

# NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION



## GUIDELINES ON TRANS-NATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Trans-National Education (TNE) refers to the movement of people, programmes, providers, knowledge, ideas, projects and services across national boundaries. The term is often used interchangeably with “offshore education” and “borderless education”. Trans-National Education involves educational partnerships, developmental cooperation projects, academic exchange programmes and commercial initiatives. It is the type of higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution, provider or course materials move across national jurisdictional borders. Trans-National Education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms, from students travelling to campuses abroad) to distance learning using a range of technologies including e-learning. It presents a wide range of opportunities such as increasing access to higher education and promoting strategic alliances between countries and regions. Trans-National Education has other benefits which include: International Security arising from bilateral relationships, maintenance of economic competitiveness and understanding across nations, spread of technologies, promotion of knowledge economy and creation of regional networks, as well as attaining international level in research and teaching.

Nigeria has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1995. All Members of the organization are party/signatories to the 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which was designed to increase trade liberalization. Education was also considered as an exportable service. The

National Universities Commission (NUC) hopes to widen access and fully exploit the provisions of GATS for the benefit of Nigerians. An additional advantage of opening up the space for TNE is the opportunity it would afford to foster collaborations between stakeholders in the Nigerian University System and their counterparts in foreign countries.

## 2.0 THE CONCEPT OF TRANS-NATIONAL EDUCATION

Many universities in industrialized countries for example maintain branch campuses overseas and have students who are learning through face-to-face, blended or e-learning in other countries. This approach of internationalization in the provision of post-secondary education transactions overseas is referred to as Trans-National Education.

In simple etymology, the word “transnational” implies actions, practices, or contacts that extend or go beyond national boundaries. When used in combination with other concepts such as Education, the term “transnational” still implies the idea of transactions across national borders, but with specific contextual meaning. This meaning holds for all types and modes of delivery of higher education, study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services including distance education, where learners are located in a country different from where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system in line with the UNESCO and the Revised Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and recognized by the United States as good practice in that area. NUC however deems it expedient to put in place quality assurance measures for the operation of TNE in Nigeria as a safety measure against sharp practices by providers.

The NUC prior now, in full awareness of the possibilities and threats associated with Trans-National provision of university education had intervened through the following:

- i. Liaising and collaborating with the quality assurance agencies of other countries to develop a database of recognized universities, and their accreditation status in order to obviate the threat posed by degree and accreditation mills and
- ii. Facilitating and strengthening the development of institutional and professional capacity in the Nigerian University System (NUS) for sustainable optimization of Trans-National Education opportunities by Nigerian universities and other stakeholders.

### 3.0 **JUSTIFICATION FOR TRANS-NATIONAL EDUCATION**

Due to the increase in the demand for education globally which has led to an unprecedented worldwide mobility of people and educational services, it has become necessary to provide guidelines that will regulate Trans-National educational transaction in Nigeria. However the inherent benefits in Trans-National Education are many and enough justification for a regulatory agency as NUC to standardize the operations of the various providers within the shores of Nigeria. Below are some of the benefits accruable from TNE:

- i. Increased access to quality education;
- ii. Strengthening academic capacity in research for National Development;
- iii. Providing internationally recognised education at one's space and time;
- iv. Improving international partnership for commercialization of educational commodity;
- v. Development of indigenous academic potentials;
- vi. Reduction of brain-drain and pressure in local educational systems;
- vii. Promoting regional cooperation for the harmonization of educational qualifications;
- viii. Providing international cross-cultural identity;
- ix. Providing a source of revenue for Government;
- x. Providing international innovative experience through the deployment of modern technologies in teaching and learning and in particular;

- xi. Reducing Nigerians exodus to neighboring countries for degree programs that may not necessarily be of comparable quality to that in the NUS and
- xii. Limiting wastage of foreign exchange.

#### 4.0 SCOPE OF TRANS-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The concept of Trans-National Education is generally taken to mean the importation of education from the “North” to the “South.” In other words, it is seen as a one-way flow of education from the developed countries to the developing countries of the world. This notion had greatly influenced the perception and approach of Nigerians towards it. However, Trans-National Education is two-dimensional, as it involves both the importation and exportation of educational services. This understanding is reflected in this document.

To drive the process of mainstreaming Trans-National Education, and in line with the global community, the National Universities Commission established the Department of Open and Distance Education (now Directorate of Open Distance and e- Learning) in 2011 and created a Division, Cross-Border Education (now Trans – National Education) division, which is charged with the responsibility of handling Trans-National Education issues. This was informed by the need to put the necessary quality assurance framework and guidelines in place, in line with international best practices for the regulation of the provision of Trans-National Education in the Nigerian University System. These guidelines provide for cross-border provision of university education to Nigeria by foreign providers.

The initial conception of Trans – National Education, was that of providers coming into Nigeria, informed the adoption of only models that encourage providers exporting Educational provisions into Nigeria. A remote attempt at exporting education beyond the shores of Nigeria sometime ago was truncated most probably because it did not receive necessary approvals. Since this failed attempt, no Nigerian university has indicated interest in exporting education outside the shores of Nigeria. However, with better understanding of TNE as a two-dimensional flow of educational provision, the Commission is now well disposed to universities in Nigeria that may wish to take education provision to other climes provided that from the conception of the idea and progressively, the Commission is formally kept in the loop.

Moreover, all MoUs emanating from such a venture would need NUC's scrutiny from inception in order to preclude untoward developments. The University must submit a detailed proposal to the Commission, stating its capacity to run the programme abroad without whittling the quality of delivery at the home institution, names and number of programmes it intends to run, the mode of delivery, the staffing (faculty and administrative), MoU with the foreign university, permission by government of the importing country and evidence that the proposed venture has been indicated as an addendum in the university's statutory documents.

In line with the global trends, the Commission found it necessary to expand the scope of TNE provision by the addition of more models to the initial three. This is aimed at further liberalizing the provision of TNE.

## **5.0 MODELS OF TRANS-NATIONAL EDUCATION**

The following are the various models of Trans-National Education proposed for the Nigerian space.

### **Model 1**

#### **Twinning/Articulation**

In this model, a foreign university (recognized and accredited by competent authorities in its home country) and an approved Nigerian university, collaborate to offer courses, enrich curricula content, pedagogy, and offer degrees with joint or dual certification and/or have articulation arrangements, which involve study on host and home campuses. This may be acceptable to/recognized by government provided that under the articulation arrangements, upon successful completion of an approved course of study, students are awarded degrees of the Nigerian university. However, if the arrangement is such that the Nigerian students in the programme will be awarded the degree of the foreign university, then such students will be required to spend a minimum of two semesters or one academic year on the overseas campus of the foreign university and this would form part of the graduation requirements.

The universities must inform the National Universities Commission as the regulator from conception, submit the Memorandum of Understanding and ensure that the NUC approval is obtained **before** the collaboration is finalized.

Responsibility for **internal QA shall be borne by both institutions and in line with the provisions of the** NUC Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS).

## **Model 2**

### **Branch Campus**

The Branch Campus Model is one in which a foreign university establishes its campus anywhere in Nigeria, following the NUC standing procedure for establishment of Branch Campus. Programmes offered in the Nigerian campus shall be a replica of [or at least must be of comparable standards with] those offered in the parent institution in the home country and must meet the standards and quality assurance requirements currently applicable to Nigerian Universities. The representative of the foreign university will pay application fee as determined by the Commission. The Commission will also regulate the activities of the university.

*(See Appendix 1: Steps and Procedures for the establishment of Branch Campus Model)*

## **Model 3**

### **The Open & Distance Learning (ODL) Model**

The ODL model refers to the provision of quality academic programmes and courses leading to the award of degrees, without the constraints of time and space by the foreign Open or Dual Mode Universities. Interested universities are however expected to comply with the ODL model approved for the Nigerian University System which is the **ICT-Enabled Supported Blended Learning (IESBL)** model. It is the acceptable and practicable model in Nigeria for now. The IESBL model places high premium on the centrality of quality interactive course materials produced in mixed-media format, the deployment of appropriate technologies and provision of robust learner support mechanism. Minimum learner-tutor contact in a face-to-face environment and periodic pen-on-paper examinations are also imperative in this model. The acceptability of the IESBL as the model of choice in the NUS is informed by the Commission's commitment to ensure that while mechanisms are in place to address the problem of access through the veritable tool of ODL, the quality of the ensuing products is not compromised.

## **Model 4**

### **Joint/Parallel Degrees**

#### **a. Joint Degree Option**

In the Joint Degree option, a single degree programme is undertaken to obtain a single certificate bearing the signatures of the competent authorities of all degree-awarding bodies involved. It is an arrangement whereby providers in different countries collaborate to offer a programme for which students receive qualifications from the providers, or a joint award from the collaborating partners. Arrangements for programme provision and criteria for awarding the qualifications are customized for each collaborative initiative in accordance with national regulations in each country. The Commission will oversee the necessary quality assurance processing.

#### **b. Parallel Degree Option**

In the Parallel Degree option, two separate degree programmes are studied alongside each other; leading to two separate awards. It may involve the mutual accreditation of prior learning and or in-course credit transfer as well as some curriculum mapping between both Institutions. As prerequisite, a detailed agreement with partners on the legal, academic and financial parameters is painstakingly undertaken.

## **Model 5**

### **Independent Institution**

In this model, the foreign provider (a traditional university, a commercial company or alliance/network) establishes in Nigeria, a stand-alone university to offer courses/programmes. There is usually no ‘‘Parent Institution’’ in the country of the foreign provider and it is therefore independent. The National Universities Commission will need to work together with the foreign providers on the design, delivery and quality assurance of the academic programmes. The procedures for establishment of private universities is applied.

## **Model 6**

### **Acquisition/Merger**

The Acquisition/Merger model is the amalgamation of two or more legally incorporated foreign universities or interest purchasing a part or 100% of an established university in Nigeria on a mutual agreement between the foreign providers and the Nigerian University and retaining all the terms of the initial license excepting proprietorship, membership of Board of Trustees and some aspects of Governance.

#### **Model 7**

##### **Affiliation/Networks**

This is a model in which different types of ‘public and private’, ‘traditional and new’ providers from various countries collaborate through innovative types of partnerships to establish institutions to deliver courses and programmes in Nigeria through distance or face-to-face modes. A Nigerian degree will be awarded.

#### **Model 8**

##### **Teaching Institutions**

A foreign provider establishes teaching institutions in Nigeria to support students taking their courses/programmes. The institution may be independent or may be a University in Nigeria. The NUC will regulate the operations of these institutions in addition to regulatory measures by the foreign provider.

#### **Model 9**

##### **Teaching Centre**

A teaching Centre is an institution in Nigeria where a foreign university undertakes part of the course of study away from its home country and completes the remaining in the foreign country.

In this model, the institution intending to establish a Teaching Centre must be a full-fledged and accredited university in its home country. There shall be submission of a letter of introduction from the Embassy/Diplomatic Mission of the home country of the parent university. There shall also be evidence that the foreign university is recognized and accredited by competent authorities in its home country for the purpose of offering degree programmes. They could do a part in Nigeria but there must be verifiable evidence that faculty and facilities



obtainable at the home institution are also available at the teaching centres. Furthermore, evidence in form of a written confirmation that the students would complete the programme(s) at the parent university after spending a part at the Teaching Centre in Nigeria shall be provided. Not less than 50% of the faculty across board must be from Nigeria.

There shall be evidence that the programmes of the foreign university to be run at the Teaching Centre are approved and accredited by the appropriate quality assurance agencies in the home country. Upon satisfactory compliance with the above requirements, the Commission shall issue a “letter of no objection” to the university to commence operation.

### **Model 10**

#### **Franchise**

This model involves an arrangement whereby a foreign provider authorizes an approved Nigerian University to deliver its programmes/services within Nigeria. The qualification shall be awarded by the foreign provider while the Commission and the foreign provider shall be responsible for monitoring, arrangements for teaching, management, assessment, profit-sharing, awarding of credit and qualifications and other activities. This must be customized for each franchise arrangement and must comply with National regulations, quality assurance regime and eligibility criteria of both institutions.

In conclusion, while the Commission is well disposed to opening up the Nigerian space and thus align with the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and global best practices in relation to Trans-National Education, it behoves the Commission to provide clear regulatory guidelines that will govern the operations of each model on offer. By this the global public may request to buy in and adopt the guidelines to take informed decisions. Without doubt, Nigeria stands to benefit from this laudable initiative.

## **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FOREIGN PROVIDERS**

The Nigerian Government shall grant approval for a cross-border arrangement between a Nigerian university and a foreign university for the award of degrees provided that:

- i. The home country of the foreign university has a subsisting diplomatic relationship with Nigeria and bilateral agreement that covers the provision of education at university level including mutual recognition of degrees.
- ii. The foreign university shall be recognized by its home country for the purpose of offering degree programmes.
- iii. The programme(s) of the foreign university shall be recognized by the national and regional quality assurance agencies in its home country as appropriate.
- iv. The foreign university shall be recognized and duly endorsed by the National Universities Commission to deliver preliminary content of its degree in Nigeria.
- v. The foreign university shall provide in Nigeria the physical infrastructure for the takeoff of the programme.
- vi. 50% of the foreign academic staff shall come from the foreign university and 50% from Nigeria.
- vii. The home country of the foreign university must subscribe to the principle of reciprocity with Nigeria in matters of cross-border education.

## **APPLICATION**

The appropriate application Form (NUC/TNE-QAC) shall be obtained from the National Universities Commission on payment of a specified non-refundable amount.

The completed Form shall be submitted to NUC with:

- i. Evidence of subsisting diplomatic relationship with Nigeria;
- ii. Evidence of recognition of exporting institution by its home country;
- iii. Evidence of accreditation of programme(s) to be exported by the appropriate national accreditation agency in the exporting country;
- iv. Evidence of facilities (e.g. classrooms, laboratories, workshops, offices and library) in the collaborating university in Nigeria, equivalent to the facilities available in the exporting university.

## **PROCESSING**

A processing fee shall be paid by the exporting university as determined by the National Universities Commission.

The application will be processed by the NUC TNE Quality Assurance Committee (TNE-QAC).

The Committee shall:

- i. Verify and authenticate claims in the application and supporting documents.
- ii. Conduct on-site visits to the teaching centre in Nigeria.
- iii. Make recommendations to the NUC Board through Management and the University Development Committee of the Board.
- iv. Verify recognition status of institutions from the foreign quality assurance agency;
- v. The NUC shall issue a letter of no objection and inform the Board.

## **POST APPROVAL ACTIVITIES**

- i. The National Universities Commission shall conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation facilities and staff audit of the teaching centre.
- ii. The National Universities Commission shall ensure that there is liaison between the NUC and the Quality Assurance Agency (ies) of the foreign University's country.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1**

#### **STEPS/PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF BRANCH CAMPUS MODEL**

A foreign university intending to establish a campus in Nigeria is required to follow the steps/procedures highlighted below:

- i. Letter of intent to the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC);
- ii. Interactive session between the Senior Officials of the foreign university\* and NUC Management;
- iii. Payment of a specified non-refundable Application fee;
- iv. Completion and submission of the Application Form to NUC with the following key documents:
  - a. Letter of introduction from Embassy/Diplomatic Mission of the home country of the parent university intending to establish a branch campus in Nigeria;
  - b. Evidence that the foreign university intending to establish a Branch Campus in Nigeria is recognized and accredited by competent authorities in its home country for the purpose of offering degree programmes;

- c. Evidence that the programme(s) of the foreign university to be run at the proposed Branch Campus are recognized by the appropriate quality assurance agency in its home country;
- d. An academic portfolio which covers inter alia:
  - i. Historical, Philosophical and Visioning perspectives;
  - ii. Administrative Structure;
  - iii. Academic Structure and trajectory;
  - iv. Students and staff projections across faculties/college(s)/ departments;
  - v. Financial Projections including Funding Sources.

NB: The staff projections should take cognizance of the local content requirements in terms of the ratio of 50% local content across board (50% indigenous staff to 50% international staff at all level of staffing).

- e. Physical development strategy which should encompass, among others, the following elements bearing in mind a minimum land area of 1 hectare:
  - i. Historical, Philosophical and Visioning perspectives
  - ii. Site Appraisal
  - iii. Development of Academic Brief
  - iv. Preparation of Strategic Alternatives
  - v. Draft Master Plan
  - vi. Final Master Plan and Publication

NB: The scope of work for each item listed above is as detailed in the current NUC's Procedures, Guide and Physical Development Manual.

Take-off facilities layout plan/details showing the administrative and academic facilities available for the take-off of the proposed branch campus is an integral part of the portfolio.

- f. The University Law which should contain the laws and Statutes that will govern the operation of the proposed branch campus in its entirety. Accordingly, its laws and Statutes should not conflict with the avowed traditional institutional autonomy.

## **PROCESSING**

- a. At the appropriate time in the processing of the application, a study/inspection visit shall be undertaken by a team of NUC officials to the parent university in its home country to ascertain the capacity of the institution to establish a campus in Nigeria;
- b. Following the first review of the institution's strategic documents, a team of NUC officials will conduct first assessment visit to the site acquired in Nigeria by the foreign university for the proposed branch campus to review the strategic documents with the university team on one-on-one basis to determine the level of preparedness in terms of documentation. During the visit, the NUC team will also conduct a facility tour to ascertain their adequacy for the smooth take-off of the proposed College/Faculty/Departments/Programmes in the first phase of academic development of the Branch Campus;
- c. Revision of strategic documents by the proprietor (foreign provider) based on the report by a Team of NUC officials;
- d. There shall be second and final site assessment visit to ensure that the recommendations of the first visit are implemented and also ensure that facilities provided meet the approved NUC standards.

## **APPROVAL**

Positive recommendations of a team of NUC officials will be subjected to three levels of approval process:

- a. Approval by NUC Management;
- b. Approval by NUC Board, and
- c. Approval by Federal Executive Council.

## APPENDIX 2

### PROCEDURE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDY CENTERS IN NIGERIA BY FOREIGN OPEN/DUAL MODE UNIVERSITIES

1. Letter of intent from the University to the Executive Secretary, indicating the rationale for the establishment of a study centre.
2. The Commission will organize an interactive session with the proprietor and other principal officials of the foreign Open University.
3. After due consideration, the University collects application forms for the establishment of the study centre
4. Submission of completed application forms should be accompanied with the following documents;
  - a. Approved Institutional ODL Policy Document covering all ramifications of the establishment and operations of the study centre to include inter alia, clear policy statements on:
    - i. Course material development and acquisition.
    - ii. Open Educational Resources (OER).
    - iii. Course delivery modalities (not solely reliant on face-to-face mode).
    - iv. Staff recruitment, retention and progression of the study centre.
    - v. Learner Support.
    - vi. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).
  - b. Evidence of approval for the establishment of the study centre by Governing Council
  - c. Senate of the foreign Open University.
  - d. Strategic Plan for the study centre
  - e. Academic Portfolio which should include:
    - i. Projected academic pattern/programme development.
    - ii. Projected student enrolment
    - iii. Projected staffing structure (all cadres and categories) including proportion of staff with validated ODL qualifications that are also core staff of the Centre. The staffing structure should take cognizance of the requirement for academic and non-academic staff that are primarily staff of the study centre with a well-defined pathway for Professional development and career progression up to the Professorial cadre in the case of academics.
  - f. Physical and infrastructural development plan. This should include:
    - i. ICT infrastructure: adequate provision for a physical library/e-library, a hall with at least 500 internet ready work-stations for Computer Based Testing(CBT), video

- conferencing facilities, audio visual systems and smart boards-dedicated exclusively to the DLC's use and other relevant ICT facilities.
- ii. Logistics/warehousing: detailed strategies for storage/ware-housing of course materials and other learning resources including logistic arrangement for distribution of electronic and printed learning resources
  - g. Learning Resources Provision: This should take cognizance of the requirement that a minimum of 75% of the course materials for each course/programme is required in mix-media format, for any degree programme to be considered for approval by NUC.
  - h. Access to University library on-line
5. Following the first review of the Institution's documents, there would be a familiarization visit to the foreign Open University to ascertain the operational modalities of the University.
  6. After the familiarization visit, there will be a pre-validation visit to the study centre. During the visit, inspection of facilities and an audit of the various categories of staff will be undertaken. The over-arching objective of the pre-validation visit shall be to gather evidence of an established ODL system capable of fostering a sustainable environment for learner-centered supported blended learning in line with the NUC 'Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning in Nigerian Universities'.
  7. After the pre-validation site visit, the DODeL will write a report of the findings to the NUC Management and a technical advisory report will be submitted to the University.
  8. There shall be a second pre-validation site visit to ensure that the recommendation of the first visit is implemented and also to ensure compliance with the approved NUC requirements. The DODeL will write a report of the pre-validation visit with appropriate recommendation to the NUC management for its consideration and necessary action.
  9. Approval By NUC Board  
The NUC Management, upon receipt of DODeL report on the proposed study centre, considers and makes appropriate recommendation to the University Development Committee (UDC) of the NUC Board for its consideration after which the latter submits it to the Board for ratification. The Board, thereafter, forwards its recommendation to the Federal Government through the Honourable Minister of Education for its consideration and approval.

### **Approval Steps**

- Approval by NUC Management.
- Approval by the Governing Board of NUC.
- Approval by the Federal Executive Council

If approved, a three-year Provisional License is granted to the foreign Open/Dual Mode University. Only satisfactory performance during the probationary period will earn the University a substantive License.

The NUC Management will communicate its decision on the Study Centre to the University.