

# Review of the National Universities Commission's New Curriculum for Nigerian Universities, in the Area of Political Science and Comparism with The Old Curriculum

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## ABSTRACT

To meet the challenges of 21st century realities in educational advancement worldwide, the Nigerian Universities Commission, in line with the objectives of education in Nigeria, has introduced new programmes into the Nigerian University system. The NUC in December 2022, in order to unbundle academic program of universities and make them more practically oriented for skill acquisition, came up with the new Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to replace the old curriculum known as “the Benchmark for Minimum Academics Standards (BMAs). Other compelling reasons included the need to update the standard and relevance of university education in the country as well as to integrate entrepreneurial studies and peace and conflict studies as essential new platforms that will guarantee all graduates from Nigerian universities the knowledge and appropriate skills, competencies and dispositions that will make them globally competitive and capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigeria’s socioeconomic development. This paper addressed the contents of the new curriculum, which is regarded as a core curriculum, the changes and new courses introduced, the unbundling of some courses and comparison with the old curriculum (BMAs) in the area of political science and made suggestions.

**Forewords:** Review, Nigerian universities, new curriculum, comparism, old curriculum.

## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKDROP

According to <https://ogborusoinshononline.com>, Section 10(1) of the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, Cap E3, Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004, empowers the National Universities Commission to lay down minimum standards for all programmes taught in Nigerian universities. In 1989, the Commission, in collaboration with the individual universities and their staff, developed minimum academic standards for all the programmes taught in Nigerian universities, and the federal government subsequently approved the documents.

After more than a decade of using the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) document as a major instrument of quality assurance, the Commission in 2001 initiated a process to revise the documents. The curriculum review was necessitated by the fact that the frontiers of knowledge in all academic disciplines had been advancing with new information generated as a result of research. The impact of information communication technology (ICT) on teaching and learning and the dynamics of the skills needed to face the challenges of competition as engendered by globalization were also compelling reasons for the curriculum

review.

Recognizing that the content-based MAS documents were rather prescriptive, a decision was made to develop outcome-based benchmark statements for all the programmes in line with contemporary global best practices. To actualize this, the Commission organized a stakeholder workshop to benchmark each programme in all the disciplines taught in Nigerian universities.

Following comments and feedback from the critical stakeholders in the universities indicating that the benchmark-style statements were too sketchy to meaningfully guide the development of curricula and were also inadequate for the purpose of accreditation, the Commission put in place the mechanism for merging the Benchmark-style statements and the revised Minimum Academic Standards into new documents referred to as the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAs). Consequently BMA documents were produced for 13 academic programmes:

1. Administration: Management and Management Technology
2. Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Home Economics
3. Arts
4. Basic Medical and Health Sciences
5. Education
6. Emergency and Technology
7. Environmental Studies
8. Law
9. Pharmaceutical Sciences
10. Medicine and Dentistry
11. Science
12. Social sciences
13. Veterinary Medicine

The academic programmes in these disciplines have been in use until recently in 2022 when the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission again reviewed and came up with an enhanced curriculum document for universities known as Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAs) in December, 2022.

The new Core Curriculum and Minimum Standards document provided for academic programmes in 17 disciplines, namely:

1. Veterinary Medicine
2. Social Sciences
3. Sciences
4. Pharmaceutical Sciences
5. Medicine and Dentistry
6. Law
7. Environmental Sciences
8. Engineering and Technology
9. Education
10. Computing
11. Communication and Media Studies
12. Basic Medical Sciences
13. Arts
14. Architecture

15. Allied Health Sciences
16. Agriculture
17. Administration and Management

### **Components of CCMAS and BMAS**

According to <https://ogbomosoinightonline.com>, the Federal government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission (NUC) has introduced new programmes into the Nigerian University system beginning in December, 2022. According to the federal government, the new curriculum is known as the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS). The new curriculum for university education in Nigeria is expected to reflect 21st century realities. “The Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) which was in use previously has been revised to Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).

The new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards provide 70 percent of what should be taught in Nigerian universities with the expected outcome, while the university will provide 30 percent based on their individual university’s contextual peculiarities and characteristics.

### **Contents and unbundling of courses in the new CCAMS curriculum**

The new NUC Curriculum for Nigerian Universities known as Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) has 17 disciplines and 238 academic programmes, with the Federal government approving the introduction of three new courses in the university system, namely, Allied Health Sciences, Architecture Communication and Menial Studies. According to the Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission (NUC) Prof. Peter Okebukola, the new curriculum addresses the knowledge and skills gap, as it introduces in content similar to the curriculum in the best university system in the world and relevant to Nigeria’s sociocultural context in comparable terms. In the new curriculum, mass communication was unbundled to advertising, broadcasting, development communication studies, film and multimedia, information and media studies, journalism and media studies, mass communication, public relations and strategic communication. Agriculture is unbundled into programmes in its contributing components of B.Sc. Agricultural Economics, B. Sc Animal Science, B.Sc Crop Science and B.Sc Soil Science. There is the unbundling of architecture and the introduction of architecture as a new discipline with programmes such as architecture, landscape architecture, architectural technology, interior architectural design, architectural technology and naval architecture. The Basic Medical Sciences discipline is split into Basic Medical Sciences and Allied Health Science. There is also the unbundling of the Social Sciences and the reduction of the General Studies courses from 36 credit units to 12 credit units of 6 courses such as communication in English, Nigerian People and Culture, Philosophy, logic and Human Existence, Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Venture Creation, and Peace and Conflict Resolution Entrepreneurship has been repackaged with the introduction of programme-specific entrepreneurship.

### **Need for the New CCMAS and the difference between it and the old BMAS**

The following are the major differences between the new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) and the Benchmark Academic Standards (BMAS).

1. ***To enhance Contemporary Knowledge:*** The change in the curriculum of Nigerian universities is to enhance contemporary knowledge. The world is revolving around technology and science, and changing the curriculum makes knowledge progressive. Our present -day curriculum in universities and other higher institutions should be tailored towards producing graduates who have what it takes to improve our communities and societies.
2. ***To encourage greater specialization of the Graduates from the Onset:*** The new curriculum is

tailored towards specialization from the undergraduate level to the postgraduate level. This will enable the graduates to have very in-depth knowledge of the course they studied both in practical and theoretical terms. There is specialization from the onset of the study from the first year in undergraduate study. This is the major reason for unbundling the various courses and making them core courses to allow for specialization. There is no more room for the blanket approach under the old BMA curriculum.

3. ***Need to Meet Up With Global Standards:*** There is a great need for universities in Nigeria to meet global standards, and to achieve this, the curriculum must be reviewed. If Nigeria should address the recent challenges in learning, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, terrorism and others, then learners should be introduced to these courses that would enable them to solve the problems relating to these issues successfully.
4. ***Need for Greater Knowledge and Skill Development for Employment Purposes:*** The unbundling of some of the courses in the new curriculum is for manpower development. It is aimed at equipping graduates with greater knowledge and skills development so that they can be employable when they graduate as opposed to the former curriculum, which pays little or no attention to skill development and has left the graduates of most courses unemployable.
5. ***Reshaping the Behaviours of the Nigeria Graduate with more Emphasis on Self Reliance:*** The new curriculum is aimed at changing the behaviour and thinking pattern of our Nigerian graduates on the need for them to be self-reliant after graduating from the university. They should think towards the practice of their areas of specialization, thereby becoming employers of labor instead of waiting to be employed.
6. ***To Create Room for More Uniform Curriculum Among Nigerian Universities:*** The new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAs) provide for 70 percent of the content to be provided by the Federal government as well as the outcome. This leaves the federal government with greater input in the learning content, unlike in the old Benchmark Academic Minimum Standards, which gave the individual universities greater involvement in determining the content of what students are to learn in the various disciplines and courses. Under the new curriculum, the involvement of individual universities was reduced to 30 percent.

### **Change and Unbundling of Social Sciences and Political Science in the New Curriculum**

According to <http://ogbonosoinightonline.com>, the Core Curriculum and Academic Minimum Standards (CCMAs), as they affect the Social Sciences, promote the education and training of students in the various areas of social sciences in Nigerian universities. The subject matter of the Social Sciences has to do with the behavior of individuals and institutions in society. It involves the study of human behaviour, the environment and its elements and the interactions among them. Its knowledge and approach are inevitable for improving the quality of human lives. The various aspects of social science study human behavior from their various standpoints. However, as a dynamic area of study, there are different perspectives that constitute various disciplines of social science:

1. The need to describe, explain, predict and construct human behavior in the sociocultural environment.
2. The need to avoid unnecessary human biases as well as trial and error approach to social problems through the formulation of appropriate hypotheses and theories of social sciences.
3. The need to raise our consciousness in public socioeconomic and other natural policies.
4. The need for critical thinking in critiquing the existing system and its operations in Nigeria and group further to propose alternatives.
5. The need for comparative analysis such that the situation in Nigeria can be compared with other African and indeed third world countries.

However, as a dynamic area of study that evolves with changes in human and physical situations, emerging

new areas of specialization in political science under the new curriculum (CCMAS) are demography and social statistics, international relations, criminology and security studies, peace studies and conflict resolution, political science, etc. Some universities that are responding gradually to the needs of their environment also offer courses in combined honours degrees such as Political Science Education. The new curriculum also provides for courses in petroleum economy and policy studies, social works, social standards, politics, philosophy, economics and development studies. They all are areas of specialization and with degrees awarded for each of these course studies rather than the old BMAs where a degree is awarded in political science with peripheral knowledge of all the component areas. Here, in the new curriculum, an in-depth study is performed, and they are areas of specialization and hope to equip graduates with in-depth knowledge and skills in the course so they can practice as professionals and become self-reliant and employers of labour.

### **The Philosophy, Aims and Objectives of Political Science in the New Curriculum**

The philosophy underlying the programmes in political science is to produce graduates imbued with the ability to understand and make contributions to the development of Nigeria and the global community. The Social Sciences have the mission to foster an understanding of the rapidly changing world, including issues of globalization and a borderless world as well as relationships between various countries. This broad objective can be achieved by equipping students with a solid foundation as well as specialized knowledge in a particular discipline and preparing graduates to meet the human resource needs, create entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and the ability to adapt to new changes and help them develop a sense of public responsibility and self-reliance.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Accordingly, political science training should:

1. Develop students' understanding of social problems at various levels of Nigerian and global communities.
2. Develop the student the ability for objective and critical judgement and to observe, criticize, analyse, understand and synthesize socioeconomic, political and environmental problems using social science methods and techniques.
3. Create an enabling environment for desirable behavioural changes that would help the student develop values that are consistent with hard work, probity, commitment, discipline and patriotism.
4. Enable graduates of political science to fit into various fields of human endeavor both in the private and public sectors of the economy and equip them with entrepreneurial skills and a sense of self-reliance.

### **Differences in Old and New Curriculum**

The objectives of studying political science are the same in both the new CCMAs and BMAs curricula, with slight changes in the following areas:

1. The new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academics Standard provides for more specialization of the students in their areas of studying in their undergraduate studies; hence, the unbundling enables students to start from the first year of study to choose an area of study and specialization from any of the courses that hitherto were components of political science. In the old BMAs, the student studied the major course, Political Science, and earned a B.Sc or B.Ed degree in Political Science. However, in the new CCMAs, the student studies and earns a B.Sc degree or B.Ed in any aspect of Political Science of his/her interest be it Political Economy, International Relations, Community and Development Studies, Public Policy, Criminology and Security Studies, Peace and Conflict



Resolution etc.

2. The new CCMA provides for an in-depth study of the various aspects of political science as major causes on which degrees are awarded on completion of studies. It provides for more specialization of the students in the course of their choice. It therefore narrows down their study in that particular aspect, and more detailed theoretical and practical training is given to make them experts and professionals in the particular course.

The old BMAs do not offer an in-depth study of the various aspects and specialization in a particular area; rather, all the component courses in political science are studied peripherally without any form of specialization at the undergraduate level.

3. The new CCMA provides a more practical approach to study and focus more on the development of skills and knowledge in a segment of political science. The students are equipped with well-detailed knowledge and skills in their chosen area and thus make them experts in the area. The old BMAs were not skill oriented, and the theoretical knowledge given was not well detailed because of the blanket approach of studying all the courses together under political science.
4. The new CCMA aims to train students with employable capabilities and abilities for self-reliance. After going through the study, the students should be able to practice the profession on their own and become employers of labour. They are also better equipped to be employed by firms because of the skills and knowledge they possess. The old BMAs did not offer students such opportunities for specialization at the undergraduate level.
5. The new CCMA hopes to produce students that can fit into the 21st century digital society, hence the introduction of courses that will expose students more to the use of technology in teaching and learning. Under the new CCMA, more emphasis would be placed on the use of computer-mediated teaching processes, thus preparing the students for future societal challenges. The old BMAs laid little or no emphasis on the use of computer-mediated teaching. It was more of use of the traditional lecture teaching method.

### **Basic Admission Requirements and Expected Duration of the Programme**

Admission into the Social Science/Political Science undergraduate programme is by two modes:

1. The UTME, Universities and Tertiary Matriculation Examination and Direct Entry mode using advanced level GCE or JUPEB or first degree in another discipline. Intending students must have a minimum of five credits, including English and mathematics, in one or two sittings. Direct entry qualifies the student to start from year two of the study. The entry requirements into the study are the same in the new and old curricula.

### **Course Descriptions for Political Science**

The first year of undergraduate study in political science has 9 core courses in the first semester and 9 core courses in the second semester. Apart from these nine courses, students are expected to take electives and general courses. There are also no core courses in the first year of the first semester and eight core courses in the second semester. Year three had eight core courses in the first semester and 9 courses in the second semester, while the final year had seven core courses in the first semester and eight courses in the second semester. The summary is as follows:

1. General courses	=	10
2. Interfaculty courses	=	10
3. Faculty courses	=	10
4. Departmental courses	=	117

5. Electives (optional courses) 3 totaling 157 courses.

## CONCLUSION

The need to continually review the curriculum of universities in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized because as our society is developing and new challenges are emerging, there is a great need to restructure the curriculum of the various disciplines studied in our universities to produce a crop of graduates that would have well-grounded and professional knowledge of the courses they studied. It is also important that the curriculum would enable the inculcation of needed skills in the various courses to make them self-reliant; although there is a great need to make them employable for those who cannot establish their own businesses. The Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards came into existence in 1989 with 13 disciplines and has been in use in our universities until December 2022, when the National Universities Commission came up with the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards with 17 disciplines and unbundling of so many courses for more professionalism the need to cope with present-day security challenges and other global issues. The curriculum places greater emphasis on the professional development of students, as they will from their year one in the university choose their area of study, which they will specialize in. For example, an aspect of political sciences, may be Policy Studies, Development Studies, or International Relations. It is hoped that the new CCMAAs will put to rest the issue of absence of skills among our university graduates in Nigeria that has made many of them to remain unemployable even after acquiring a university degree.

## RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

1. The NUC should endeavor to make the study of political science more practically oriented. Since political science is the art of governing and administering society, graduates should be exposed to some years of practical experience in the national Assembly, State Houses of Assembly, Local Government Legislative Houses, Civil Service and paramilitary offices.
2. The unbundling of political science to enable graduates to specialize in different aspects from the first year is a welcome development and should be sustained. It will make for more professionalization of the graduates as opposed to the blanket approach earlier adopted under BMAS. Under the BMAS arrangement, specialization is only in political science at the undergraduate level.
3. More sponsorships should be provided for the undergraduates of political science for overseas exchange programmes, to enable them to have first-hand experience and information on how the governments of other countries are run, not just reading them in books, but interactions with the citizens of those countries would be of immense benefit.
4. If my earlier recommendation for practical experiences for undergraduates of political science should be adopted, then the duration of study of all political science courses should be increased to five years, four years of classroom study and one year of practical experience.
5. There should be concerted efforts towards the professionalization of the study in the real sense of it. It is important that with the professionalization and practical experience gained, political science graduates should be given preference to run for the positions of President, Vice President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Local Government Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, Senate, House of Representative, State Houses of Assembly and Councillorship in Nigeria. This will surely reduce the confusion and show of shame Nigeria is currently facing having governance/leadership become an all comers affairs.
6. Those in governance already but without any background in political science can receive training in the art of governance indirectly by way of seminars, workshops, and retreats. They could also begin experiential and systematic training and can engage in programmes of self-study to obtain the needed training and background to enable them to successfully play their roles in governance.

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