



**UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT, PORT
HARCOURT, NIGERIA**



**AFRICA CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND
TOXICOLOGICAL RESEARCH (PUTOR)**



**POLICY ON STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AND
FACULTY INCENTIVES**

APRIL 2019

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PUTOR is a World Bank funded African Centre of Excellence for Public Health and Toxicological Research. It is a platform for providing inter-disciplinary academic streams of postgraduate programmes, in order to rapidly bridge the gap arising from current paucity of adequately trained personnel with terminal degrees in public health, toxicology, nutrition and midwifery/child health nursing in sub-Saharan Africa.

Health systems played a key role in the dramatic rise in global life expectancy during the 20th century, and still contributes enormously to the improvement in population health. A multi-disciplinary health workforce is the backbone of each health system that facilitates the smooth implementation of health actions for sustainable socio-economic development. Furthermore, the direct effect of on-going oil and gas activities has left deleterious consequences on the ecosystem and public health in all the countries in this region. The way of life of the people, whose livelihood are dependent on the surrounding ecosystem have adversely affected. More recently, there has been a ‘double air pollution burden’ in the city of Port Harcourt. The persistence of black soot over the city is partly the result of oil exploration, meteorological changes, criminal activities of artisanal crude oil refiners, poor environmental regulatory activities and the dearth of strategic knowledge resource to combat these preventable catastrophes.

Adequately trained and highly skilled health workforce would play a major role in tackling the public health and environmental issues arising from oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as well as contiguous areas in the Gulf of Guinea. Environmental degradation, especially the swamps, rivers and creeks from oil spills, pipeline vandalizing and illegal refining activities are the major fallouts of the oil and gas industry in the Niger Delta region. This affects the health and livelihood of the people who depend on the ecosystem services for survival, leading to increased poverty and hunger. The problem is compounded by the paucity of highly skilled and motivated health professionals who are equipped with current knowledge, skills and competencies required for conducting cutting-edge research in public health, toxicology, nutrition and nursing that would help mitigate the public health issues arising from oil and gas exploration in the region.

Our vision is to become a centre of excellence in providing highly sought-after, world-class academic and professional programmes which are recognised for local relevance, international excellence and global impact in the field of public health, toxicology, nutrition and midwifery/child health nursing.

Our mission is to provide a platform to congregate highly skilled human resource, both within and outside the University of Port Harcourt; build a robust resource of highly skilled and motivated public health professionals who are equipped with current knowledge, skills and competencies required to improve the practice of public health, nutrition, toxicology and midwifery/child health nursing; produce cutting –edge research projects to solve public health issues arising from oil and gas sectors ; and undertake consultancy and community services.

The need for scholars with research and problem-solving skills who have strong interest in collaborative and interdisciplinary research is increasingly becoming glaring with the advent of multifaceted and complex health challenges. The training programmes by the African Centre of Excellence provides scholars with the required knowledge and skills in research to approach and fix these challenges.

Specific Objectives of the Centre include:

1. Training of students, technical experts, and policymakers through short courses on relevant public health and toxicological issues in the region.
2. Training of national and regional Masters’ students in the focused areas
3. Training of national and regional students to obtain PhDs in the focused areas.
4. Development of regional research capacity to support focused interventions on developmental challenges

Scholarships are provided each year to deserving students who apply for full time study and have no means of meeting up with the cost of their education. This decided through a merit-based screening procedure. These are of two categories – regional and local.

The benefit package from each of these scholarships are different and may also vary from session to session. It shall commonly include payment of tuition and students’ accommodation.

The number of national scholarship slots shall be divided equally between males and females and shall only be available for full-time students with excellent academic track records including performance in the entry screening exercise. The scholarship scheme is designed to capture all indigent students who are desirous and qualified to a postgraduate training in the Centre. Every student who requires a scholarship, applies to the Centre Leader stating their economic status and how the scholarship would assist their academic pursuit. All applications for the session are screened by the 'Scholarship Screening Committee' whose membership include: Deputy Centre Leader, The Academic Coordinator, Student Support Officer and the representative from the School of Graduate Studies.

Without prejudice to the existing policy, the Centre Management had approved based on the availability of funding, automatic partial scholarships from the Centre for all full-time national and regional students admitted into PhD programmes in the Centre. For clarity, only fulltime national students who are undertaking a PhD programme are eligible for the partial scholarship programmes. All regional MSc and PhD students are eligible for the partial scholarship in the Centre. There is currently no provision for full scholarship.

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Partial scholarship for the National Students will cover payment for tuition, health coverage, library access, masterclasses, payment for external examinations, payment for lunch during lecture periods

Partial scholarship for the National Students will cover payment for tuition, airport pick-ups, library access, masterclasses, payment for external examinations, payment for lunch during lecture periods, provision of campus hostel accommodation, health insurance under the Tertiary Institutions Social Health Insurance Programme (TISHIP) and payment for the official documentation of their stay in Nigeria (Residence Permit).

International students are expected to make provision for their living expenses while in Nigeria. The annual cost of living in Port Harcourt range from ₦600,000 to ₦1,440,000 (\$1 ≈ ₦390) depending on one's standard of living. This will cover the cost of meal, groceries, local transportation, leisure, and other essentials. Students are free to prepare their meals in the hostel if they chose to and this can significantly reduce the cost of living.

International student should also be aware that:

- The official currency in Nigeria is the Naira. Conversion into other world's currency can be obtained on <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>
- There are numerous ATM machines available throughout the city and within the University
- The electrical voltage in the Nigeria is 220v with a three square -prong socket
- Nigeria is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT + 1)
- The Port Harcourt average annual temperature is 26.4°C in Port Harcourt, precipitation averages 2708 mm and the weather condition are often warm.

International students should kindly reach out to our reception team on +2347018285531 as soon as you confirm your travel itinerary.

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Each admitted student on partial scholarship is duly informed of his/her scholarship status in the admission letter. The coverage of the partial scholarship is also included in the admission and email sent to successful candidates. The scholarship statement on the admission letter read thus:

You have been offered a partial scholarship which covers School Charges including accommodation, administrative costs, masterclasses, internship, research proposal defence, ethical clearance for research project, plagiarism test and thesis defence. To be a ACE-PUTOR sponsored students, you must (a) graduate within the specified duration of your programme, after which you will be required to pay fees (b) provide legal guarantors who shall be persons of proven integrity in public or private service (see adaptable template below)

As the current scholarship regime are tied to the admission status of the students, scholarship adverts are contained in the annual advertisement for admission into the various postgraduate programmes in the Centre. These adverts are usually made online on the PUTOR's official website, through printed postal that are placed are strategic institutional billboards and websites, through the print media and through social medial handles of the Centre. The duration from application to shortlisting of applicants is usually three months and candidates shortlisted are screened within one month and formally communicated of the outcome of the screening within 2 weeks.

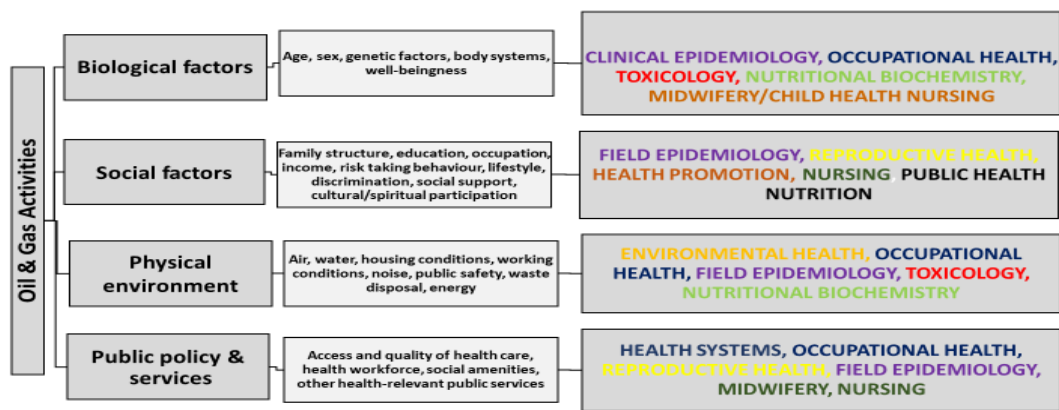
All students on partial scholarships are expected to complete the bond process which are signed in a court of competent jurisdiction. This is to ensure that the students work assiduously to complete their programme in record time. A prototype of this bond can be found in the appendix of this policy document.

Besides scholarships, all fulltime students are also entitled to other financial support for internship, research and conference attendance. Internship placement are often secured by the Centre in industries, sectors, and government agencies relevant to the research work of the students.

The Centre’s merit-based system accommodates sponsorship for 1-month internship for the best student (by CGPA) in the early training anywhere in the world including Europe and America. The price tag is currently fixed at \$4,000 (four thousand dollars). The second and third best students are permitted to do same within the African region with a support of \$2,000 (two thousand dollars). The rest can either do their internship in Rivers state with a support of N50,000 (fifty thousand naira only) or outside Rivers but within the country with a sponsorship support of N100,000 (one hundred thousand naira only). These provisions are however subject to the availability of funds and the financial regulations in the University.

Research support is provided for eligible masters and PhD students whose research topics are deemed to be relevant to the research themes of the Centre as shown in the Figure below.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES – INTERDISPLINARY SOLUTIONS



Students who are interested in this support are required to apply with details of their research proposal including the cost of the elements of their work the funding will cover. The cost element may include cost of attendance of conference, publication of their research or other forms of dissemination of their research finding. The decisions on who qualifies for this support are made annually by a team headed by the Centre’s applied research coordinator. Other members of this assessment team include the research team leaders from the various collaborating departments.

The current ceiling for research support is N100,000 (One hundred thousand naira only) for master-level students and N300,000 (three hundred thousand naira only) for PhD students. These provisions are however subject to the availability of funds and approval by the University.

In exceptional cases, additional funding can be made available to deserving students who:

- a) Wish to present their research findings in international conference.
- b) Have developed or are in the process of developing a patent or commercializing their research.

Request of such nature shall be directed to the Centre Leader and decisions are made on a case to case basis by the Centre Steering Committee

The ceiling for all routine supports given by the Centre Management shall be approved annually by the Centre's steering committee and communicated to prospective students during the application process. The request, disbursement and retirements of all expenses from these supports shall be in accordance to the Centre's financial management regulations.

The outcomes (whether positive or negative outcomes) of all application for financial support are formally communicated to the applicants. Students who are unsuccessful in their application for financial support are provided opportunities to appeal the decision of the committee within two weeks of received the formal communication of the outcome of their application process. These appeals are dealt with by the steering committee during their very next meeting and the outcome communicated to the students.

The management of records of scholarship and financial support are done in line with the Centre Financial Policy. The audit process requires a retirement of all documents related to financial supported to students and faculties. These include but not limited to stump of flight tickets, conference payment receipt, copy of certificate of participation, training logbook etc. The tracking system of students on partial scholarship was established to ensure that the beneficiaries conclude their programmes in record time.

Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and subsequently signed into law the Discrimination against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act in 2019. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disability by service providers and imposes sanctions including fines and prison sentences on those who contravene it. The Centre has responsibility under the act to make reasonable adjustments in all its activities to ensure that candidates with additional support needs are not disadvantaged for reasons related to their long-term medical condition, physical, visual and hearing impairments, specific learning difficulties and/or disability. The Centre management shall ensure that students with disabilities are given special attention during enrolment, allocation of accommodation spaces, design and construction of lecture halls and provision of essential health services. Candidates with such needs are however expected to inform the Centre's management of arrangements and adjustments that need to be made to enable their full participation in lectures and examination.

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Further advice and support are available from support@aceputoruniport.edu.ng

Some of the important help and support contacts for the students are presented below:

Contacts for support and response time

Contacts	Need	Anticipated response time
infoaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	For general information about the centre, programmes and events, linkages	24 hours
admissionaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	Inquiries on admission into degree programmes and short courses	48 hours
academicsaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	Information on academic issues, lecture schedules, modules and programmes feedback	72 hours
researchaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	For support on research and submission of research presentation (research proposal, draft thesis etc) or research outputs such as conference abstract, proceedings, journal articles.	48 hours
supportaceputor@uniport.edu.ng adminaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	Students' support, complaints, scholarships, accommodation, harassment, theft	24 hours
financeaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	Making payments, checking balance due	48 hours
technicalaceputor@uniport.edu.ng	Use of ICT during modules and other activities, special technical assistance	24 hours

Students belong to different training groups and are involved in several activities in the course of their study in the Centre. This structure is meant to ensure that every student receives the best available support from the Centre and their peers. It is recommended that each student keeps a detailed inventory of their activities alongside their reports on their progress. The typical spectrum of these involvement is shown in the figure below:

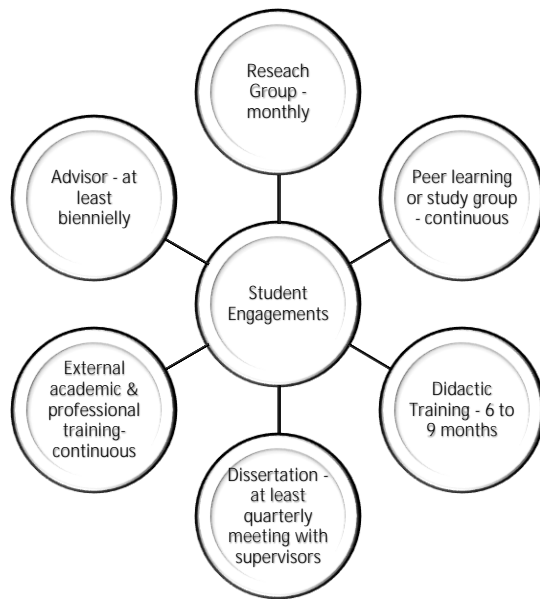


Figure 1. Students involvements during training

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The research groups occasionally undertake specialized methodological training, collaborative research, evidence synthesis. Despite the expediency for individualized research, the complementary skills that come to bear in group research offers promise of tremendous benefits in tackling complex and important problems, producing high quality work with group members learning from each other. Additionally, the research group is a perfect forum for discussing individual research. The current research groups in the Centre include – Environmental health, toxicology, nutrition and nursing. Others available in the University of Port Harcourt School of Public Health include health services/systems, population/reproductive health and epidemiology research groups. There is a broad range of cross-cutting activities between these centres and with the departments of Preventive and Social Medicine, Biochemistry, Experimental Pharmacology, Nursing, Centre for Health and Development and Centre for Marine Pollution and Seafoods Safety. Students in this Centre are permitted to attend academic and professional trainings/seminars holding in any of these collaborating units

Our students are our greatest ambassadors and so we welcome every opportunity to share knowledge and impact them positively. Plans for retention and support of the students would commence even before enrolment and would cut across the traditional three main categories – social integration, academic integration and monitoring progress of the students’ pathway.

Our academic advisory unit shall provide on-going service to intending students on the challenges of university life and provide online and onsite educational material bordering on questions and answer that may pose a challenge to the intending students.

A general orientation would be conducted annually for all fresh students of the Centre in addition to the non-credit module on *introduction to graduate studies*. This is to ensure that all fresh students quickly get adapted to their new learning environment, meet with the faculties and promote organisational integration.

The orientation would also provide an opportunity for the management of the Centre to collate the expectations of the new students and understand how to adapt the programme as much as possible to the need of individual student. It has been stated earlier that the Centre plans to provide enhanced scholarships and assistance to disadvantaged students especially foreign and female students through its welfare committee.

Each admitted student shall be provided a pathway which shows an interactive timeline of his or her key progression milestone specific to the research programme. Candidates who have an interruption, extension or changed their milestones would need to update their new progression milestone deadlines with the Postgraduate committee in the department.

In addition, current students are encouraged to form associations that would serve as a medium to share experiences and support themselves. Regular interactions between alumni and current students would also be arranged as this would provide additional support and social integration for the students especially the foreign students.

Accommodation within campus are often very competitive to get. Foreign students are provided shared spaces at available international Students hostels located along the East-West Road and other hostel facilities within the university. Priority is given to female students and those with special needs. Nigerian students are accommodated in the various postgraduate hostels in the University. The Centre's students support officer would be of help to students who desire to be accommodated on campus.

As an academic Centre of Excellence, PUTOR runs periodic academic seminars that would involve all academics (faculty members and students) in the Centre. This would provide a

means of continuous professional developments. Faculties can participate in all other academic activities and trainings provided by the Centre free of charge

Each faculty will be provided sponsorship opportunities to participate in local and international professional and academic conferences and trainings. In this regard, the centre would augment the existing provisions made available to faculties and administrative staff from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND). The staff in the Centre would also be given opportunities to partake in short-term internships and/or spend a sabbatical period with partnering academic institutions.

All faculty members and students would be attached to at least one research group and this would serve the purpose of mentorship and collaborative research. The Centre would put in place deliberate policy to attract and retain some of the successful doctorate candidates who would serve as post-doctoral fellows and this would enable them to continue a research career in line with UniPort's regulations.

Special trainings would be arranged for staff from time to time based on their areas of need. This may involve Technical training e.g. in proposal writing, use of Microsoft office, developing a research profile, grants writing or manning of equipment. All staff would be expected to enrol for a minimum number of such trainings which would be organised within the Centre and partner institutions every year.

For the purpose of managing expectations of staff, the following would be applicable subject to the availability of funds and disbursement will be in line with the financial regulations in the University.

Group	Benefit	Pre-requisites	Remarks
CMC members	Attendance of bi-annual WB workshop	Subject to invitation	
	1 national conference annually	Relevant to professional development	Duration not greater than 7 days
	1 regional conference every other year	Academics must have an accepted presentation relevant to the centre	Duration not greater than 7 days; fee not more than \$500
	Representing specific focus of the Centre nationally/regionally	Centre strongly required to attend; not more than 1 of such annually	Not just a personal development meeting and recommended by the centre's management
	Representing general focus of the Centre nationally/regionally	The centre is strongly required to attend	Not just a personal development meeting and recommended by the centre's management
Admin staff in the Centre	1 national conference annually	Relevant to professional development	Duration not greater than 7 days

Group	Benefit	Pre-requisites	Remarks
Faculty	National conference	Not more than 1 annually and academics must have an accepted work related to the centre's focus and student's work supervised	Subject to availability of funds and duration not more than 7 days
	Regional conference	Not more than 1 every other year and academics must have an accepted work related to the centre's focus and student's work supervised	Subject to availability of funds; duration not more than 7 days; fee not more than \$500
Members of Centre Boards - (ISAB, SAB, AB)	Facilitation for meetings or undertaking centre's assignment	Support to enable individual to undertake centre's activity	Subject to availability of funds
All staff	For events that are of benefit to the professional development and the staff (e.g. internship or exchange programmes) which are longer than 7 days, sponsorship shall be subject to availability of fund; approval by the Centre's management and stipends would be based on living cost and not per diem.		

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All activities including admissions, scholarship and engagement of faculties are undertaken with the need to promote equity and gender balance

The Centre has made deliberate provisions for gender balance and support inclusion of women in its activities programmes in line with the strategies and policies of the host institution on equity and gender mainstreaming. Some of these strategies include:

- Preferential admission approach to guarantee realisation of the male and female, national and regional students' ratio.
- Preference in the provision of hostel accommodation for all female students
- Differential scholarship programme for female enrolees
- Additional support backed by extant public policy on maternity leave
- Provision of creche and day-care facilities for breastfeeding mothers in academic career
- Adhere to the host University's policy against sexual discrimination, gender bias and all forms of discrimination against women

Monitoring the gender strategy is done alongside the tracking of achievement along the DLI requirements. The findings from this would be presented in the Centre's Report Card for Gender Equality. So far, the admission in current postgraduate programmes run by collaborating departments demonstrates this commitment to gender equality but in addition this Centre will closely monitor and make public its report card annually and such publication would provide answers to the following questions:

- What proportion of the Centre's Masters Students is female?
- What proportion of the Centre's PhD students is female?
- What proportion of the Centre's faculty (graduate assistants, assistant lecturer, lecturer II, lecturer I, senior lecturer, reader and professor) is female?
- What proportion of female faculty was sponsored for conferences/internship etc in the last one year?
- What proportion of headship of internal committees/units/courses/programmes is female?
- What proportion of the Centre's tenured faculty members that were newly recruited in the last one year from outside the institution was female?
- What proportion of external examiners invited for the defence of the students' dissertation is female?

Apart from the partial scholarship where payments are made directly to vendors, other supports to students and staff will follow the requirements of the ACE-PUTOR financial manual. All requests for sponsorship activities will emanate from the would-be recipient to the Centre Leader. If the specific activity required the inputs of the committee, this would be done before the request is forwarded by the Centre Leader to the Vice Chancellor for approval after the auditors have vetted the financial aspects of the request.

Appendix 1. Prototype bond format

THE JUDICIARY
IN THE MAGISTRATE/CUSTOMARY COURT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA
IN THE CHOBA MAGISTRATE/CUSTOMARY COURT DISTRICT,
HOLDING AT CHOBA
STATUTORY DECLARATION AND COMMITMENT TO AN INTENSIVE Ph.D PROGRAMME

I

.....
..... a student of the Africa Centre for Excellence for Public Health and Toxicological
Research (ACE-PUTOR), University of Port, Harcourt, a citizen of the
....., whose address is

.....
...
(Permanent home address)

Residing at
.....
(Present address)

Hereby depose as follows:

1. That I am the deponent herein and swear to this affidavit in good faith
2. That if it becomes inevitable for me to leave before the completion of the Programme for which am being partially sponsored, that I shall pay to the Centre, the sum of One Million, Five Hundred Thousand Naira (₦1,500,000) only which covers the tuition fee and other miscellaneous expenses for the Programme.
3. That I make this solemn declaration and commitment, and affirm that I will abide by the contents of this declaration which I make in accordance with the Oaths Act of 2004.

DEPONENT

SWORN to at the Court's Registry Choba

This Day of 2019

Before me

Commissioner for Oaths

GUARANTOR'S COMMITMENT

I

of.....
(Permanent home address)

Residing at
.....
(Present address)

A citizen of

A staff of
.....
(Organization/rank/position)

Do hereby declare that:

1. I am the Guarantor of

a student of the Centre for Public Health and Toxicological Research, University of Port Harcourt.

2. I guarantee to pay the sum of One Million, Five Hundred Thousand Naira (₦1,500,000) naira if the said student
.....

for whom I stand as guarantor, leaves before the completion of the Programme.

3. I make this solemn declaration, binding myself to the contents and in accordance With the Oaths Act 2004.

GUARANTOR

This Day of 20

Before me

Commissioner for Oaths