CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

LIFELONG LEARNING ACCESS POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises lifelong learning as a vital driver of continuous personal development, professional re-skilling, socio-economic mobility, and sustainable societal transformation across all age groups and demographics.

The University is committed to establishing an inclusive educational ecosystem that extends learning opportunities beyond traditional degree structures, offering flexible academic pathways, professional development programs, vocational enhancement, and open community learning to non-traditional and adult learners.

This Policy establishes the University's institutional commitment to expanding open access to education, regulating flexible learning pathways, recognizing prior experiential learning, and fostering community-wide intellectual engagement across all COOU campuses.

The Policy operates consistently with the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Universities Commission (NUC) guidelines on open and distance learning, the University's enabling statutes, regulations, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- democratize access to higher education and specialized skills for non-traditional learners, working professionals, and mature students;
- provide a structured framework for executive, vocational, continuing, and short-course professional development;
- establish transparent mechanisms for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer for adult learners;
- harness digital technologies and hybrid learning formats to broaden educational outreach beyond physical campus boundaries;
- foster partnerships with industry, professional bodies, local communities, and government agencies to address workforce skill gaps;
- guarantee equal opportunity and non-discriminatory access to University learning resources regardless of age, background, or career stage; and
- provide an institutional governance model for quality assurance across all non-formal and continuing education offerings.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies across all campuses, faculties, directorates, centers, and institutes of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, including the Directorate of Part-Time & Continuing Education and the Centre for Executive Education, and covers:

- adult learners, mature applicants, and non-traditional students seeking skill upgrades or qualification updates;
- enrolled students in part-time, weekend, sandwich, executive, and distance learning programs;

- participants in short courses, workshops, micro-credentials, and professional certification modules;
- academic staff involved in teaching, module design, and assessment for continuing education; and
- external stakeholders, industry partners, and community members accessing University public lectures, libraries, and open educational resources.

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as compromising academic rigor, bypassing statutory accreditation standards, or authorising unapproved waivers of core degree requirements.

4. PRINCIPLES OF LIFELONG LEARNING ACCESS

4.1 Open Access and Inclusivity

The University shall eliminate artificial barriers to educational entry by providing flexible entry requirements for non-degree courses and specialized adult education programs, catering to diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

4.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University recognises that valuable knowledge and competencies are acquired through professional practice, informal training, and life experience. Formal RPL guidelines shall be established to evaluate and credit verified prior learning toward admission or module waivers in appropriate continuing education programs.

4.3 Flexible Delivery Modes

To accommodate work, family, and personal commitments of adult learners, the University shall offer courses through blended, evening, weekend, modular, and online distance-learning modalities, ensuring equal access to academic support services.

5. PROGRAM STRUCTURES AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS

5.1 Short Courses and Professional Development

Academic departments are encouraged to design stackable short courses, executive diplomas, and micro-credentials that respond directly to regional labor market demands, technological advancements, and community needs.

5.2 Community Outreach and Public Education

The University shall regularly organize public lecture series, agricultural extension workshops, civic education seminars, and digital literacy programs accessible to surrounding local communities without formal academic prerequisites.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

All lifelong learning programs, short courses, and continuing education modules shall undergo rigorous quality assurance review by the University Academic Planning Directorate. Micro-credentials and certificates issued must reflect established NUC standards and institutional quality benchmarks.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIFELONG LEARNERS

Participants in University lifelong learning initiatives shall:

a. actively participate in instructional activities and adhere to course completion schedules;

b. uphold academic integrity, professional ethics, and campus code of conduct regulations;

c. provide authentic documentation when applying for RPL or professional module entry; and

d. fulfill financial and administrative requirements associated with their chosen course of study.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

The University Management shall:

a. allocate appropriate physical, digital, and instructional resources to support continuing education;

b. expand digital infrastructure and Learning Management Systems (LMS) for remote and hybrid learning;

c. foster industry and community linkages to align lifelong learning offerings with socio-economic priorities; and

d. ensure reasonable fee structures and financial flexibility for adult and professional learners.

9. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

The University shall designate the **Board of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning** to:

a. oversee the policy implementation and strategic expansion of non-traditional educational offerings;

b. review and approve proposed short courses, executive programs, and RPL assessment frameworks;

c. evaluate quality assurance metrics across all flexible delivery channels; and

d. submit an annual Lifelong Learning and Community Access Report to the Vice-Chancellor and Senate.

10. PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

This Policy, along with information on available continuing education modules, RPL guidelines, and entry details, shall be published on the official University website and learning portals. The University shall maintain an official policy control record detailing approval and review schedules.

11. REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier if required by updates in national education guidelines, technological shifts, or University Senate directives. Every review shall be officially documented and approved.



Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr

Vice Chancellor **Date:** 24/10/2026