



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

Plot 91, Cadastral Zone, University Village, Nnamdi Azikiwe Way, Jabi, Abuja

(OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR - ACADEMIC)

POLICY ON RECALLING/INVALIDATING AND RE-ISSUING OF CERTIFICATES

1.0 UNIVERSITY POSITION ON AWARDING OF DEGREES/CERTIFICATES

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) as a higher institution is authorized by enabling law to award degrees and diploma certificates to undergraduate and post graduate students who meet the requirements for the award of such certificates in both learning and character.

The certificates may contain the following information:

- date of award of degree,
- name of student receiving the award,
- type of award (degree, diploma etc and class of degree (where necessary)).

The information on the certificates does not include details of courses, scores and the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of awardees.

The various awards are issued in the form of certificates to eligible students. Certificates are issued not only based on academic performance, rather the student concerned would have been found worthy in learning and character.

The University commenced awarding degrees to graduates in 2009. Since then, there have been increasing requests for reissue of certificates. The requests for recall and re-issuance of certificates are often based on the graduand's perception

of the information contained on the certificates. In the absence of any clear policy on the recall, invalidation and re-issuance of certificates awarded to graduates, CDD constituted this Committee to look into the matter with the view of advising Senate appropriately.

2.0 FINDINGS:

Below are some of the findings of the Committee:

- i. Most of the administrative errors on students' certificates are avoidable. Such errors include: incorrect spelling of student name, wrong programme of study, class of degree and year of graduation
- ii. The Committee also noticed that there were instances when a student could enroll for more than one programme and run them concurrently.
- iii. Lack of strict adherence to degree rules leading to premature graduation of students was noticed by the Committee.
- iv. The University might have awarded degrees and issued certificates to students who were expelled or sanctioned by NOUN as a result of examination misconduct or other forms of misconduct. This was possible because hitherto, there had been no means of readily identifying such students as they quickly transfer to another Study Centre to continue/change their programme of study.
- v. Many students are yet to know the extant university rules on the number of acceptable names to be printed on certificates. Furthermore, most students are not aware that the University does not accept initials in printing of certificates.
- vi. Presently, the certificates NOUN issues to its graduands have special watermarks supported by the seal of the University as security features. These features can only be identified by those who are experts in certificate verification.

3.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE: OBSERVATIONS AND PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered its assigned terms of reference in line with the findings made in the course of its operations and hereby recommends as follows:

i. To investigate the possibility of invalidating and re-issuing of certificates

The Committee critically considered the various requests from graduands for reissuance of their certificates as well as other reported cases of administrative errors in the course of producing certificate. After thorough deliberations, the Committee established that there was need for invalidation and re-issuance of certificates where and when necessary.

ii. To bring up factors that could render a certificate invalid

The Committee considered what obtained in other institutions of higher learning and identified administrative and other factors that could render a certificate invalid thereby needed recall/invalidation by the Senate of the University. The Administrative errors are those possible errors that may occur when the certificates are being produced by the University. They may include errors such as: misspelling or wrong/incomplete name of the graduand, programme of study, class of degree, wrong date of graduation, or duplication of certificate. Another administrative error identified by the Committee is premature graduation of a student who is yet to meet one or more of the requirements for the award of the certificate

Other factors that could render a certificate invalid are:

- Suspicion of forgery
- Alteration on a certificate

- Cases whereby a student is discovered to have registered for two or more programmes concurrently.
- Impersonation
- Issuance of certificate to an undeserving student
- Qualifying results from unaccredited programmes/institutions

The Committee considered these possible circumstances and classified the factors into two categories: the minor ones, which, result from administrative errors, and the major errors, which could result from the students.

In all the cases, the University reserves the right to recall and invalidate the certificate already issued. While in the case of administrative error, a corrected copy would be issued.

iii. **To provide steps to invalidating certificates**

In view of its findings, the Committee identified the following steps for the recall and invalidation of certificates:

- Constitution of a University Certificate Committee and appointment of Certificate Desk Officers. The Desk Officers are to be domiciled at the Academic Office. The need to ensure that staff assigned this duty had incontrovertible and tested integrity that would not for any reason compromise the university standards.
- Completion and submission of a Complaint/Reissue Form by the graduands. Hard copies of the said form are to be collected from the Academic Office as well as Study Centres. It was recommended that the said form could be uploaded on the University's website where those concerned could easily download them and process with Academic Office of the University.
- Retrieval of the original copy of the certificate issued.

- Verification and investigation of graduands claim by the University Certificate Committee or Certificate Desk officers as the case may be. The need for cautious handling of this activity cannot be over emphasised.
- Reports of investigations are to be first presented to the CDD after which CDD's recommendations may be forwarded to Senate for consideration and possible final approval.
- For Invalidated certificates, their numbers should be clearly marked and well documented prior to their listing in the designated print-media for the attention of the public.
- All invalidated certificates should be boldly stamped "**INVALIDATED**".
- All retrieved, recalled and invalidated certificates should be stored for a period of one (1) year before they are destroyed.

iv. To provide situations that could make a certificate eligible to be re-issued

The Committee considered the possible cases and recommends that the under listed cases would only be considered for correction and reissue:

- Confirmed error on the spelling of student's name with evidence.
- Confirmed error in class of degree.
- Confirmed error in date of graduation.
- Confirmed error in name of programme.

It must be confirmed that at least one of the above listed peculiarities is proven before a request for re-issue of certificate is considered. In each of the above-listed cases, a fresh certificate bearing the right information printed therein would be re-issued to the student.

However, it is worthy of noting that such certificates would be signed by the current serving officers of the University but would retain the student's approved date of graduation. Furthermore, the word "**REISSUED**" and the **DATE it was reissued** would be boldly printed on the left hand corner of the certificate.

The Committee further recommends that the following cases shall not be considered for re-issue:

- a) **Suspicion of forgery:** If a case of forgery is established against any graduand, the Certificate should be retrieved and invalidated. Such certificates are not to be re-issued. Rather the student should be made to face sanctions as contained in the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- b) **Alteration on a certificate:** A graduand who alters his certificate would face the stipulated sanctions. The certificate would be retrieved and invalidated and there will be no reissue.
- c) **Concurrent Registration of more than two programmes:** - Only one certificate would be issued to graduands found to have registered for two or more programmes concurrently. The other would be retrieved and invalidated.
- d) **Loss/theft/damage of certificate:** - In the event of proven loss of certificate, a certified true copy will be issued on the notification of the loss. The name on the certificate must be the same as contained in the University's database. The date of graduation, programme and class of degree would remain same.
- e) **Failure of certificate verification test:** - The unverifiable certificates presented as the entry qualification for registration into a programme would lead to the recall and invalidation of the certificate issued to the graduands concerned.

f) Presentation of certificates from unaccredited programmes/institutions. This would be treated as in “e” above.

g) **Change of name after graduation:** Certificates will not be re-issued in the case of a student’s change of name after graduation.

v. To develop steps to be adopted for the re-issuance of certificates

The steps to be adopted for the re-issuance of certificates comprise:

- Completion of a Certificate Complaint Form by the graduands. Each complainant is required to complete the designated Certificate Complaint Form. (See Appendix 1)
- An original copy of the duly completed form **MUST** be submitted to the Office of the Registrar. A receipt for the payment of a non-refundable processing fee of ten thousand Naira (N10,000.00) only, through Remita into the University account must be attached to the Form.
- Other documents to be attached to the completed form are photocopies of:
 - (i) Identity Card (any of the following should be acceptable, photo page of international passport, drivers license, national identity card or voters card),
 - (ii) Marriage certificates,
 - (iii) Sworn affidavit of birth/birth certificate
 - (iv) Newspaper publication of change of name; and
 - (v) Any other relevant document.
- In the case of any of the major errors, a police report and affidavit sworn before a Commissioner of Oaths at a Court of competent jurisdiction must be attached.

- The original certificate issued to the student must be attached to the form as the case may be.
- Verification and investigation of student's claim by the University Certificate Committee or Certificate Desk officers would be done in liaison with the relevant Faculties, and Academic Directorates. There must be a thorough investigation and confirmation of every claim by the applicant.
- All completed Certificate Complaint Forms should be forwarded to the Committee of Deans and Directors (CDD) for consideration and approval of the Senate.
- All invalidated/recalled certificates MUST be well documented, inclusive of the certificate numbers, and published in the designated media.

Note: The whole re-issuance/recall process; from the receipt of the completed forms to the printing of the certificates would last between four (4) to six (6) weeks.

vi. **To Identify Possible landmarks peculiar to re-issued certificates**

The Committee considered this term of reference and recommends that:

- The word **"REISSUED"** must be clearly printed/stamped on all reissued certificates. Such certificates are to be dated as and when printed.
- The serving Vice-Chancellor and Registrar are to sign re-issued certificate.

4.0 PROPOSED POLICY STATEMENTS ON THE RECALL/INVALIDATION AND REISSUING OF CERTIFICATES

- The awards are conferred on qualified students during the annual convocation ceremony of the University. This is usually climaxed by the issuing of certificates.

- The Academic Office is responsible for the production and issuance of certificates to graduates of the University.
- Graduates of the University are required to collect their certificates in person. The certificates are not issued by proxy or mail.
- The University would consider recalling/invalidating and reissuing of certificates when all stipulated requirements are met.
- The University shall not consider temporary misplacement of certificate as sufficient reason for reissue.
- In the event that a student submits an appeal against his/her academic award; the certificate concerned shall be withheld pending the resolution of the appeal.
- Any fraudulent act or misrepresentation by any student shall attract sanctions and the certificate of such a student would be withdrawn and invalidated.