



**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

About PUTOR

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.

Vision

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.

Mission

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.

Rationale

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

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

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 has approved that for the time being based on the availability of funding, all full-time national and regional PhD students will receive automatic scholarships from the Centre. additionally, fulltime regional master's students will also automatically receive scholarship from the Centre. finally, all regional students are entitled to free hostel accommodation within the University and would have their residency permit done by the Centre.

Financial Support

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 so 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 public health effects of environmental pollution especially from oil and gas activities. 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 can also 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. Where applicable, 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 decided 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.

Disability support

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. 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:

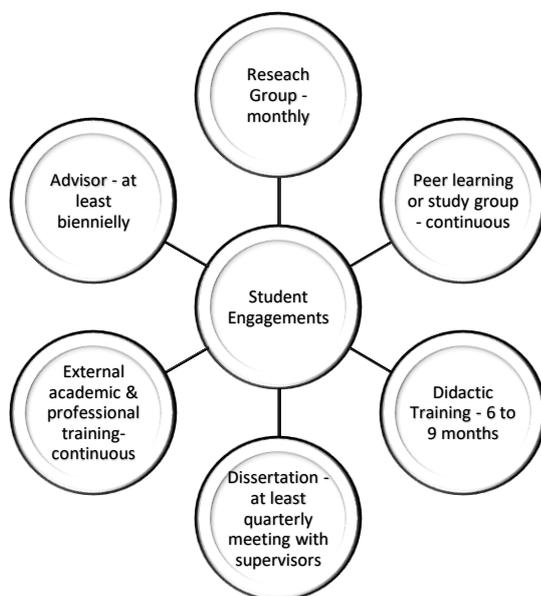
Contacts for support and response time

Contacts	Needs	Anticipated response time
info@aceputoruniport.edu.ng	For general information about the centre, programmes and events, linkages	24 hours
admission@aceputoruniport.edu.ng	Enquiries on admission into degree programmes and short courses	48 hours

academics@aceputoruniport.edu.ng	Information on academic issues, lecture schedules, modules and programmes feedback	72 hours
research@aceputoruniport.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
ceputoruniport.edu.ng	Students' support, complaints, scholarships, accommodation, harassment, theft	24 hours
finance@aceputoruniport.edu.ng	Making payments, checking balance due	48 hours
technical@aceputoruniport.edu.ng	Use of ICT during modules and other activities, special technical assistance	24 hours

Students' engagements and support during training

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:



Research Groups

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

Student retention and progress monitoring

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

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. 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.

Fee payment

Students are classified as private or sponsored based on fee payment. The fees payable by these categories are published before the start of the new session and are not subject to changes for that session. Students are expected to pay school fees annually and for the duration of their programmes. For programmes lasting more than a session, the school fee schedule at commencement shall remain unchanged through the stay of the student.

Payment of school fees is flexible, can be done in installments but should be completed before the end of third quarter of the session. Students can make arrangements for a personalized payment plan by communicating with the finance officers at finance@aceputoruniport.edu.ng

Students who fail to complete their annual payments at the end of the 3rd quarter of each session shall be asked to withdraw from their academic programme. The deadlines for such payments shall be sent to all students at the commencement of the session. Sponsored candidates would have to present their letter of sponsorship from the sponsoring institution, but they are still required to liaise with their sponsors for the payment of required fees. Stated fees are only for all activities done within the Centre, there may be other fees applicable and students are advised to seek clarifications from the office of the Dean of Students' Affairs before making additional payments.

Incentive Structures and Mechanisms for faculties

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	The centre is strongly required to attend	Not just a personal development

Group	Benefit	Pre-requisites	Remarks
	Centre nationally/regionally		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
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.		