



COUNTRY REPORT:
Nigeria

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Introduction

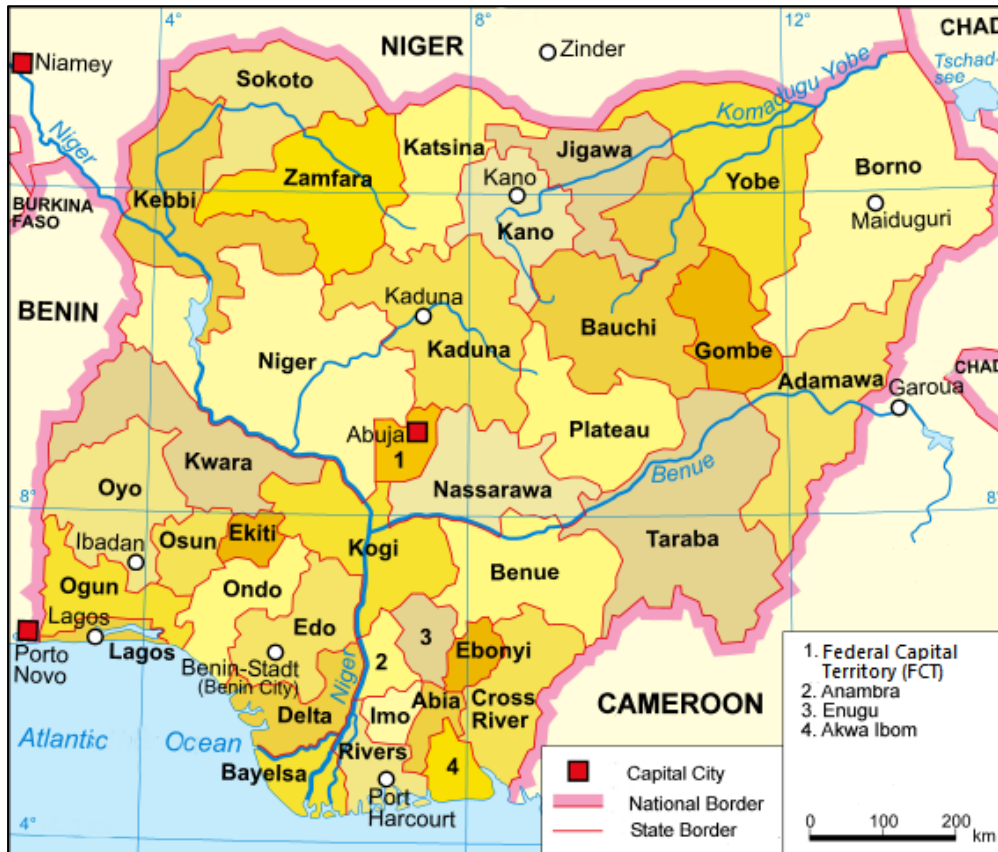
This report is part of a series of country reports that QAA regularly produces to offer higher education providers an insight into the higher education and regulatory landscape of key countries for UK transnational education (TNE). The reports offer high level information and intelligence about regulations, challenges and opportunities, signposting to sources of further information.

In producing these reports, QAA seeks to liaise with local regulators and quality assurance agencies, and other UK-sector bodies with relevant expertise. QAA has a number of strategic partnerships with counterpart agencies in key countries for UK TNE. These are a source of intelligence and direct access to up-to-date information about local regulatory developments.

We would like to thank Universities UK International for their support in developing this report.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria

Nigeria, officially known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is on the western coast of Africa. Occupying a total land area of just over 910,000 km², it borders Benin in the north, Chad in the northeast, and Cameroon in the southeast. Its coast in the south is located on the Gulf of Guinea along the Atlantic Ocean. The country comprises 36 states and one Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.



Nigeria is officially a democratic secular country. It declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. It comprises over 500 ethnic groups speaking different languages. Its official language is English.

Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world, with its population accounting for 2.6 per cent of the world's population, and 47 per cent of West Africa's population.¹ As of 2019, the estimated population of Nigeria is just over 200 million, and is expected to grow by over five million, taking into account expected migration of 60,000 per year, reaching 206 million in 2020. Current population growth is approximately 2.6 per cent each year and has increased approximately 268 per cent since independence in 1960. Its population is expected to be over 300 million in 2050, which would make it the third most populous country.² Nigeria is also one of the youngest countries in the world with a median population age of 18 years, with those aged under 14 representing 44 per cent per cent of its total population. People aged 65 and older are currently just 3 per cent of the total population, although by 2050 this is expected to rise to about 9 per cent.

¹ www.worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nigeria-population/

² www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/nigeria-become-3rd-populous-country-2050-un-report/

Nigeria has made significant socio-economic progress over the last 15 years, overtaking South Africa as the largest economy on the African continent. However, currently ranking 157th in the United Nation's Human Development Index, Nigeria is still regarded as a country with Low Human Development,³ with an adult literacy rate of 51 per cent, a gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education of just 10.1 per cent in 2011⁴, and a consistently underfunded tertiary sector.

Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated by the World Bank at 375.77 billion US dollars in 2017,⁵ with an average growth rate of 5.7 per cent per year. However, the country's dependency on oil production continues to affect the country's growth pattern characterised by boom and bust cycles due to the volatility of oil prices. Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil exporter, as well as having the largest gas reserves on the African continent. Oil production accounts from more than 90 percent of Nigeria's exports and 70 percent of its government revenues.⁶

One of the key developmental challenges facing the country is precisely that of diversifying its economy to reduce its dependency on oil. Further important challenges include strengthening infrastructures for agriculture, energy and transport, and developing more robust and efficient governance practices.⁷ With a growing population and a low tertiary gross enrolment ratio, investment in education is also a significant strategic priority for the country's economy growth⁸

Key national policy drivers

The current national economic priorities are set out in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020.⁹ The overall aim of the Plan in the medium term is to secure sustainable growth, build a globally competitive economy and invest in the Nigerian people, with a focus on economic diversification, investment in infrastructure, reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment, and fostering society and human capital.¹⁰

ERGP identifies five key priority areas for its successful realisation:

- stabilising the macroeconomic environment
- achieving agriculture and food security
- ensuring energy sufficiency
- improving transportation infrastructure
- driving industrialisation focusing on small and medium enterprises.

The Plan also recognises the need to address skills shortages in key economic areas and support the development of a knowledge-based economy. Some of the most pressing challenges include limited access to, and quality of basic education, limited provision of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; inadequate facilities at all levels of education especially at tertiary level; lack of structured and quality

³ www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_summary_human_development_statistical_update_en.pdf (PDF 500KB)

⁴ www.uis.unesco.org/country/NG

⁵ www.data.worldbank.org/country/nigeria

⁶ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/684961468197340692/pdf/101751-WP-P151987-Box393265B-PUBLIC-Nigeria-Economic-Report-2015-web-version.pdf>

⁷ www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/overview

⁸ www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-economic-update-beyond-oil-key-drivers-for-sustainable-growth

⁹

https://www.cbn.gov.ng/Out/2017/CCD/Financial%20Inclusion%20Newsletter_%20MAY%202017_Volume%20%20Issue%202-final%20-%20Review%20%20%20.pdf

¹⁰ www.acioe.com/2017/11/15/nigeria-economic-recovery-growth-plan-2017-2020-overview/

programmes for technical and vocational education and training; insufficient number of skilled teachers and lecturers; and inadequate financing.

In order to address these challenges, some of the measures that Plan commits to include:

- partnering with state governments and the private sector to establish new vocational and technical institutes
- improving teacher quality by incentivising performance and building capabilities
- improving the quality of education by strengthening quality assurance
- reviewing and restructuring the education curriculum in line with international best practices
- increasing investment in STEM education
- using the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) to incentivise high-performing tertiary institutions.

Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC), the government umbrella organisation that oversees the administration and quality of higher education in Nigeria, has put in place a five-year blueprint, outlining how the country's higher education system can be improved by 2023. Among other objectives, the blueprint states that by 2023:

- access to university education should have increased by 20 per cent over the 2018 figures
- at least 30 per cent of facilities for teaching, learning and research be upgraded to meet international standards
- the gap in the number of teachers needed in the Nigerian university system and those in post, should be reduced from 30 per cent to 20 per cent
- a sustainable funding model should be approved at all levels and implemented via appropriate instruments of federal and state governments.¹¹

The Nigerian higher education landscape

Nigeria's higher education system consists of a university sector and a non-university sector comprising polytechnics, monotronics, and colleges of education.

NUC lists 43 federal universities, 48 state universities and 79 private universities as accredited degree-granting institutions on its website.¹² The largest part of students are enrolled with federal universities (68 per cent) and state universities (27 per cent), while private universities accounts only for 5 per cent of total higher education student population (see figures 1 and 2).¹³

¹¹ www.thepienews.com/analysis/two-million-applicants-for-750k-places-nigerias-bid-to-tackle-its-capacity-issue/

¹² www.nuc.edu.ng/nigerian-universities/federal-universities/

¹³ <http://education.gov.ng/nigerian-universities-commission/>

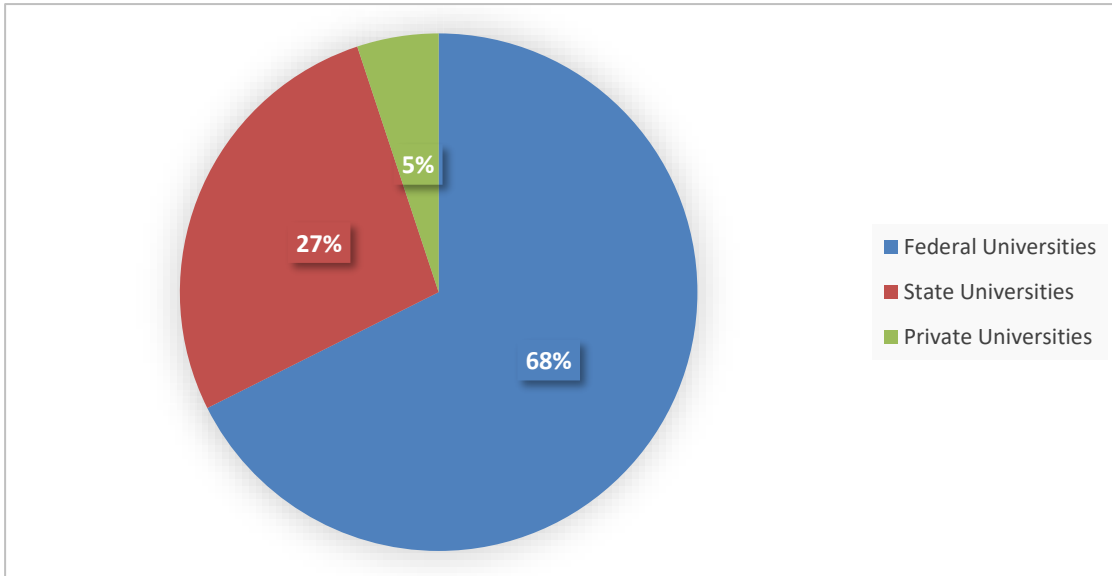


Figure 1: Student distribution across Nigerian higher education institutions

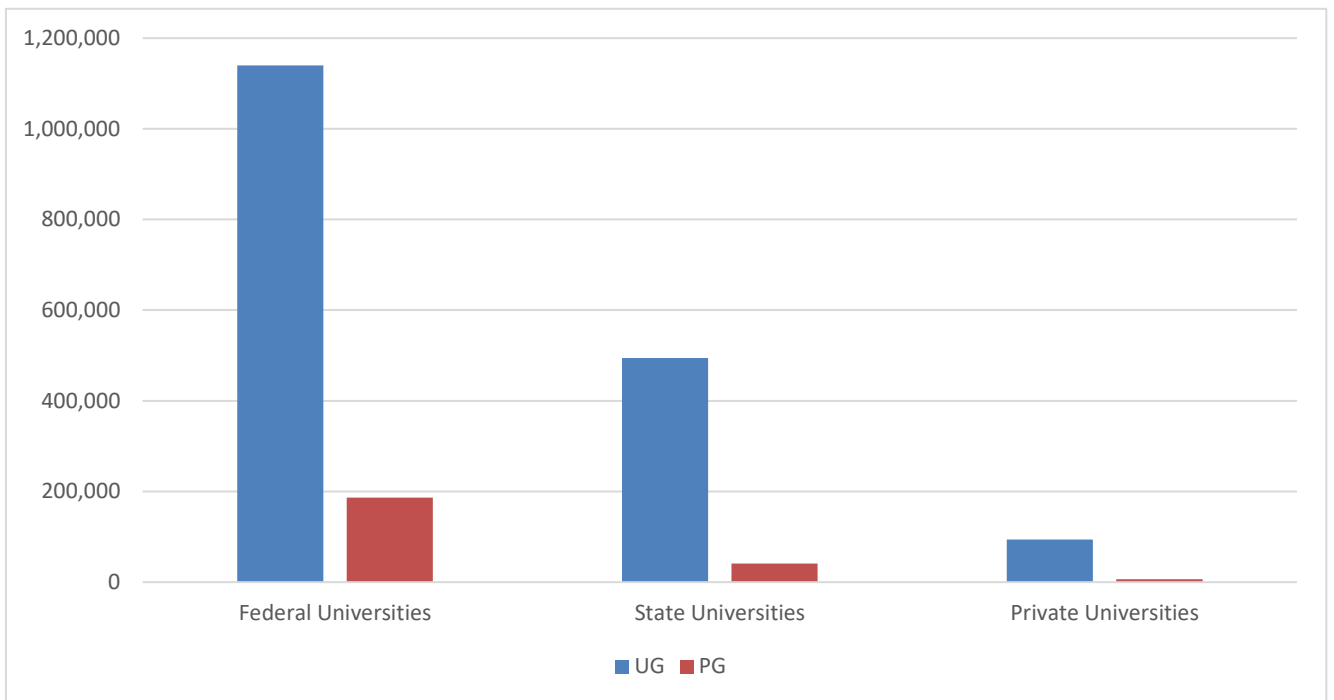


Figure 2: Student distribution across Nigerian higher education institutions (undergraduate and postgraduate)

Many of Nigeria's higher education institutions are relatively new. Nigeria's higher education sector has had to expand rapidly to respond to strong population growth with over 60 per cent of population under the age of 24.

In 1948 there was only one university-level institution in the country, the University College of Ibadan, which was originally an affiliate of the University of London. By 1962, there were five federal universities (the University of Ibadan, the University of Ife, the University of Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University, and the University of Lagos), since then the number of recognised universities has grown exponentially, with private institutions representing 46 per cent of all Nigerian universities. However, private institutions still account for only a small

percentage of Nigeria's total tertiary enrolment. For many students the fees charged by private institutions are not unaffordable.

As reported by a recent British Council study on Nigerian higher education the total enrolment at private universities in 2013 was 19,254, whereas the allocated quota for the year was 67,009 students.¹⁴ This is despite the demand for higher education far exceeds supply in publicly funded higher education institutions, with significant numbers of prospective students unable to secure a place at a Nigerian university. Applications to the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the national body controlling admission to higher education, regularly exceeds the carrying capacity of Nigerian higher education institutions. It has been calculated that Between 2010 and 2015 of the 10 million applicants that sought entry into Nigerian universities, only 26 per cent was able to gain admission.^{15 16}

In addition to universities, there are many polytechnics and colleges under the purview of the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE), the federal government body with responsibility for technical and vocational education. Currently NBTE recognise 126 polytechnics (28 federal, 43 state and 55 private), 27 monotechnics (22 federal, three state and two private) and over 400 colleges and innovation and vocational enterprise institutions in various specific disciplines.¹⁷ The National Commission for Colleges of Education, the federal body dedicated to overseeing non-university teacher education, further lists 89 approved teacher training colleges in Nigeria.

Speaking at QAA's 2018 Annual Conference', the executive secretary of the NUC said that his organisation is in the process of assessing 292 applications from institutions wanting to become private universities. He also said the government is aiming to tackle the challenge of access by exploring open and distance learning modes of delivery, as well as by expanding the capacity of traditional universities.

Outward-student mobility

The inability of the Nigerian higher education system to meet growing demand, and the rapid expansion of its middle class, has led many students who can afford it to seek higher education opportunities abroad. The government also actively supports outward student mobility with an extensive scholarship scheme. About 40 per cent of Nigerian students studying abroad are supported by scholarships.

Traditionally the UK been the most popular destination for Nigerian students overseas receiving about 10,500 students in 2017-18.¹⁸ Nigeria is the 9th largest sending country of international students to the UK. In recent years, Nigerian students have also increasingly taken the opportunities provided by growing regionalisation in Africa, with Ghana recently overtaking the US as the second most popular destination country.¹⁹

Another country that has recently emerged as a popular destination for Nigerian students, especially among the Muslim population, is Malaysia. Malaysia does not only represent an Islamic country, but offers low tuition and living costs, as well as the opportunity to study at one of the several international branch campuses in the country. There are five UK branch

¹⁴ www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/british_council_full_report_14_8_18.pdf

¹⁵ www.thepienews.com/analysis/two-million-applicants-for-750k-places-nigerias-bid-to-tackle-its-capacity-issue/

¹⁶ <https://qswownews.com/nigerian-higher-education-birth-growth/>

¹⁷ www.net.nbte.gov.ng/VEI

¹⁸ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>

¹⁹ <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/03/education-in-nigeria>

campuses currently operating in Malaysia, in addition to many collaborative partnerships offering a large range of higher education programmes.

However, for most Nigerians international study is not a realistic option, and volatile foreign exchange poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of supporting international study.

Transnational education

Nigeria is the 5th largest host country for UK TNE, with about 30,000 students, according to HESA data for 2017-18. However, about 95 per cent of this provision is via distance learning, and over 85 per cent of all students are enrolled with Oxford Brookes on the BSc in Applied Accountancy offered in collaboration with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), also delivered via distance learning. This might reflect the challenge of delivering TNE on the ground due to lack of infrastructure, as well as political and social instability. Therefore, TNE, other than distance learning, has so far not played a significant role in helping the country addressing the unmet demand for higher education.

The Nigerian higher education regulatory framework

Education is administered by the federal, state and local governments. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for overall policy formation and ensuring quality control, and it is primarily involved with tertiary education. Secondary and elementary education is largely the responsibility of state and local governments respectively.

Nigeria's 43 federal universities are under the direct purview of the NUC. State governments have responsibility for the administration and financing of the 48 state universities. NUC's stated mission is 'to ensure the orderly development of a well coordinated and productive university system that will guarantee quality and relevant education for national development and global competitiveness.' NUC oversees and supports the development of the Nigerian higher education sector to ensure the delivery of quality education that matches the national labour need. It advises the Federal Government on the financial needs of universities and allocated Federal block grants to federal universities.

The NUC's functions include the approval and accreditation for all academic programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level in all Nigerian universities, both federal and state level, as well as private universities. NUC has the statutory power to set minimum academic standards for universities and to accredit their programmes against these standards. It has developed Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for 13 disciplines at both undergraduate and postgraduate level as follows:

- 1 administration, management and management technology
- 2 agriculture, forestry, fisheries and home economics
- 3 arts
- 4 basic medical and health science
- 5 education
- 6 engineering and technology
- 7 environmental sciences
- 8 law
- 9 pharmaceutical sciences
- 10 medicine and dentistry
- 11 science
- 12 social sciences
- 13 veterinary medicine.

NUC has more recently introduced processes for institutional accreditation. Only institutions that have been in existence for at least 10 years, with 70 per cent of their programmes having full accreditation status, can seek institutional accreditation. NUC's criteria for institutional accreditation cover governance and administration, financial stability, admissions, personnel services, institutional resources, student academic achievement, institutional effectiveness, and relationships with constituencies inside and outside the institution.

The NUC has recently issued *Guidelines for Cross-border Provision of University Education in Nigeria* to provide a framework for quality provision in cross-border university education. These Guidelines set out processes and requirements for registration/licensing, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes delivered in Nigeria through TNE. According to the Guidelines, the Nigerian Government will grant approval for a TNE agreement between a Nigerian and a foreign university on the following criteria.

- The home country of the foreign university has a diplomatic relationship with Nigeria, including bilateral agreements that cover the provision of higher education and recognition of qualifications.
- The foreign university is recognised by its home country for the purpose of offering higher education programmes (degrees, diplomas and certificates).
- The programmes of the foreign university are recognised by the relevant national quality assurance agency in its home country.
- The programmes of the foreign university are certified as meeting Nigeria's priority area of manpower as determined by the NUC.
- The partner university in Nigeria is recognised and duly licensed by the NUC for the purpose of offering higher education programmes.
- The partner university in Nigeria provides the physical infrastructure for the delivery of the programme (or in conjunction with the foreign university).
- The foreign university provides learning support facilities for students, in line with the minimum academic standards provision of the NUC.
- The foreign university provides 30 per cent of the academic staff for the intended programme.
- The fees to be charged by the foreign university are commensurate with what is in existence in Nigeria and shall take due cognisance of the local economy.
- The curriculum of the foreign university's programme meets the Nigerian minimum academic standards and provide for local content where appropriate.

All applications are processed by the NUC Cross-Border Quality Assurance Committee, which will verify and authenticate the claims made in the application and supporting documents. This process of verification and authentication includes visits to the local partner institution in Nigeria. The NUC Board will make recommendations to the Federal Ministry of Education. If approved the NUC will issue operating license to the successful applicants. After approval, it will continue to routinely monitor, evaluate and re-accredit TNE programmes. National regulatory professional bodies are expected to ensure that all TNE programmes in relevant professions are in line with national provisions. The Guidelines also states that NUC will seek to involve student bodies such as the National Association of Nigerian Students in the monitoring of TNE programmes, as well as seeking to liaise with the quality assurance agencies of the foreign provider's country.

The above guidelines cover three models of TNE delivery:

- **Twinning and articulation agreements:** these are intended to cover a variety of partnership models between an approved Nigerian university and a foreign university recognised and accredited by the competent authorities in the home

country. When the partnership leads to the award of the foreign university students are required to spend no less than two semesters at the home campus of the foreign university.

- Branch campus: this model follows the NUC procedures to establish a private university²⁰ Programmes delivered at the campus should be of comparable standards with similar programmes offered at the home campus, and must meet the quality assurance requirements applicable to Nigerian universities
- Open and distance learning: this modality excludes programmes offered exclusively online (e-learning) and must comply with minimum standards requirements set for the relevant discipline and with the standards and criteria set out in *Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning in Nigerian Universities*.²¹

The Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) are aimed at strengthening the local universities' capacity to deliver this type of provision, which is regarded of strategic importance by the national government as a way to widen access to quality education for those who otherwise would have been denied. Distance learning in Nigeria is currently offered only by the National Open University of Nigeria - dedicated exclusively to distance learning higher education provision - and six conventional universities with limited capacity to deliver ODL programmes. Indeed, to assist with developing the national capacity to offer ODL courses, the NUC has recently entered into an agreement with the University of London Worldwide, to draw on their extensive experience in this mode of education delivery.²²

All interested and eligible universities wishing to offer degree programmes by ODL must submit an application to the NUC indicating the dedicated human and material resources, including student support, to guarantee sustainable teaching and learning. The NUC has put limits to the academic disciplines that can be offered by ODL considering the national technical and infrastructure challenges. In the period 2009-15 the eligible disciplines included: education, administration/management sciences, social sciences, arts/humanities, sciences and applied sciences. The list is periodically reviewed by the NUC. The guidelines for ODL set out in details the aspects that are considered by the NUC for granting ODL programmes approval at accredited ODL institutions or centres.

Conclusions

With a young, growing population, and a rapidly expanding middle class, and the country's ambition to build a globally competitive economy and invest in the Nigerian people, higher education demand in Nigeria is set to grow. However, the country's higher education capacity has so far lagged significantly behind demand. Over the past 10 years, for example, only one third of all students registering for the university matriculation exam have been admitted into a university.

This mismatch in demand and supply has led many students who could afford it to seek higher education opportunities abroad, with the UK having traditionally been the most popular destination. The NUC expects a significant growth in applications for establishing private universities, and the national government has set out plans to expand the capacity of traditional universities, as well as strengthening the capacity for open and distance-learning delivery.

The NUC has recently developed guidelines to for the regulation and quality assurance of ODL as well as other types of TNE including collaborative partnerships and branch campuses. These modalities are allowed to operate in the country, but so far the take up from foreign higher education providers has been slow. This is arguably due primarily to the

²⁰ www.nuc.edu.ng/project/scopu/

²¹ www.nuc.edu.ng/project/open-and-distance-education/

²² www.nuc.edu.ng/nuc-partners-university-of-london-on-odl/

country's political and economic uncertainty, as well as the lack of suitable infrastructure and a still developing quality assurance framework for higher education and TNE. As Nigeria's political and economic landscape stabilises, the country can be expected to start playing an increasing major role in the international higher education landscape, including through growing TNE offered in the country beyond open and distance learning.

QAA2378 - May 19

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