NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION

No. 26, Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama District, P.M.B. 237, Garki, Abuja-Nigeria.

COMMUNIQUÉ

ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 2026 RETREAT WITH VICE-CHANCELLORS OF ALL NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND DIRECTORS OF INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTRES

Held on 13th-14th October, 2026 at the Idris Abdulkadir Auditorium, NUC Secretariat, Maitama, Abuja

Theme: *Enhancing Regulatory Compliance, Partnership, Governance and Leadership in the Nigerian University System*

The National Universities Commission (NUC) convened its 2026 Retreat with Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities and Directors of Inter-University Centers on 13–14 October 2026 in Abuja. The Retreat examined regulatory compliance, quality assurance, governance, leadership, and partnerships to support the development of the Nigerian University System (NUS).

Declared open by the Honorable Minister of State for Education, Professor Suwaiba Said Ahmad, the Retreat brought together 259 participants, including 198 Vice-Chancellors, 12 NUC Directors and 49 strategic partners. Of the Vice-Chancellors, 117 participated online. The opening ceremony launched the Revised Benchmark Statements on Student Support Facilities and Services in Nigerian Universities.

Following presentations and deliberations, participants adopted the following resolutions:

1 University governance and regulatory coordination

Participants reaffirmed the NUC's coordinating role in programme establishment and accreditation, while recognizing the complementary responsibilities of professional bodies and the statutory functions of Governing Councils and Senates. They called on the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Assembly, working with the NUC, to review and harmonize relevant laws to resolve overlapping mandates, particularly in curriculum development, accreditation and professional practice.

The NUC shall develop a framework for continuing dialogue with professional bodies and conduct joint programme accreditation exercise with appropriate professional bodies. The 30 percent institutional component of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) shall remain protected as a domain of university academic autonomy. The Commission shall maintain a clear distinction between academic qualifications and professional authorization to practice.

2 University ceremonies and honorary degrees

Universities shall comply with the NUC Guidelines on the Conferment of Honorary Degrees and the NUC Manual on University Ceremonies, which the Commission shall re-circulate. Honorary degrees shall be conferred only on awardees physically present at Convocation and shall not be awarded in absentia or by proxy. Recipient selection shall reflect national diversity, and institutional policies shall clearly distinguish honorary awards from earned academic degrees.

Sign-out ceremonies on university campuses should be regulated. Universities shall maintain current ceremonial and protocol manuals. All new students shall take and sign the Matriculation Oath, which shall address examination misconduct and its penalties.

3 Certificates and academic records

Universities shall strengthen transcript and certificate management through secure digital systems, reliable verification, data protection and backup arrangements against physical and cyber threats. Universities shall treat blank certificates as controlled institutional assets and produce certificates only on the basis of duly approved academic results.

Each university shall establish a Certificate and Academic Records Management Committee under the Registrar, comprising the Director of Academic Planning, Director of Quality Assurance and Deans of Student Affairs. Universities shall adopt standard operating procedures, periodic risk assessments and Key Performance Indicators for graduation, certificates, transcripts and verification, and pursue automation to improve service delivery.

4 Accreditation and programme approval

Universities shall strengthen internal quality assurance and establish Programme Readiness Committees ahead of resource verification and accreditation. Programme expansion shall be based on demonstrated need, relevance, available resources and institutional capacity. The NUC shall exercise active regulatory oversight of the degree component of dual-mandate Colleges of Education to ensure compliance with university degree standards.

Top-up programmes in the Nigerian University System are suspended with immediate effect, pending the finalization of NUC guidelines. The Commission shall issue the guidelines and clarify how to treat students already enrolled. The NUS shall not introduce the Professor of Practice, as no extant regulation governing university education in Nigeria supports it.

Vice-Chancellors shall audit academic programmes and centers and discontinue those operating without approval. Requests from professional bodies to establish academic units or programmes shall be referred to the NUC and shall not be acted upon without its approval.

5 Open Distance and e-Learning and Transnational Education

Universities shall progressively adopt Open Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) and Transnational Education (TNE) to expand access and strengthen financial sustainability,

within their institutional capacity and in strict compliance with NUC guidelines. Quality shall be comparable to that of conventional programs. The permissible ODeL model remains ICT-enabled blended learning, supported by appropriate course materials and a Learning Management System.

Universities shall invest in digital infrastructure, instructional design, staff training and student support, with capacity-building support from the NUC. They shall pursue TNE partnerships with African universities and develop distinctive programmes for export, beginning with ECOWAS and other African markets. The NUC shall review the programmes permissible under ODeL in light of emerging technologies, while stakeholders shall sustain public advocacy on its role in widening access.

6 Annual review meetings and institutional data

The NUC shall resume the University System Annual Review Meetings (USARM), remodeled to reflect the size of the university system, from the first quarter of 2027. The Commission shall review and circulate the reporting templates ahead of each cycle and train participating university officers.

All universities shall onboard on the e-NUC platform for real-time data transmission. They shall participate in USARM through teams led by their Vice-Chancellors and submit annual reports in the prescribed format. Universities shall revive strategic planning, assign timelines to institutional goals and maintain accurate statistical records for decision-making. Vice-Chancellors shall appoint competent Directors of Academic Planning and involve them in admissions, employment and Convocation.

7 Artificial intelligence and data protection

Universities shall adopt artificial intelligence (AI) ethically and responsibly in teaching, research and administration. The NUC shall circulate its AI Roadmap, and each university shall develop an aligned institutional AI policy and establish an AI Implementation Committee under the leadership of its Vice-Chancellor.

AI literacy shall be compulsory and mainstreamed into the appropriate General Studies (GST) course. The NUC shall establish a mechanism to monitor implementation of university AI policies and collaborate with the Nigeria Data Protection Commission to train universities on data protection policy in the first quarter of 2027.

8 Student welfare and university security

Universities shall implement the Revised Benchmark Statements on Student Support Facilities and Services in Nigerian Universities. Vice-Chancellors shall prioritize student welfare, fair treatment and security by ensuring functional support services and reviewing campus security arrangements.

9 Entrepreneurship and internationalization

Entrepreneurship education shall be driven by creativity and innovation. Each university shall establish a Technology Transfer Office and adopt an Intellectual Property policy to support research commercialization and patenting. Universities shall participate in, and benefit from, the patenting of intellectual property emanating from their institutions.

Universities shall involve the NUC when signing Memoranda of Understanding, especially with foreign universities and institutions. They shall promote staff and student exchanges to improve international visibility, while ensuring that student enrolment and staff engagement reflect Nigeria's diversity.

10 Governance and monitoring of private universities

The NUC shall circulate the Revised Code of Governance for Private Universities (2025 Edition), the Guidelines for the Establishment of Private Universities and the Guidelines for Mentoring of Private Universities in Nigeria for implementation. Newly licensed private universities shall liaise with their mentor institutions on administration, governance, curriculum delivery and research.

Boards of Trustees shall appoint credible persons with relevant experience as Chairmen or Pro-Chancellors of Governing Councils. The NUC shall engage periodically with proprietors, monitor compliance through its representatives on Governing Councils and continue structured post-licensing monitoring.

11 Institutional administration and mentoring

Universities shall ensure that University Librarians attend Governing Council meetings and draw on the minimum appointment and promotion criteria in the CCMAS when developing institutional guidelines. Older universities shall mentor newer institutions. Universities shall not publish official documents on social media and shall observe proper protocol during ceremonies and in correspondence with superior offices and officers.

12 Implementation and monitoring

Each Vice-Chancellor shall present the Retreat's resolutions to the Governing Council and Senate and ensure their implementation. The NUC shall issue or circulate the relevant guidelines and frameworks, track implementation through USARM and the e-NUC platform, and report progress at the next Retreat.

Appreciation

Participants expressed appreciation to the Chairman of the NUC Governing Board, Professor Oluwatoyin Temitayo Ogundipe, *FLS, FASE, FAS*, and the Executive Secretary, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, *FCVSN*, for providing the platform for dialogue and engagement. They reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the resolutions to develop the Nigerian University System.

Issued in Abuja on 16th October, 2026

Theophilus Ogbor
Chairman, Communiqué Drafting Committee

Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, *FCVSN*
Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission