

# ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU)



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### IMPOSITION OF THE CORE CURRICULUM MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDARDS (CCMAS) ON NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: THE POSITION OF ASUU

1. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has received several complaints on the threats posed by the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to quality university education and the erosion of powers of university Senate in Nigerian universities. ASUU cannot turn deaf ears to widespread protests against CCMAS. It is inexplicable that the National Universities Commission's (NUC) pre-packaged 70% CCMAS contents are being imposed on the Nigerian University System (NUS); leaving university Senates, who are statutorily responsible for academic programme development, to work on only 30%!
2. ASUU is not unaware that setting academic standards and assuring quality in the NUS is within the remit of the NUC. Section 10(1) of the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, Cap E3, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 enjoins the NUC to lay down the minimum standards for all universities and other degree awarding institutions in the Federation and conduct the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards. However, the process of generating the standard is as important (if not more important) than what is produced as "minimum standards". In this instance, the NUC has recently, through some hazy procedures, churned out CCMAS documents containing 70% curricular contents in seventeen academic fields with little or no inputs from the universities. The academic disciplines covered are: (i) Administration and Management, (ii) Agriculture, (iii) Allied Health Sciences, (iv) Architecture, (v) Arts, (vi) Basic Medical Sciences, (vii) Computing, (viii)

Communication and Media Studies, (ix) Education, (x) Engineering and Technology, (xi) Environmental Sciences, (xii) Law, (xiii) Medicine and Dentistry, (xiv) Pharmaceutical Science, (xv) Sciences, (xvi) Social Sciences, and (xvii) Veterinary Medicine.

3. Expectedly, there are growing concerns about the numerous shortcomings and gross inadequacies of the CCMAS documents. Many University Administrators, though dissatisfied, are shying away from making public comments on CCMAS. However, some university Senates did not hide their displeasure with the ongoing efforts to impose CCMAS on Nigerian universities by the NUC. For instance, at the Special Meeting of the University of Ibadan (UI) Senate held on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, it was observed that “the ratio of 70 to 30 recommended does not permit the exhibition of the uniqueness of disciplines across institutions”. Based on this and other observations, the UI Senate decided that submissions “made by various departments, reflecting the desirable contents be submitted to the NUC”. From ASUU’s knowledge of expressed views and feelings across campuses, the undercurrents in the widespread condemnation of CCMAS include the following:

- (i) No initial communication from the NUC to universities on the planned revision of the BMAS, development of the CCMAS and subsequent migration to CCMAS; making university Senates to become mere spectators in their own affairs.
- (ii) Communication on CCMAS to the universities suddenly came from the Facilitator/Consultant in a manner that undermines the functions of Senate of each university; suggesting that NUC was possibly not seriously involved in the process *ab initio* and that the regulator was possibly brought in into the process to validate its products (CCMAS documents).
- (iii) Many important components of university academic programmes were completely phased out in the new 70% CCMAS and the 30% “local content” is insufficient to remedy the lacunae. For example, there are no Chemistry courses for students of B. Sc. Physics. Apart from Departmental and General Studies (GES/GST) courses, the 70% CCMAS has left out all other Faculty or University courses like Engineering Mathematics for Engineering students, Statistics for Science students, Philosophy and Sociology of Education courses for education students, etc. Almost all departments reported one major deficiency or the other in the CCMAS.
- (iv) Contrary to the stated intentions, the current 70% CCMAS documents have left out essential courses in university programmes which would

render Nigerian graduates globally uncompetitive! There are omissions of core and mandatorily required contents of courses in the old BMAS from those of the 70% CCMAS; raising serious questions about the competence of the so-called experts who executed the “contracts”.

- (v) There are indications of watering down of standards in some BMAS courses as their equivalents in the 70% CCMAS were poorly developed; some course contents are so shallow that graduates of such programmes would find it difficult to defend their certificates. A typical example is Biochemistry where courses at the 300 and 400 levels were weakened and made superficial, bereft of contemporary trends.
- (vi) Unbundling some programmes as contained in the 70% CCMAS would render graduates of such programmes limited, inadequate, and subsequently unemployable in the sectors that would ordinarily want to engage their services. For example, the unbundling of the Mass Communication/Communication Studies would give products of the programme narrow specialisations. The “specialisation” idea in the CCMAS was poorly conceived, making multi-disciplinary understanding impossible in this age of inter-connectedness of things. The labour market in today’s Nigeria is not in sync with narrow specialisation. Specialisation is good and acceptable at the Postgraduate level, not Undergraduate!
- (vii) As could be gleaned from the CCMAS documents, the deployment of experts is skewed to favour some specific areas of disciplines by the Facilitator/Consultant; leaving other critical areas to suffer. An example such bias is the Veterinary Medicine where 7 of the 8 experts that developed the 70% CCMAS came from only one (1) of the ten (10) Departments/Areas of specialisation of the discipline. Engineering and Technology also suffered this same fate.
- (viii) Unifying academic curricula across an estimated 300 universities in Nigeria is counterproductive; it erodes competition, innovation, and creativity. Indeed, CCMAS is a drawback for the older and more experienced universities who justifiably see themselves as being held down for new ones to catch up. Does it make much sense to force first generation universities that have creatively developed their programmes for over six decades to run the same content courses with universities created about six years ago all in the name of “core curriculum”?
- (ix) Imposition of 70% poorly packaged CCMAS undermines the gains of diversified university curricula and the thriving of Specialised Universities. Of course, making transcripts of Academic Records across

the institutions depict the same set of courses is unhealthy and does not portray Nigerian universities as centres of creativity and innovation.

4. ASUU posits that CCMAS portends serious dangers for quality university education in Nigeria. It is an erosion of University Autonomy and Academic Freedom which the Union has advocated and struggled to defend over time. CCMAS is an emasculation of university Senate which, by law and practice, should superintend curriculum review, examinations and award of degrees and certificates in each university. ASUU suspects the imposition of CCMAS as part of strategy for implementing the Nigerian University System Innovation Programme (NUSIP) of the World Bank. The Union rejected NUSIP in the 1990s. We also reject the imposition of CCMAS on Nigerian universities now!
  
5. The CCMAS is a nightmarish model of curriculum reengineering. It is an aberration to the Nigerian University System. The CCMAS documents are flawed both in process and in content. There is no basis for the 70% “untouchable CCMAS” which cannot stand the test of critical scrutiny of university Senates. NUC should encourage universities, as currently being done by the University of Ibadan, to propose innovations for the review of their programmes. Proposals from across universities should then be sieved and synthesised by more competent expert teams to review the existing BMAS documents and/or create new ones as appropriate. The difference here is the bottom-up approach unlike the top-bottom or *take-it-or-leave-it* model of the CCMAS.



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30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023