

NATIONAL COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NATIONAL POLICY
ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
IN THE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

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NATIONAL POLICY ON HIGHER EDUCATION

PREAMBLE

This document, **NATIONAL POLICY ON HIGHER EDUCATION**, sets forth the framework for the guidance and direction of Higher Education in Liberia. It therefore advances a philosophy of higher education, the scope, relevant issues, a general policy and details key considerations in the conceptualization and the actualization of higher education in Liberia.

1.0 PHILOSOPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBERIA

Cognizant of the crucial role which education plays in liberating the mind from ignorance and leading it to the path of truth, knowledge and understanding, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) is dedicated to the promotion of higher education in Liberia with the view of developing quality manpower for the socio-economic development of the Liberian society and the outside world.

1.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION

The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) is the Government Agency charged with the responsibility of evaluating, accrediting, and establishing institutions of higher learning in the Republic of Liberia. It also has the responsibility of coordinating the operation of existing institutions of higher learning in the country.

The statutory functions of the Commission as stated in Section One of the Act which created it in 1989 are as follow:

1. To formulate broad policy guidelines for the establishment of higher education in Liberia, and to coordinate and serve as the principal liaison between institutes of higher learning and Government of Liberia.
2. To monitor, evaluate and accredit all institutions of higher learning.
3. To approve all new and existing programs of higher education for funding after having satisfied itself of their needs for national development, and
4. To review existing programs at institutions of higher education with the aim of establishing priority programs of study based on national needs.

2.0 SCOPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Commitment and Partnership

2.1.1 Commitment

The Government of Liberia is conscious of the strategic role of higher education for meeting the national manpower needs and for ushering the nation into modernity in science, technology, development, and gender equality. Therefore, the development, operation, and financing of higher education and its institutions are the primary responsibilities of the Government of Liberia.

2.1.2 Partnership

Recognition of this commitment, including its implementation, is based on the development of sound national policies which serve as guidelines and framework for decision making and appropriate action. To this end, the Government will take all necessary measures to encourage and promote partnership with the civil society, including but not limited to religious and community groups. The Government will also encourage any new partners within the scope and development of higher education institutions which conform to the laws and established policies of the Republic of Liberia.

2.2 Origin of the National Commission of Higher Education

The NCHE was established as an Autonomous Agency of Government of Liberia by an Act of the National Legislature in July 1989, as the result of the following:

- 2.2.1** Post-secondary institutions were established in Liberia without reference to the Government.
- 2.2.2** The need to monitor, evaluate, and approve programs of study of higher education institutions existed.
- 2.2.3** The need existed to provide equal access to educational facilities for improvement of the educational systems, and
- 2.2.4** The need was evident for a system of quality education relevant to national development.

2.3 GENERAL POLICY

In order to avoid the recurrence of the above situation, the National Legislature authorized the Commission to perform the following functions as stipulated in the Commission's mandate:

- 2.3.1** The rights of teachers to teach, investigate, and publish freely, without administrative or political interference.
- 2.3.2** The rights of the students to the opportunity of learning in a conducive environment, without unnecessary supervision and coordination.
- 2.3.3** The rights of all institutions to autonomy, to fulfill the purposes for their establishment through unrestrained collaboration with their sponsors and in harmonious consultation with their clients.
- 2.3.4** Ensure relevance through proper linkage of the academia with the needs of Liberia; services to the community and the academic environment; and secure appropriate fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do and produce.
- 2.3.5** Draw on the advantages and potential of new information and communication technologies in a spirit of openness, equity and international cooperation.
- 2.3.6** Increase access and equity to higher education on the bases of need, merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion expressed by those seeking it, regardless of race, sex, religion, economic, social or physical disabilities, and location.
- 2.3.7** Review, upgrade and strengthen the management and administrative structures, and procedures to ensure prudence, accountability and transparency in the institutions without infringing on their autonomy and academic freedom. Areas where attention shall be focused include:
 - Students admission, placement, counseling, vocational and service
 - Staffing, staff promotion and discipline;
 - Examinations, records, benefactions; and
 - Funds and facilities
- 2.3.8** Review with the view to improve the conditions of service of academic and non academic staff to improve the job content, work environment, professionalism and tenure.

The Honorable Minister of Education is the Chairperson of the NCHE assisted by the Co-Chairperson and the Executive Director, who also heads the Secretariat. This Team of leaders has the responsibility to lend the Commission in formulating such regulations and directives that would be necessary to improve standards while expanding access.

2.4 Definition and Classification of Higher Education Institutions

2.4.1 Definition of Higher Education

Higher Education is a concept that refers to institutions and programs that encompass all educational programs of study and institutions above the senior Secondary level in terms of programs of study and degrees or credentials awarded, a higher institution is defined as a Junior or Community College, a Technical or Technological Institute, a Polytechnic, a four-year College, a Seminary, a University College or a University.

2.4.2 Classification of Higher Education Institutions

Higher institutions of learning in Liberia shall be classified on the basis of sponsorship of public and non public, including private and church-related institutions. Additionally, higher education institutions can be classified by the kinds of programs that they sponsor and the various degrees they award to students who satisfy their requirements. Higher education institutions are listed by levels according to the highest degree as follow:

Level I - certificate granting institutions

Level II - the highest degree awarded is Associate Degree

Level III - the highest degree is Bachelor's Degree

Level IV - the highest degree is Master's Degree

Level V - Master's Degree and Education Specialist Degree

Level VI – three or fewer Doctoral Degrees as the highest degrees; and

Level VII - four or more Doctoral Degrees as the highest degrees.

2.4.3 Development

It is apparent that the major development concerns of higher education, both at national and international institutional levels, relate to the constraints of access, quality, relevance, capacity building, equity, management and funding. Government will direct its attention to redressing these constrains.

3.0 MASTER PLAN

The National Commission of Higher Education is the Agency of Government which shall develop, plan, and maintain a Master Plan of higher education in the Republic of Liberia, subject to periodic review and final approval by Government. The Master Plan shall contain and become embodiment of National Policy of Higher Education, including policies on the establishment, categorization levels, financing and funding, location, capital development, government commitment, coordination, equalization of higher education opportunities, intuitional diversity, distribution of programs, institutional evaluation and self-study, accreditation, and the organizational structure for developing the Master Plan.

3.1 Coordination and Review of Policy

The National Commission of Higher Education is charged with the responsibility to coordinate and review policy of higher education in Liberia, as well as to coordinate and disseminate institutional research funding in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other agencies that are interested in the development of higher education.

3.2 Establishment of Higher Education Institutions

The National legislature has the statutory authority for chartering institutions of higher learning only following recommendation from the National Commission of Higher Education. This policy shall curtail the proliferation of underfinanced and unplanned institutions of higher education in Liberia.

3.3 Evaluation and Accreditation

The National Commission of Higher Education will evaluate the missions, objectives, academic programs, physical resources, finances and qualifications of administrative and instructional staff of an institution of higher learning and subsequently accredit the same. Physical resources will include campuses, classrooms and office furniture, libraries, adequate and relevant books, instructional material, laboratory equipment, conducive working environment, safe drinking water, electricity and sanitary facilities. Evidence of accreditation will be the issuance of a certificate of accreditation by the National Commission of Higher Education or use of another official instrument by the Commission to be considered a legal document of permission to operate.

3.4 Institutional Self-Study

It is the policy of the Government of Liberia that institutional self-study is a compulsory requirement and prerequisite to accreditation. In consultation and cooperation with the National Commission of Higher Education, it is therefore the responsibility of every institution of higher learning to recognize, mobilize required resources, and conduct the Study of all institutional facilities, including missions, goals and objectives, instructional programs, support services, libraries, financial and human resources, offices, classrooms, and so forth.

3.5 Equal Opportunity for Higher Education

The Government of Liberia should be encouraged to provide equal opportunity for higher education in various counties and statutory districts of Liberia by committing itself to establishing, coordinating, operating, funding, designing, confirming, and maintaining at least a public institution of higher learning in each county according to need, while the location and appellation being subject to the people of each county. Initiative for implementation of this philosophy falls within the purview of the National Commission of Higher Education.

3.6 Capital Development

Capital Development for public institutions of higher learning shall be the responsibility of Government, not precluding the participation of friendly governments, international organizations, foundations, with the financial contributions and cooperation of counties, corporations, as well as private donors and philanthropic organizations.

3.7 Financing Higher Education

The Government of Liberia shall have the major responsibility of financing all public institutions of higher learning in addition to donations, and shall provide subsidies or grants to private and nonpublic institutions of higher learning based on formulas developed by the National Commission of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education and approved by Government subject to its ability. Students and their families shall be required to contribute a reasonable proportion of the cost of higher education.

3.8 Annual Budgetary Estimates

In consultation with leaders of higher education institution, the National Commission of Higher Education shall develop procedures whereby it shall receive, review with institutions concerned, provisionally approve a public institutions Annual Budgetary Estimates. The Government shall provide subsidies or grants to public and non public higher education institutions in accordance with the policy developed by the Ministry of Education and the National Commission of Higher Education.

3.9 Governance

- a. Governance of higher education shall be the exclusive province of the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Charter of each institution of higher learning. The NCHE shall intervene only during a crises at institutions.
- b. The President of Liberia is the Visitor and Chairman. EX-Officio on Boards of Trustees of all public institutions of higher learning. The rights and authority of the Visitor shall be as provided in the Charter of every public institution of higher learning.
- c. It is the policy of Government that the Minister of Education shall be Ex-Officio Member of the Board of Trustees of all higher education institutions in Liberia. As Ex-Officio Member, the Ministry of Education, according to practice, shall hold no office on any public Board of Trustees.

3.10 Management

Each institution of higher learning shall constitute a Management Team known as the Administration to run its operations, subject to its Board of Trustees and according to its Charter.

3.11 Scholarships

The awarding of scholarships shall be based on consideration of the need for improvement of the training of higher-level Manpower for national development

3.12 Articulation

The Liberia National Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that policies for entrance to higher education institutions shall be developed on the basis of consistent consultation with relevant institutions. The Commission shall further ensure that entrance and transfer to all institutions accredited are effected based on cooperation among relevant institutions accredited by the Commission.

5.0 MINIMUM ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Act creating the National Commission of Higher Education during the third season of the National Legislature in 1989, empowers the Commission to:

- a. formulate broad policy guidelines for the establishment of institutions of higher education in Liberia, and to coordinate and serve as the principal liaison between institutions of learning and the Government of Liberia.
- b. monitor, evaluate and accredit all institutions of higher learning;

- c. approve new and existing programs of higher education for funding, after having satisfied itself of their needs for national development; and
- d. review existing programs at institutions of higher education with the aim of establishing priority programs of study based on national needs

In order to comply with provisions of the Act the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) has developed, reviewed, and approved these minimum accreditation standards to guide the continuous operation of higher education institutions in the Republic of Liberia, through the use of expertise of the 19-Member Commission and contributions from educators in and out of the Republic of Liberia.

II. PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMS TO BE ACCREDITED

There shall be evidence that the programs to be accredited have clearly defined the philosophy and objectives. Panel members will judge the validity of the philosophy as well as the efforts being made by institutes, colleges, and universities to achieve the quality through the stated philosophy and objectives of the programs.

III. CURRICULUM

The curricula of the programs to be accredited should be relevant and adequate in terms of scope and sequence to prepare practitioners at an appropriate level in the particular field. They should include the appropriate theoretical knowledge and practical skills to fulfill requirements for specific job objectives. There should be a clearly defined process by which the curricula are reviewed and established. This process should recognize the needs of the students and the various roles of the faculty, the administration, and others.

The curricula of the institutions in question at whatever level are subject to scrutiny by the Panel. The Panel will require evidence that the curricula of the programs to be accredited meet the above mentioned requirements.

Visitation Team Members will ascertain that the general environment in the institute, college, and university indicates that the requirements of the curricula are indeed being met. The institute, college or university will provide evidence that supports the implementation of the curricula to the According Team Members with documentary evidence of individual course, textbooks for the course, descriptive materials and reports.

IV: TEACHING STAFF: QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Adequacy of the number of the teaching staff, their competence, and the standard of instruction in all subject areas of the programs will be taken into consideration. Generally, the quality of the instruction determines the effectiveness of the programs as the instructional goal and objectives are consistent with only to the level of competence and vision of the teaching staff.

The overall competence of the teaching staff and thereby the quality of instruction may be judged by such factors as:

- a. their level of academic and/or professional training;
- b. their teaching experience and professional work;
- c. the diversity of their background;
- d. the extent to which they further their education in relevant programs;
- e. the existence of a staff development programs for the improvement of the quality of instruction;

- f. number of full time instructors / part time instructors;
- g. good working condition to attract and retain staff of high quality, for example, accommodation, conducive offices, clerical support staff, modern office equipment;
- h. a suitable setting for the school such as enclosed premises with a conducive learning environment, attractive, spacious and ventilated classrooms and well equipped laboratories, libraries with up-to-date, useful materials;
- i. a reasonable teaching load not more than fifteen (15) credit hours per week;

V: STUDENT ADMISSION ADVISEMENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The institute, college or university should have policies on admission, retention, withdrawal, expulsion, and graduation of students clearly spelt out in its catalogue and other policy documents. There shall be evidence that these policies are properly explained and widely publicized for the information of all students either seeking admission or already enrolled in the institute, college, or university. For admission into any of the institutions, the minimum requirements expected shall be successful pass in the Senior High School Examinations conducted by the West African Examination Council. There should be policy or mechanism through which students are properly advised and guided through their academic programs. For graduation, candidates should have fulfilled degree or other credential requirements as spelt out by the institution.

VI: STANDARDS FOR AWARDING DEGREES

In general, the institution of higher education should have rules and regulations governing examination and the awarding of degrees and diplomas.

These rules should be carefully explained to students on enrollment, widely publicized, and given to all students.

The requirements for each program at different levels shall be comprehensive and clearly spelt out

VII: FINANCIAL SUPPORT

There should be adequate financial support to the institution of higher education and to the department where the programs to be accredited are offered. Evidence of financial support to the institution will be a Bank Account, Presentation and support of the Budget and Donor support amongst others.

VIII: PHYSICAL FACILITIES

There shall be adequate physical facilities - classrooms, laboratories, workshop, recreational facilities, tools, instruments, equipment, and provision for updating the physical facilities and for expendable supplies to give students proper learning experiences essential to achieving the education philosophy and objectives of the programs. The Accreditation Panel will require evidence that adequate physical facilities exist and that they are being used to educate the students, in various aspects of skills or in the techniques of applied design, construction, operation, and production processes in the technology-based programs respectively. Where the institution has residential facilities accommodation for students and faculty, should meet minimum standards.

IX: CONDUCT OF ADMINISTRATION

The effect on productivity of sound administrative policy and effective leadership cannot be over-emphasized. A capable staff can be more effective if it performs its function in an atmosphere of good relationship with the administration, Administrators should perform their leadership role with concern for policies that affect teaching and support staff and students of the institution. The role of an administrator in the institution includes selection and supervision of students, teaching, coordination of activities of programs, conduct of examinations, interpretation of programs and serving as organizational spokesman to members of the profession and to the public.

There should be evidence to panel members that, in performing these functions, the administrator seeks advice from the teaching staff, staff committees, committee chairperson and other staff where necessary,

X: EMPLOYERS AND OTHER RATINGS OF GRADUATES AND OTHER STUDENTS

As evidence of meeting the philosophy and objectives of the programs, the Accreditation Panel will require documentation which indicates employers' satisfaction that graduates of the programs are performing well at their various levels of employment. The evidence should be a result of a survey of the graduates to ascertain that there is rating of satisfactory performance of the graduates in their chosen fields. Where an institute, college, or university has not graduated any student from the programs to be accredited, the student's practical work or projects in programs may be assessed by panel members in lieu of employers rating of graduates. Additionally, the academic performance of the matriculating or transfer students to other institutions of higher education may serve as rating or evaluation instruments.

XI: CONCLUSION

In adopting these Minimum Accreditation Standards, the National Commission of Higher Education hopes that this document has provided sufficient information that institutions seeking accreditation be guided to ensure that academic excellence is achieved in Liberia's higher education. This Accreditation Policy does not prevent higher institutions of learning from seeking and acquiring additional Institutional and Professional Accreditation of their programs.

ACCREDITATION PANEL COMPOSITION (5-7 members)

The following members will constitute the Panel to study and review the documentation and physical facilities of institutions seeking accreditation.

- 1, secretariat
2. Selected Commissioners
3. Co-opted

REGULATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBERIA

INTRODUCTON

Am individual, a group of individuals, or any entity wishing to operate a higher educational institution in Liberia must apply to the National Commission of Higher Education. All applying institutions must meet the requirements set up by the Commission. **NO INSTITUTION SHALL BE CHARTERED UNLESS AUTHORIZED BY THE COMMISSION.**

In order to fulfill the minimum requirements for the establishment of an institution of higher learning in Liberia, one must complete the following: -

1. An application form must be obtained, completed and submitted to the National Commission of Higher Education.
2. An application fee of US\$50.00 will be charged.
3. A survey fee of US\$100.00 will be charged
4. A Verification Team will be sent to the institution to determine whether the information indicated in the form is correct
5. The Commission shall recommend institutions that meet the requirements to the National Legislature to be chartered.
6. Only institutions qualified by the Commission and chartered by the National Legislature shall be issued a TEMPORARY OPERATIONAL PERMIT PENDING THEIR ACCREDITATION.

CATEGORIES OF OPERATIONAL PERMIT FEES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

TEMPORARY PERMIT (TWO YEARS)

- | | |
|--|------------|
| a. School or institution awarding only Certificates/Diplomas | US\$100.00 |
| b. Junior College awarding only Associate Degrees | US\$150.00 |
| c. University/College awarding only Bachelor's Degrees | US\$200.00 |
| d. University awarding Bachelor's degree and above | US\$250.00 |

PERMANENT PERMIT FOR FIVE YEARS

- | | |
|--|------------|
| a. School or institution awarding only Certificates/Diplomas | US\$100.00 |
| b. Junior College awarding only Associate Degrees | US\$150.00 |
| c. University/College awarding only Bachelor's Degrees | US\$200.00 |
| d. University awarding Bachelor's degree and above | US\$250.00 |

7. An applying institution is required to submit to the Commission the following information along with the completed application form:

1. Roster of all instructors and administrative staff, their qualifications (original to be provided on demand), areas of specialization, the institutions graduated from, and year(s) graduated.
2. Academic programs and the various level of credentials awarded in each program.
3. Curriculum vitae and copies of credentials of the founder/proprietor or entity wishing to establish the higher education institution.
4. Evidence by the institutions presentation of current resident and work permits by foreign instructors and staff.
5. Presentation of the actual and potential financial position other than receipts from tuition and fees. Also a current bank account in the name of the institution must be present.
- 6 A five year plan showing staff and infrastructural development. Also a current bank account in the name of the institution must be present.
7. The Visitation Team of the Commission shall conduct an on-the-spot inspection to authenticate the information submitted on the form as well a other requirements.
8. Any Institution of Higher Education in the Republic of Liberia shall be given a period of one calendar year to meet all of the requirements as stipulated herein for the establishment of a Higher Education Institution as of the publication of this document- except for institutions granted temporary permit of operation by the National Commission of Higher Education

9. Any institution found operating without meeting the requirements as enshrined herein shall be immediately closed and a fine of US\$500.00 will be payable to Government revenue.

10. These regulations do not in the mean apply to Higher Education Institutions which started operation before to creation of the National Commission of Higher Education. As of the publication of these regulations, institutions must regularize their status with the National Commission of Higher Education by adhering to the provisions herein. Their failure to comply will subject them to the penalty mentioned above. All Higher Education Institutions in Liberia must be accredited by the National Commission of Higher Education under the policy document, the **MINIMUM ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.**