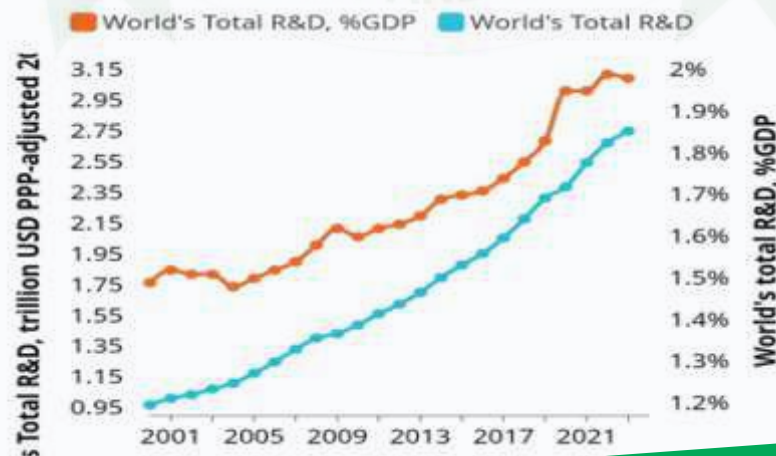
13.2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

13.2.1 Global R and D Funding Trends and the Nigerian National Situation

The UNESCO aspirational target for R and D as a percentage of GDP is about 3%. However, according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the global average figure hovers around 1.8%, although there is a huge disparity between the advanced economies, which average about 2.3%, and developing economies, which average about 1.1%. In fact, the least developed economies average about 0.2% of their GDP expenditure on R and D. Please see the chart below (Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2025).



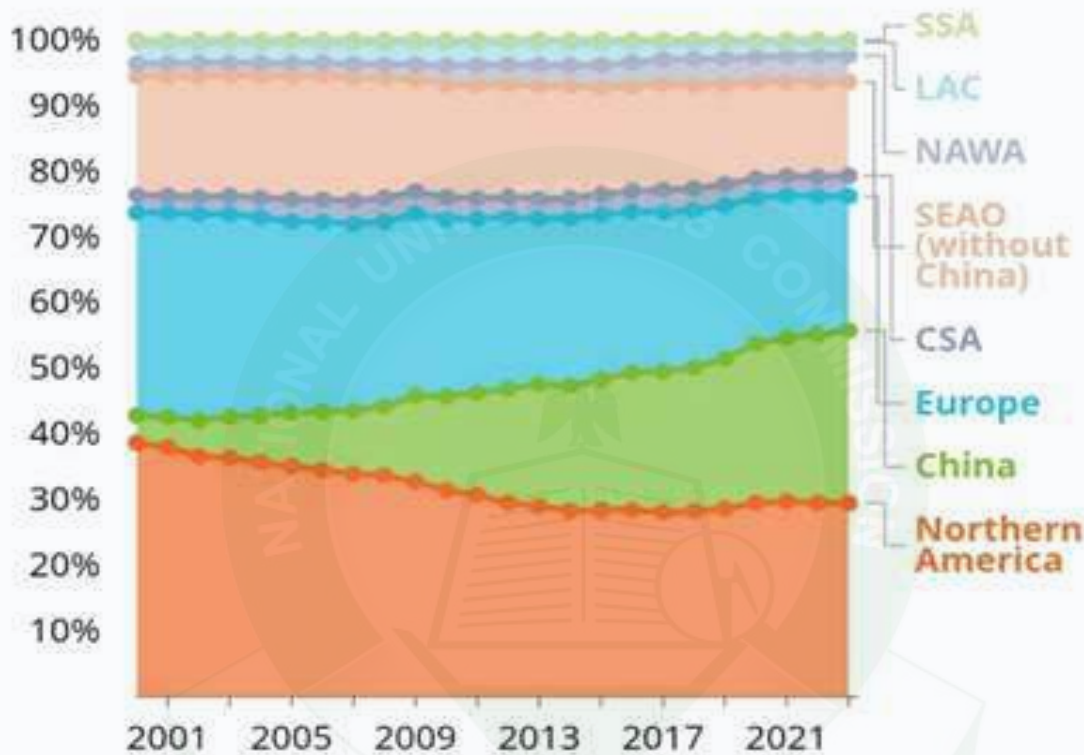
In real monetary terms, the value of R and D has increased to about \$3 trillion over the past quarter of a century, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). See the chart below:





Source: WIPO estimates based on the Global Innovation Index (GII) Database and data from Eurostat, OECD, RICYT, and UNESCO Institute of Statistics)

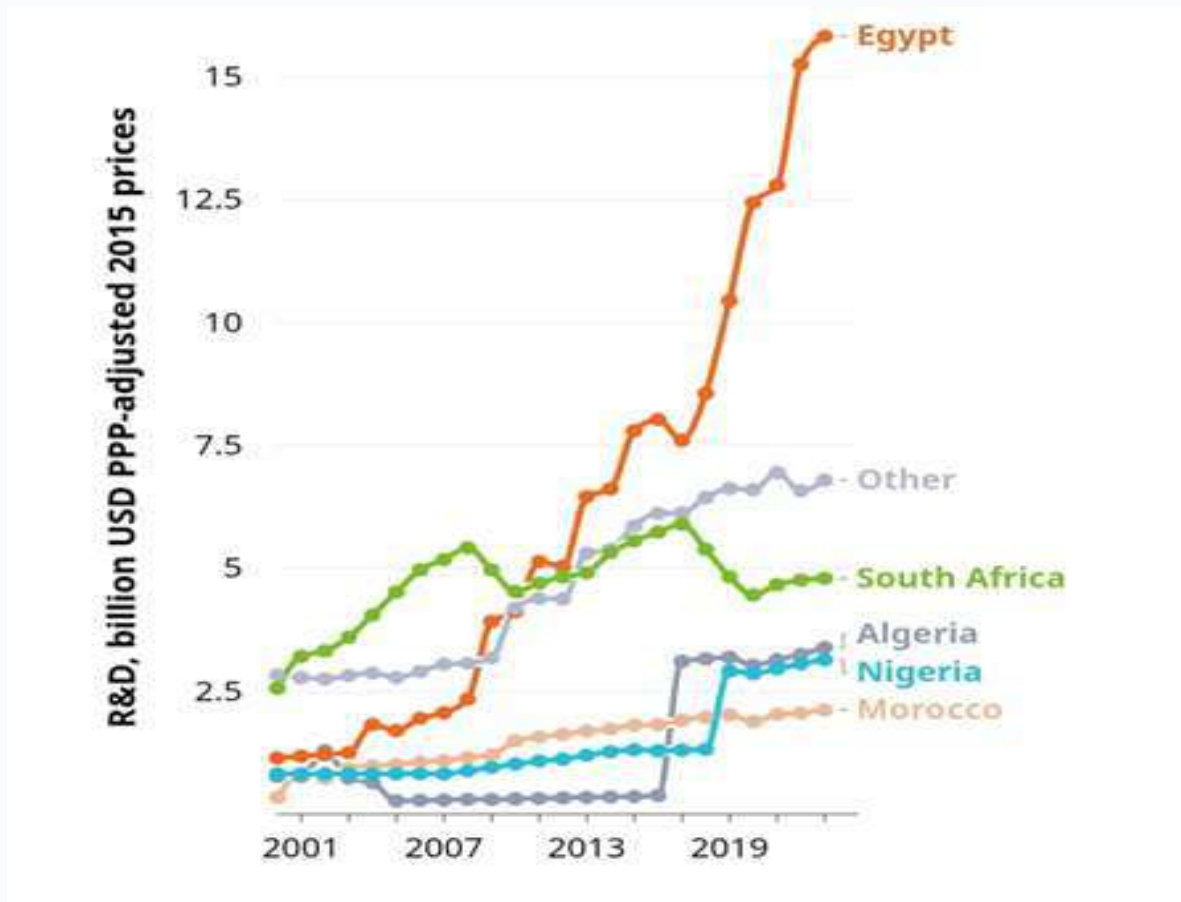
The global percentage share, by region, of this huge R and D expenditure is indicated in the chart below:



Source: WIPO estimates based on GII Database and data from Eurostat, OECD, RICYT, and UIS. SSA refers to Sub-Saharan Africa, NAWA to Northern African and Western Asia, LAC to Latin America and the Caribbean, SEAO to Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania, and CSA to Central and Southern Asia

As can be seen from the above chart, in absolute terms, generally, the Sub-Saharan African region, which includes Nigeria, remains in the unenviable situation of not only being of the very lowest percentage share of the global R & D expenditures, but also having barely increased over a period of a quarter of a century (from the year 2000 to 2025).

Furthermore, the chart below shows the R & D expenditure trend in dollar equivalent of some selected African economies, including Nigeria:



Source: WIPO estimates based on Global Innovation Index (GII) Database and data from Eurostat, OECD, RICYT, and UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS).

The above selected economies' per capita R & D expenditure in billion dollars(b\$/million)are compared in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1: Comparison of Per Capita Expenditure of Selected Countries

Country	UNPF Population Estimate (millions)	R & D Expenditure (billion \$; 2023)	R & D Per Capita Expenditure (\$; 2023)
Algeria	47	3.39	72.1
Egypt	118	15.83	134.2
Morocco	38	2.12	55.8
Nigeria	238	3.14	13.2
South Africa	65	4.8	73.9



The table shows that Nigeria spends about a mere 13 dollars per citizen with regards to R & D.

The above data clearly show that Nigeria, like many other SSA countries, is lagging behind the world in R & D spending.

It must be mentioned that the data considered above includes the entire R & D funding, aggregated across sectors, national and sub-national entities. However, with regard to the funding available to the NUS, the figures are even more abysmal.

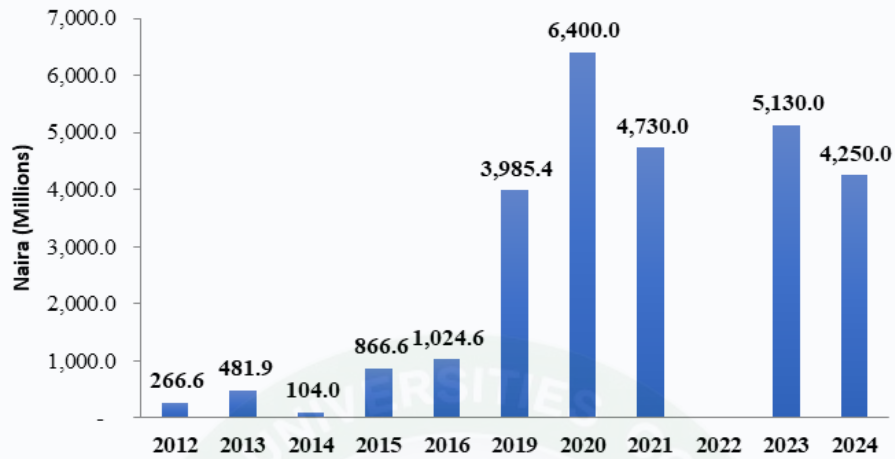
The TETFund National Research Fund (NRF) has been the major source of research grants to researchers in the NUS to undertake multidisciplinary research projects. The breakdown of grants awarded under NRF from 2012–2024 is presented in Table 13.2 and also graphically illustrated in Fig. 13.1. A total of N27, 239 million was committed to support 1,020 grants during the period. This translates to N26.7 million per grant awarded. The fund operates a maximum of N50 million grant.

Table 13.2: Breakdown of NRF Grants Awarded by TETFund (2012–2024)

YEAR	AMOUNT (Naira 'Millions)	NO. OF GRANTS
2012	266.6	13
2013	481.9	20
2014	104.0	8
2015	866.6	33
2016	1,024.6	39
2019	3,985.4	128
2020	6,400.0	217
2021	4,730.0	219
2022		
2023	5,130.0	185
2024	4,250.0	158
TOTAL	27,239.1	1,020
AVERAGE GRANT	26.7	



Figure 13.1: Distribution of the Total Grant Award of ₦27,239 Million (2012-2024)





13.2.2 World Intellectual Property Organization Global Innovation Index (GII) Ranking

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Global Innovation Index (GII) ranks the innovation performance of about 130 economies around the world, using 80 indicators, such as funding, number of researchers per million inhabitants, venture capital deals reached for commercialisation, research infrastructure, etc.

In the GII 2025 report, Nigeria's indicators reveal the following interesting highlights:

- Overall ranking: 105th
- Innovation output: 80th
- Innovation input: 127th
- High-tech imports: 8th
- Knowledge-intensive employment: 35th
- Late-stage Venture Capital (VC) deals: 26th
- Unicorn Valuation: 1st (Unicorns are defined as privately owned start-up companies that are valued at over \$1 billion in private funding).

As can be seen, despite low innovation inputs, such as lower human capital deficit, inadequate infrastructure and an import-dependent high-tech sector, overall, the results show huge opportunities in Nigeria's innovation landscape. This is highlighted very clearly by the fact that Nigeria ranks first in Unicorn companies' valuation.

13.2.3 SWOT Analysis of the Nigerian Universities System with Regards to RDI for Wealth Creation and Self-reliance

Strengths

- (a) Established Research Culture in the NUS
- (b) Large pool of young researchers who can be mentored by experienced researchers

Weaknesses

- (a) Inadequate funding
- (b) Lack of research commercialisation eco-system
- (c) Weak policy framework that enhances research commercialisation
- (d) Inadequate experienced human resources
- (e) Inadequate infrastructures and relevant utilities, such as electricity, water, etc

Opportunities

- (a) An untapped economy that could sustain large job creation from research spin-offs and start-ups
- (b) A large population with purchasing power for any successfully commercialised product



- (c) Young demographics from which a massive research pool could be drawn
- (d) Successful collaboration with the industrial sector

Threats

- (a) The tendency of both young and experienced researchers of the NUS to be lured overseas
- (b) Inconsistent implementation of national policies that favour national self-reliance
- (c) Inadequate governance of the available research fund
- (d) Lack of maintenance culture for research equipment
- (e) Lack of a national effort for the acquisition of the capacity to manufacture basic and advanced research equipment

13.3: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE RDI AND COMMERCIALISATION ECO-SYSTEM FOR THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (NUS)

To create a sustainable ecosystem that commercialises the NUS RDI outputs and hence drives economic growth and creates wealth, a paradigm shift must occur to transform the conventional universities into entrepreneurial hubs. It requires a coordinated approach that fosters strong academia-industry-government linkages (the triple-helix model), improved funding, robust commercialisation infrastructure that includes business incubation, effective intellectual property management, and enhanced teaching of the management of technology and innovation in university curricula.

13.3.1 Sustainable Funding

(a) **Alternative Funding Sources from Local Content and Nigerian Laws:**

In addition to TETFund's NRF, there must be other sources of funding that would be channelled to university RDI. Such funds could be specially raised by strategically leveraging the Local Content Laws to secure sustainable seed money for the relevant sector/industries stipulated in the particular local content law. Aside from TETFund, other specialised agencies of government, such as NCDMB, PTDF, ITF, the NDDC, the Regional Development Commissions and NITDA, could be statutorily made to contribute to university RDI funds.

(b) **Venture Capital, Angel Investment and Investment Banking:**

Funding pathways should be created for investors to fund university innovations and start-ups, via special instruments, such as venture capital and angel investment from blue-chip companies quoted in the Nigerian Stock Exchange and investment banking instruments registered in Nigeria. Specialised banks, such as the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Development Bank of Nigeria, should also be included in the funding template for R & D for wealth creation.



(c) Tweaking the Procurement Law and Retention of NUS IGR:

To raise more funds that can be channelled to RDI, special consideration could be given to the Universities for them to retain a guaranteed percentage (say 30%) of all projects awarded in the institutions. In addition, the policy that national universities should remit 25% of their IGR to the Federal Government should be waived.

(d) Creation of a National Research Funding Entity:

A major highlight of the recently sealed agreement between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is the proposal for the establishment of a National Research Council (NRC), which will be funded with not less than one per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The council is expected to strengthen innovation, fund research, and support research universities and centres of excellence across the country. The establishment of the NRC should urgently be operationalised by an act of parliament. It is suggested that the name of the Council should be changed to the National Research and Innovation Council (NRIC).

In the meantime, TETFund should increase the amount of funds allocated for the yearly NRF in the NUS. In addition, there should be strict governance of the Institution-based Research (IBR) to ensure that young researchers are the sole beneficiaries, especially considering that the IBR has replaced the traditional senate research grants for young scholars in most universities.

13.3.2 Regulatory and Policy Frameworks

(a) Performance-based Disbursement (PBD) Mechanism:

As important as sustainable funding is to foster an ecosystem that creates wealth and economic growth from RDI, the mechanism for disbursement, monitoring and evaluation of the entire value chain, from the conception of the R&D to getting into the marketplace, is just as important, if not more so. Therefore, a performance-based disbursement mechanism and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework must be implemented for a successful RDI and commercialisation. Indeed, there cannot be sustainable financing/funding without a robust performance measurement and accountability from the conception of the research idea or a commercialisable research result to the marketplace.

(b) Intellectual Property Utilisation and Management:

Clear and efficient IP utilisation and management must be developed to foster unambiguous patenting and licensing procedures and to incentivise researchers



within the NUS. In particular, the intellectual property granting agencies must be harmonised. In Nigeria, both NOTAP and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are empowered to grant patents differently.

(c) **Supportive Policy Ecosystem:**

The alignment of national RDI/STI policies to the goals of the NUS should be such that it fosters a cohesive, innovative environment. In particular, national policies should align with the Africa Agenda 2063 and the African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024, which seek to, among other goals, transform Africa into an integrated, prosperous people focusing on economic growth, sustainable development, youth empowerment and self-reliance.

(d) **Leveraging the Nigeria Start-up Act 2022 and other similar laws:**

In 2022, Nigeria passed the Start-up Act, which has provided the legal framework that establishes the National Council for Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship and provides for the creation and development of an enabling environment for technology-enabled start-ups in Nigeria and other related matters.

The objectives of the Act include:

- i. Provision of a legal and institutional framework for the development of start-ups in Nigeria;
- ii. Provision of an enabling environment for the establishment, development and operation of start-ups in Nigeria;
- iii. Provision for the development and growth of technology-related talents; and
- iv. Positioning Nigeria's start-up ecosystem as the leading digital technology hub in Africa, with excellent innovators with cutting-edge skills and exportable capacity.

Furthermore, the Act “applies to companies incorporated under the Companies and Allied Matters Act and granted the start-up label” as granted by the Act and “organisations and establishments whose activities affect the creation, support and incubation of labelled start-ups in Nigeria”.

The Act, as summarised above, would be fully utilised by the NUS for RDI. Besides the Start-up law, there are similar laws and government policies that should be leveraged to promote RDI for wealth creation. All such laws and executive orders should be collated and studied for the purpose of using them to buttress RDI for national wealth creation.



It is also important to note that since the NUS is expected to leverage laws such as the Start-up Act, designed to encourage start-ups and spiff-off enterprises, then certain aspects of laws, policies and regulations inhibiting the participation of university researchers and innovators from fully running companies should be amended, of course, with appropriate provisions to prevent abuse. Indeed, the following question can be posed: if the existing public service laws/regulations prohibits university professors to engage in private practice in their area of specialization, who would run the spin-off and start-up companies that would result from their RDI effort? The role that Stanford University professors and their students played in creating the world-famous Silicon Valley in California, USA, is a fitting answer to this question, for indeed, they were the pioneers in establishing start-ups and spin-offs that culminated in famed innovation super-hub, known today as the Silicon Valley.

(e) **National Coordinator for RDI (NC-RDI) for National Wealth Creation and Self-reliance**

The RDI landscape in Nigeria needs to be streamlined on a national level. The numerous research, development and innovation projects conducted in the NUS, national research institutes, etc., need to be properly documented in a repository. The intellectual property rights due to these RDI also need to be documented and made available for utilisation in a systematic way. More importantly, ongoing RDI on a national level must be streamlined and tracked to serve identified national priority areas.

Accordingly, a National Coordinator for RDI under the relevant agency of the Federal Government or even the Presidency should be created, as a matter of urgency.





13.3.3. Business Incubation and Innovation Clusters Eco-system - the Triple-Helix Concept in Action

The NUS is not lacking in business incubation systems, entrepreneurship training curricula or university-owned commercial ventures. However, the limited contribution of these initiatives to IGR for the NUS and their negligible impact on broader national economic development suggest the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing approaches.

Presently, a national project, the Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprise (iDICE) programme, is already being implemented in some selected universities in the NUS and also in polytechnics. The project is an example of how the triple-helix model of RDI could operate. The iDICE programme is a strategic national project aimed at promoting innovation, creative entrepreneurship, and digital skills development within Nigeria's higher education system. The programme has some unique features, such as a broad, multi-disciplinary network of stakeholders in each cluster: universities, polytechnics, the relevant industry players and government agencies in the same innovation/incubation hub system.

iDICE-type innovation hubs that take NUS R & D into the marketplace would be a new way of creating a society-impactful knowledge system for self-reliance and wealth creation. Business and innovation clusters would be created more intentionally, with set national priorities, adequate funding and a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

Already, there are relevant government agencies that promote entrepreneurship through several interventions, such as the Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIP), Nigeria Incentive-based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL), Agri-Business Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Scheme (AGSMEIS), Bank of Industry loan schemes for SMEs, etc.

However, such interventions need to be done in a more strategic and result-oriented manner, particularly involving the SMEs that bear the brunt of job creation in Nigeria and indeed would benefit mostly and immediately from applied research outputs from the universities.

National priority areas may include:

- i. Sustainable Agriculture
- ii. Sustainable Energy and Energy Security
- iii. Health
- iv. Telecommunication and Digital Economy
- v. Manufacturing
- vi. Transportation (Air and Sea, inclusive)
- vii. Climate Change, Environmental Sustainability and the Blue Economy



Based on the identified priority areas, National Business Incubation and Innovation Clusters (NBIIC) would be created that would include SMEs, universities, experts in the Nigerian Diaspora, and relevant government agencies. There would be a deliberate effort to involve the private and public sectors to create a vibrant national RDI eco-system around the NUS. Organisations such as SMEDAN, MAN, NACCIMA, NASENI and all other relevant trade and professional organisations would all be engaged in the consultation and implementation of the business incubation and innovation clusters. All stakeholders - the government, the NUS and the private sector- must be fully mobilised to create a robust RDI eco-system on a national scale, with the NUS serving as a hub for the creation of start-ups and spin-off companies, creating jobs, wealth and national self-reliance.

Based on the above, our universities are expected to produce not only products with the requisite skill sets to drive the economy, but, also, most importantly, to engage in research and innovation for socio-economic development. Thus, helping to transform our economy from resource-driven to knowledge-driven while facing the challenges of globalisation. This will necessarily involve the transformation of our universities into service intensive universities or developmental universities. Within the Triple Helix partnership, government must establish appropriate agency such as the South Africa Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an entity established to promote the development and exploitation of discoveries, inventions and innovations to bridge the innovation chasm between research and commercialisation. TIA's focus is on technology development, from proof of concept to pre-commercialisation. To achieve this, TIA established the following funds: the Seed Fund, the Technology Development Fund, and the Commercialisation Support Fund. Worthy of note is the performance of TIA as presented in Table 13.3 through which university RDI entered the industrial sector.

Table 13.3:TIA Outcome Performance

Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	5-year Target	5-year Actual
Technologies commercialised	26	49	63	80	90	175	308
Demonstrated bio - based technologies	37	36	37	50	60	75	220
Bio-based entrepreneurs supported	165	45	67	197	140	600	614
MSMEs supported	1,990	3,167	2,671	3,114	2,907	15,750	13,849



13.3.4 Paradigm Shift in the NUS RDI System

Staff strength in the NUS is generally below par, especially with the persistent brain drain that has depleted the ranks of researchers from junior to senior levels. It is therefore practically difficult to maintain a viable RDI system while also bearing the heavy workload of teaching. Accordingly, new measures and programmes are required to ensure that Nigerian universities transition from mere academic institutions into transformational and result-oriented RDI entities, as identified below.

Tenured Track in RDI within the NUS (Research Professors and Professors of Practice):

Research Professors are career researchers within the NUS whose main duty is to engage in RDI. This means that they do not engage in teaching but may engage in the supervision of student theses and projects. Professors of Practice are experienced professionals who have, through years of RDI in the industrial sectors, acquired high expertise of a mainly practical nature and hence can be appointed as professors after a relevant evaluation.

What is common to these two categories of professors is that they focus on RDI, unlike their teaching professor counterparts, who mainly carry out teaching activities, but with minimal research duties.

Mandatory Creation of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Development and Innovation (RDI):

In the NUS, the duties of the DVC (RDI) would be distinct from the duties of the DVC (Academic), who, in most universities, has hitherto overseen both academic and research activities in the NUS. The DVC (RDI) shall coordinate all Research, Development, Innovation and Intellectual Property issues and research commercialisation.

Mandatory Establishment of Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property (TTIP) Directorate in all Nigerian Universities

All universities shall establish and train staff for a Directorate in charge of Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property (TTIP) within six months of the Blueprint 2.0 coming into effect. Streamlining of the institutional RDI eco-system that includes the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, Science and Technology Parks, TVET, etc.

Each university shall appoint an institutional focal person who will ensure synergy in the RDI eco-system of the university.



Entrepreneurial PhD Programme Model - The Innovation-to-Market Doctorate for Africa:

This is a revolutionary postgraduate programme proposal being made by the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) towards achieving the goals of the AU's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024). NEPAD aims to transform conventional PhD programmes and their funding into venture capital projects for knowledge-based enterprises and innovation-driven development. This will definitely be suitable for the NUS in achieving the goals of RDI in wealth creation and self-reliance. The PhDs blend rigorous academic work and market-driven innovation, with the students' graduation tied to the market success of the research result.

The basic programme title is proposed as Doctor of Philosophy in Entrepreneurial Innovation (PhD-EI), with specialised tracks, such as:

- i. PhD-EI in Technology Ventures
- ii. PhD-EI in Social Enterprise
- iii. PhD-EI in Agricultural Innovation
- iv. PhD-EI in Health Technology
- v. PhD-EI in Clean Energy Solutions
- vi. PhD-EI in Digital Services

The NUS should strongly key into this emerging innovation at the continental level and domesticate the programme to suit our national circumstances.

Degree Courses in Management of Technology and Innovation (MoTI):

While the recently revised university curricula document (CCMAS) addresses entrepreneurship training by further improving the already existing courses, there is a need for a more decisive intervention in training the next generation of entrepreneurs in an increasingly technology-enabled world. Technology and innovation have permeated all sectors of the economy, necessitating a more strategic approach to training in technology and innovation at the undergraduate level.

Some core courses that would be taught under the MoTI programme would cover strategic innovation, technology commercialisation, business planning, and management skills, such as:

- I. Marketing of technology and innovation (which focuses on innovation theory, R&D linkage, marketing plans, funding, sales, etc.)



- ii. Global innovation entrepreneurship
- iii. Organisational behaviour
- iv. Management Information Systems (MIS).

13.4 STRATEGIC LINKAGE OF THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM RDI TO EXPERTS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA

Many Nigerian experts and organisations in the diaspora should be co-opted into the national effort to utilise RDI for national wealth creation and self-reliance. This policy document outlines how to engage the Nigerian Diaspora in the RDI effort:

- i. Obtain a database of diaspora experts and organisations relevant to the national RDI policy
- ii. Classify the database according to the national priority thematic areas of the RDI
- iii. Develop a systematic procedure to engage the diaspora with the NUS as part of the RDI eco-system, business incubation and innovation clusters in Nigeria

13.5 JUSTIFICATION

Over a period of ten years, from 2014 to 2024, Nigeria's per capita GDP declined to a third of its value, to about a thousand dollars

(<https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/NGA>).

The rate of economic growth continues to be inadequate to cope with the population growth, resulting in our human development index (HDI) ranking 164th among 193 countries, according to the latest UNDP Human Development Report (<https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>). With a population of over 200 million people, Nigeria has barely 5000MW of electricity on its national grid, giving a mere 25 watts per citizen. This level of power supply can not sustain any meaningful production towards wealth creation.

Nigeria continues to depend heavily on the raw export of oil and gas and other commodities of the extractive industries for much of its foreign earnings. The trade deficit continues to indicate an import-dependent nation, whereby the exports are basically raw commodities, with little or no value addition, while imports are finished and high-tech products.

If there was ever a reminder of how low Nigeria is on self-reliance, it is the difficulty in sourcing face masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key industries in Nigeria today, from oil and gas to telecommunication, transport, etc., are heavily dependent on tech imports. The yearly unemployment figures, especially for young graduates, remain high in an economy that should be having double-digit growth, given the availability of abundant natural and human resources.



The scenario described above tells of a nation in dire need of creative innovation that would result in massive wealth creation for a huge market of over 200 million people. This paradigm shift can occur with sustained national effort in research, development and innovation to create a value chain ecosystem necessary for job creation, economic growth and national self-reliance.

13.6 STRATEGIC GOALS

(a) Overall Strategic Goal

That by the end of 2028, Nigeria would have a viable and vibrant Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) ecosystem that would move the nation along the path of abundant wealth creation and robust self-reliance.

(b) Major Deliverables

- i. Sustainable funding for RDI
- ii. Conducive infrastructural environment for RDI
- iii. Relevant and adequate human capacity building and retention for RDI
- iv. An effective and resilient ecosystem of stakeholders, including the Nigerian Diaspora, that ensures that RDI from the NUS translates into national wealth creation and self-reliance
- v. A robust policy and regulatory framework that fosters RDI for wealth creation and self-reliance

(c) Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1 By the end of 2027, establish a National Research and Innovation Council to be funded with at least 1% of the GDP.
Strategic Goal 2 Strengthen the triple helix (NUS-Industry-Government-Collaboration) model for RDI
Strategic Goal 3 Establish the Office of the National Coordinator for Research, Development and Innovation (NC-RDI) for wealth creation and self-reliance, under the Presidency
Strategic Goal 4 By the end of 2027, competitively selected universities that will pilot the National Business Incubation and Innovation Clusters (NBIIC), in the form of Science and Technology Parks.
Strategic Goal 5 Define and implement institutional changes necessary for RDI to flourish in the NUS

**Strategic Goal 6**

By 2028, to review and streamline a mechanism for funding Research, Development and Innovation, with well-defined key performance indices for monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Strategic Goal 7

By the end of 2026, review and amend existing laws/regulations/policies that would enhance RDI in the NUS

Strategic Goal 8

By the end of 2027, establish new programmes on entrepreneurship at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the NUS

Strategic Goal 9

Establish a strategic linkage between Nigerian experts and organisations in the Diaspora with the NUS for RDI

13.7 IMPLEMENTATION LOG FRAME OF THE STRATEGIC GOALS

13.0 Research, Development, and Innovation for Wealth Creation and Self-Reliance		Overarching Goal <i>That by the end of 2028, Nigeria would have a viable and vibrant Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) ecosystem that would move the nation along the path of abundant wealth creation and robust national self-reliance</i>		
Strategic Objectives	Activities	Expected Outcomes	Timeline (referenced from June 2026)*	Responsibility
By the end of 2027, establish a National Research and Innovation Council to be funded with at least 1% of the GDP.	1. Identify and initiate consultation among the relevant agencies of government (such as FME, NUC, FMSTI) 2. Meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and drafting of the Executive Bill 3. Submission and passage of the Executive Bill for the Establishment of the NRC 4. Submission of the Act to the Presidency for endorsement	1. All identified relevant agencies of government and inter-ministerial committee formed 2. Draft Bill to establish the NRC ready for review by the Presidency. 3. Passage of an Act to Establishment of the NRC 4. The President signs into law the Act to establish the NRC	1. Two months (till August 2026) 2. Three months (till Nov. 2026) 3. Three months (February 2027) 4. One month (March 2027)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC 2. Inter-ministerial Committee/NUC-PDAC 3. NASS/Inter-ministerial Committee 4. The Presidency



Strengthen the triple helix (NUS-Industry-Government, Collaboration) model for RDI	1. Comprehensive review of the laws guiding the operations of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), SMEDAN and MAN 2. Extensively identify and establish a collaboration mechanism between the private sector (as represented by the NSE, MAN, NACCIMA, SMEDAN) and the NUS 3. Review the tax laws and identify corporate expenditures for RDI that would be tax-exempt 4. Identify critical intervention agencies that would benefit the national RDI effort	1. Knowledge of the governing laws of corporate organisations and insight on how to leverage them for RDI 2. Extensive knowledge of private sector entities that can collaborate with the NUS in RDI and establish a structured collaboration mechanism 3. Knowledge of available RDI funding from tax exemptions and incentives 4. Official recognition and engagement of intervention agencies that would unleash national RDI, such as PTDF, NCDMB, ITF, NASENI, NDDC, the Regional Development Commissions, Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, Development Bank of Nigeria, etc.	1. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 2. Six Months (Dec. 2026) 3. Three months (till Sept 2026) 4. Three Months (till March 2026)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NSE/NACCIMA/MAN/SMEDAN 2. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NSE/MAN/NACCIMA/SMEDAN/NUS 3. NUC/NUC-PDAC/FMJ/NRS 4. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NUS



Establish the Office of the National Coordinator for Research, Development and Innovation (NC-RDI) for wealth creation and self-reliance, under the Presidency	1. Define the duties of the NC-RDI and the Criteria for selection 2. Use of a globally renowned management firm to interview and select the NC-RDI	1. The responsibilities and selection criteria of the NC-RDI clearly established 2. NC-RDI duly appointed	1. Two months (till August 2026) 2. Three months (till Nov. 2026)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC 2. Presidency/NUC/NUC-PDAC
By the end of 2027, competitively selected universities that will pilot the National Business Incubation and Innovation Clusters (NBIIC) in the form of Science and Technology Parks.	1. Identify ten national priority areas and define the scope the clusters 2. Collaborate with MAN, SMEDAN, NASENI, NACCIMA, and other relevant trade/professional organisations to establish criteria and identify SMEs and other appropriate organisations that would be part of the innovation clusters 3. Draft and issue the Request for Proposal (RFP) to establish the pilot clusters, with clear objectives that include the establishment of start-ups and spin-offs from the clusters Select the pilot innovation clusters in national priority areas	1. National development priority areas duly identified and the scope of the clusters clearly defined 2. The SMEs and organisations that will be part of RDI clusters duly identified based on the established criteria 3. Publicity of the RoP for the selection of participating firms and institutions in the innovation clusters 4. Selection of the pilot cluster universities and organisations completed	1. Two Months (till August 2026) 2. Three months (Till Nov. 2026) 3. Three months (Till Feb. 2027) 4. Two Months (till April 2027)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC/ACE Alliance 2. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NASENI, MAN/SMEDAN, NACCIMA, etc/ACE Alliance 3. NUC/NUC-PDAC



Define and implement institutional changes necessary for RDI to flourish in the NUS	1. Establish and train staff for the Directorate of Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property in the NUS 2. Create the office of the DVC (RDI) in the NUS 3. Create a tenure track in the NUS for Research/Practice Professor 4. Streamline the institutional RDI ecosystem that includes the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, Science Parks, TVET, etc 5. Review and enforce implementation criteria for the TETFund Institution-based Research (IBR) funding in the NUS 6. The NUC institutes an inspection accreditation scheme to ensure that the NUS has a functional RDI ecosystem	1. Establishment of a Directorate of Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property in the NUS and their staff duly trained 2. Office of the DVC (RDI) established across the NUS 3. The NUS establishes career track for Research Professor/Practice Professor 4. Each institution publishes a policy on RDI and appoints a focal person/Coordinator for RDI, responsible for synergy within the institutional RDI ecosystem 5. Universities to provide their award guidelines for IBR and evidence of three years of compliance 6. Regulations and procedures for NUC-led verification and accreditation system for a functional RDI ecosystem is in place in the NUS	1. Three months (till September 2026) 2. Four months (till Oct. 2026) 3. Six months (till Dec. 2026) 4. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 5. Two months (till August 2026) 6. Six months (till Dec. 2026)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC/CVC/NOTA P/FMCI 2. CVC/Governing Councils/University Senates 3. NUC/NUC-PDAC/CVC/Universities' Governing Councils 4. CVC 5. TETFund/NUC/NUC-PDAC



By 2028, to review and streamline a mechanism for funding Research, Development and Innovation, with well-defined key performance indices for monitoring, evaluation and accountability	1. Review and improve TETFund's National Research Fund (NRF) 2. Establishment of more robust Monitoring and Evaluation indicators for RDI in the NUS 3. All possible funding sources for RDI in the NUS clearly enumerated, including the new sources of funding, such as the proposed NRC	1. Identification of the successes, failures and the performance gaps of the NRF over the past years 2. M and E methodologies for RDI established in the NUS, and M and E officers appointed and trained 3. The funding sources available for RDI in the NUS would be known and a general estimate obtained	1. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 2. Six months (till Oct. 2026) 3. Six Months (till Dec. 2026)	1. TETFund/NUC/NUC-PDAC/CVC/ACE Alliance 2. TETFund/NUC/NUC-PDAC/ACE Alliance 3. TETFund/NUC/NUC-PDAC
By the end of 2026, review and amend existing laws/regulations/policies that would enhance RDI in the NUS	1. Training Workshop on the 2007 procurement law 2. Review the Law establishing TSA with a view to exempting the federal universities 3. Review of the Law mandating the remittance of 25% of 1. Federal universities' IGR to the FG 4. Review and amend all relevant local content laws, regulation, policies, executive orders, etc, that affect RDI	1. Clarification of the use of direct labour (institutional expertise) to implement contracts in the NUS 2. Exemption of federal universities from TSA 3. Exemption of federal universities from the remittance of 25% of their IGR to the FG 4. All laws, regulations and policies of the FG that affect RDI duly understood and re-positioned for RDI	1. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 2. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 3. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 4. Six months (till Dec. 2026)	1. Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP)/NUC/NUC-PDAC/CVC/NUC 2. NASS/FG/FME/NUC/NUC-PDAC 3. NASS/FG/FME/NUC/NUC-PDAC 4. NUC/NUC-PDAC/FMJ



By the end of 2027, new programmes that encourage entrepreneurship at undergraduate and postgraduate levels should be established in the NUS	1. Establishment of degree programmes in Management of Technology and Innovation (MoTI) in the NUS 2. Establishment of Doctor of Philosophy in Entrepreneurial Innovation (PhD-EI) in the following pilot cases reflecting key national priorities: (i) PhD-EI in Technology Ventures (ii) PhD-EI in Social Enterprise (iii) PhD-EI in Agricultural Innovation (iv) PhD-EI in Health Technology (v) PhD-EI in Clean Energy Solutions (vi) PhD-EI in Digital Services	1. Curricula approvals and resource verification approval to establish MoTI degree programmes in selected universities 2. Specialised PhD established in the selected disciplines in the selected universities	1. Nine months (till March 2027) 2. Nine months (till March 2026)	1.NUC/NUC-PDAC/Senate of the selected universities 2.NUC/NUC-PDAC/Senate of selected universities
Establish a strategic linkage between Nigerian experts and organisations in the Diaspora with the NUS	1. Establish criteria for identifying diaspora experts and organisations in the identified national priority areas 2. Prepare a digital application/registration form for individuals, experts and organisations, and publicise them through the NUC website, Nigerian diplomatic missions, continental bodies and international organisations 3. Analysis of the database of diaspora experts and organisations 4. Establishment of a mechanism for the engagement of the Diaspora in the RDI ecosystem in the NUS	1. Selection criteria for experts and organisations in the national priority areas established 2. Database of experts and organisations in the national priority areas established 3. Categorisation of the database into (i) individual experts (ii) expert organisations, (iii) investment interests 4. Firmly establish the obligations and rules of engagement between the diaspora and the NUS (such as, legally binding agreements, MOUs, etc)	1. Three months (till Sept. 2026) 2. Six months (till Dec. 2026) 3. Three months (Till March 2027) 4. Three months (till June 2027)	1. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NUS 2. NUC/NUC-PDAC/Nigeria Diplomatic missions 3. NUC/NUC-PDAC/NUS 4. NUC/NUC-PDAC/Diaspora experts and organisations/NUS

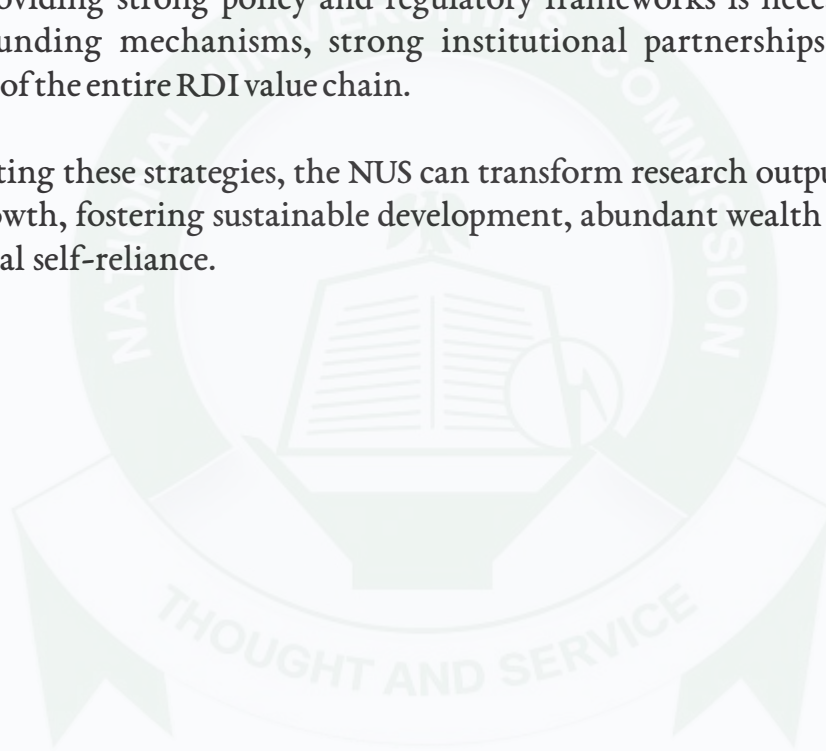


13.8 CONCLUSION

The low rate of commercialisation of R & D projects remains a major challenge within the NUS. This constitutes a substantial loss to the nation, especially considering the limited resources invested in R & D, such as funding, research infrastructure and human capital. It is expected that the commercialisation of R & D within the NUS is accorded high national priority. Several commercialisable research results have not gone beyond publications in journals and, at best, registered patents, which are considered adequate for the promotion of academic staff in the system.

The recommended approach is to evolve a structured, ecosystem-based model that links researchers, innovators, investors, policymakers, and the market. Strong government support in providing strong policy and regulatory frameworks is necessary to realise sustainable funding mechanisms, strong institutional partnerships and effective management of the entire RDI value chain.

By implementing these strategies, the NUS can transform research outputs into huge economic growth, fostering sustainable development, abundant wealth creation and robust national self-reliance.





GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

