Phase 2 Output – Potential Mitigations

Cardiff Metropolitan University

QAA

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Introduction

This document was developed as a response to the findings of the phase 1 output of the British Council funded project, the object of which was to identify the potential barriers in establishing TNE partnerships between UK and Nigerian HEI's. The phase 1 activity that took place was the result of partnership activity between a UK HEI (Cardiff Metropolitan University) and a Nigerian HEI (The National Open University of Nigeria) and involved:

1. A desk-based review by lead researchers on the potential barriers
2. A visit by partnership staff and a link tutor from Cardiff Metropolitan University to The National Open University of Nigeria, including interviews with identified stakeholders
3. A survey of stakeholder's views

The result of that activity was the phase 1 output: a scoping report into the potential barriers to establishing TNE partnerships between UK and Nigerian HEI's. This document responds to these potential barriers, with a range of suitable mitigations, which then helps to inform a roadmap to exploring such partnerships.

The document is split into the following sections:

- Regulatory and Legal
- Financial and Economic
- Operational and organisational
- Pedagogic/Academic
- Technological
- Security and Risk
- Perception and Recognition
- Environmental and Sustainability

Regulatory and Legal

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Regulatory uncertainty (NUC process)	Approval steps and local accreditation standards are not fully known to UK partners.	• NUC should ensure that the regulatory processes are clear and easy to understand by all stakeholders within and outside the country. • Laws set out should not be frequently changed without due notice • Approval steps and local accreditation standards captured in an easy-to-Understand manner are displayed on its website and other communication outlets • Such laws can be reviewed at 5 years interval NUC Website should also provide such information
Multiple UK oversight bodies	QAA/OfS/Medr requirements add layers and can slow set-up.	• The UK bodies can be streamlined to be a one-whole information centre on TNE requirements UK should look into the NUC law to prevent conflicting laws
Policy shifts affecting mobility	Changes in UK/Nigeria policy can disrupt staff/student movement.	• Both laws should be flexible enough to allow for easy staff/student movement. Restrictive migration policies of UK/Nigeria could create exemptions for the staff /students
Precedence clashes (NUC vs UK regs)	Unclear hierarchy if NUC directives conflict with UK university regulations.	• NUC should ensure that its regulations do not clash with the UK regulation • NUC should further declare that in the unlikely event of NUC directive clashing with UK university that the Minister of Education the country where the University in control is will give the final directive.

Preferred models differ	NOUN's preference for joint/dual degrees vs UK institutions' need for ultimate control.	• Need to harmonise interests of both institutions • Each University could be permitted to take control of some specified courses
Standards mapping and award titles	Need clean mapping to NUC standards and consistent award titles.	• Cooperation should be encouraged between the two regulatory bodies to ensure consistency • NUC should maintain clean mapping standards and its award titles should be consistent to avoid confusion
Timely, tidy submissions & roles	On-time submissions and clear responsibilities reduce back-and-forth.	• Efforts should be made to ensure timely submission of clear responsibilities
Oversight visits must be workable	Regulators still need in-person verification; mobility must be feasible.	• Structured in-person verification should be provided by regulators from time to time

Financial and Economic

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Financial sustainability	Both partners face tight budgets; partnerships need predictable, durable funding.	• Establish co-funded partnership models where costs and revenues are transparently shared. • Secure multi-year funding or endowments from government education agencies or development partners (e.g., British Council, TETFund). • Introduce revenue diversification through executive education, online short courses, and alumni fundraising.
FX volatility & fee currency	Exchange-rate risk and which currency students pay in can undermine viability.	• Denominate tuition in local currency with hedging mechanisms or flexible fee adjustment clauses. • Use dual-currency payment options to manage exposure. • Explore financial instruments or institutional forex arrangements that stabilize income flow.
Tuition affordability	Total cost to students (fees, extras, connectivity, living) is a major constraint.	• Offer flexible payment structures (e.g., instalment plans, pay-as-you-learn options). • Develop joint scholarships and bursary schemes targeted at low-income students. • Deliver hybrid/blended learning models to reduce relocation and accommodation costs.
“Cheaper degree” optics	Risk of devaluing local offers if TNE is priced lower.	• Maintain transparent communication on cost differentials based on delivery model, not quality. • Implement quality assurance and joint branding strategies to ensure perceived parity. • Align tuition levels with market benchmarks and value propositions.
Programme resourcing costs	Some subjects need expensive software/hardware/licences to deliver properly.	• Pool resources through shared facilities or virtual labs. • Negotiate educational discounts or institutional licences with software vendors.

		• Develop open-source and cloud-based alternatives where possible.
Infrastructure & set-up costs	Campuses/classrooms/utilities investment can be high, especially beyond cities.	• Prioritize digital infrastructure to enable remote or blended delivery. • Partner with existing local institutions to share facilities rather than build new ones. • Access public–private partnership (PPP) models for capital investment.
Scholarship availability	Lack of scholarships reduces access for cost-sensitive students.	• Establish joint scholarship funds supported by UK and Nigerian partners. • Seek support from development donors, corporate sponsors, and alumni networks. • Integrate performance-based or needs-based financial aid frameworks.

Operational and organisational

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Visa application complexity	Unreliable portals led to third-party processing; adds time/cost.	• Strengthen institutional partnerships with embassies or immigration offices, • establish centralized support for visa processing, • provide early guidance and digital checklists for applicants.
Vaccination/logistics burden	Vaccination and travel health add planning time and costs, repeated with staff changes.	• Coordinate with health agencies to streamline vaccination verification, • adopt digital health records, • build longer-term staff deployment cycles to reduce repetitive logistics.
Reliance on few individuals	Arrangements that hinge on 1–2 staff are fragile and high-risk.	• Implement role rotation, cross-training, and • knowledge management systems to ensure continuity and institutional memory.
Capacity and workload	TNE adds new delivery patterns and time-zone coordination onto existing loads.	• Introduce workload redistribution, • recruit dedicated TNE coordinators, • adopt collaborative scheduling tools for cross-time-zone efficiency.
Misaligned timelines/docs	NUC and UK quality/approval timelines and documentation don't always align.	• Develop joint academic calendars, • harmonize approval templates, • establish shared planning timelines across institutions.
Cross-system alignment	Admissions, identity, VLE/LMS, results, transcripts and data protection must line up.	• Integrate systems through APIs or middleware, • adopt unified data standards, • implement a single sign-on (SSO) framework across platforms
Unclear ownership/hand-offs	Process ownership gaps slow delivery; too many hand-offs.	• Define clear process ownership using RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) frameworks, • establish streamlined communication workflows

Headcount/training gaps	Specialist workflows (credit transfer, moderation, certification) need resourcing.	• Recruit or upskill staff for specialized roles, • provide continuous professional development • create standard operating procedures for complex workflows
Predictable service levels	Need defined response times, ticketing, and shared calendars to keep on track.	• Providing ticketing systems/AI chatbot to improve transparency and timeliness. • Shared calendar
Mixed regulations per cohort	Operating different policies/regulations for different student groups adds complexity.	• Harmonize policy frameworks where possible, • create cohort-specific operational guides, and • use regulatory mapping to manage compliance efficiently

Pedagogic/Academic

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Regional cultural differences	Variations across Nigerian regions affect study modes and support needs.	• In Nigerian higher education, English is the official language of teaching and learning, except when it involves the teaching of other languages apart from English. • Establish Community-Embedded Learning Centres (CELCs) and regional Digital Learning Hubs that leverage local infrastructure and cultural context. • Develop multilingual learner support and inclusive pedagogy models through trained regional "Digital Champions. • Implement a train-the-trainer cascade model to continuously build staff capacity for inclusive teaching across diverse regions.
Balancing contextualisation & integrity	Adapting to local context while maintaining a single, equivalent UK programme is hard.	• Adopt a Twin-Track Co-Creation Model that integrates a Core–Flex Curriculum Framework — maintaining UK academic standards (core) while embedding Nigerian socio-economic and cultural relevance (flex). • Establish Transnational Learning Innovation Hubs jointly managed by both institutions to drive curriculum co-design, contextual relevance, and continuous innovation. • Operate through a Dual Assurance Curriculum Board ensuring equivalence, parity, and responsiveness to local realities.

		• Academic expectations should be clearly stated to enhance the identification of weaknesses in a system or process for continuous improvement
70:30 hybrid fit for UK awards	UK-validated models may struggle to meet a 70/30 online–face-to-face split in practice-heavy subjects.	• There should be adjustment in the delivery models depending on the discipline • Introduce a Flexible Hybrid Learning Model guided by subject clusters — e.g., 70/30 for theory-based courses, 50/50 for practice-heavy disciplines. • Leverage Extended Reality (XR), AR/VR, and virtual labs hosted via secure cloud platforms to simulate practical experiences. • Use Co-Creation Studios within regional hubs to allow project-based, collaborative learning supervised by dual mentors (UK and Nigerian).
Practical lab resourcing at scale	Equipping many centres with specialist labs/hardware may be unrealistic.	• Employ Virtual and Shared Laboratory Networks (VSLNs) and equipment-sharing consortia across partner institutions. • Combine low-cost simulation tools and cloud-based lab environments with local resource hubs. • Develop industry-linked practice residencies in Nigeria to reduce dependency on imported lab infrastructure.
Academic integrity at scale	Risks with at-home online tests; need strong ID checks and proctoring.	• Deploy AI-enabled proctoring systems, biometric ID checks, and blockchain-secured assessment logs. • Incorporate authentic assessment designs (e.g., portfolio, case-based, reflective tasks) that reduce cheating incentives.

		• Oversight by the Joint Quality Board (JQB) ensures academic honesty and swift resolution of integrity breaches.
Marking consistency	Calibrating large, multi-hub marking operations is challenging.	• Activate a Joint Quality Board using Dynamic QA Loops supported by AI-assisted moderation dashboards. • Conduct regular cross-institutional calibration workshops and peer moderation cycles. • Employ analytics to detect anomalies and maintain transparency across markers and hubs. • Promote UK–Nigeria faculty exchanges, implement peer review of grading, and ensuring students have accessible grade review channels.
Clear rubrics & sampling	Need detailed guides, sampling and second marking to assure standards.	• Design rubric blueprints co-created by both institutions, detailing marking bands, descriptors, and local relevance examples. • Integrate AI-driven rubric validation to ensure alignment and fairness. • Maintain a centralised assessment sampling and second-marking system overseen by the JQB.
Turnaround & feedback timeliness	Large volumes can delay results and feedback.	• Implement AI-supported feedback engines to automate formative comments while preserving academic tone. • Use progress dashboards to track marking and feedback timelines. • Adopt workload balancing across marking teams in both countries with clear service-level agreements (SLAs).

Data protection & script security	Secure handling of scripts and conflicts-of-interest need tight controls.	• Enforce a Zero-Trust, Cloud-First Security Framework ensuring encryption of data at rest and in transit. • Introduce secure digital lockers for script exchange with strict access control and role-based authentication. • Implement annual cybersecurity and GDPR/NDPR compliance audits for both partners.
Credit transfer/articulation	Recognition of prior study and smooth movement between programmes not guaranteed.	• Establish a Blockchain-Enabled Credit Bank System to verify and store learner achievements securely. • Create micro-credential and stackable pathways linked to global skills frameworks (e.g., UNESCO, QAA). • Adopt a Cross-Border Academic Standards Framework defining mutual recognition and credit mobility protocols.
Outcomes/assessment alignment	Learning outcomes and standards must align without copy-pasting unsuitable models.	• Align learning outcomes through Outcome Mapping Workshops jointly facilitated by both HEIs. • Deploy Curriculum Analytics Tools to continuously test and realign programme outcomes. • Integrate graduate employability indicators into assessment design to ensure real-world impact.

Technological

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Connectivity & power reliability	Internet/power instability impedes delivery and access to platforms/libraries.	• Implement offline access options by providing downloadable content • use low-bandwidth platforms, • provide backup power sources such as solar solutions, • partner with telecom providers for subsidized data access
Digital literacy gaps	Variable digital skills among students/staff can limit online delivery.	• Conduct regular digital literacy training, • create user-friendly platforms with intuitive interfaces, • establish peer support or digital helpdesks for ongoing assistance
Virtual lab capability	Need robust virtualised environments where physical labs aren't feasible.	• Adopt cloud-based virtual lab solutions, • integrate open-source simulation tools, • collaborate with industry or edtech providers to develop context-appropriate virtual lab infrastructures
Identity verification	Reliable mechanisms needed for remote assessment identity checks.	• Use AI-based facial recognition, • secure login protocols, • proctoring software, • blockchain-backed identity management systems to authenticate users during assessments.

Security and Risk

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Security risks to travellers	Crime, kidnapping and armed robbery risks elevate travel risk management needs.	Locate TNE units in secure urban centres that have better security cover than remote locations close to ungoverned spaces.
Civil/labour unrest	Protests and strikes in major centres can disrupt operations and visits.	Advance notice of 21 days of intended strike by labour unions as provided by Nigeria's laws will allow enough time to reschedule.
LGBTQ safety concerns	Elevated risk to LGBTQ staff/students affects mobility and duty of care.	LGBTQ safety concerns can be addressed by Nigeria's health policy which does not discriminate, but it is not advised to be displayed openly because of tradition and customs.
Corruption risk	Corruption can affect operational and financial processes.	Nigeria's procurement laws insist on adherence to transparency and competitive bidding. Unethical practices once reported to the anti-corruption agencies, EFCC and ICPC are aggressively prosecuted. This can mitigate against losses.
Need for armed escorts	Security posture (e.g., armed guards) signals elevated baseline risk.	It's not in all instances, that armed guards escort foreign personnel. Many foreigners serving in diplomatic missions in Nigeria are not provided armed escort. Its only advisable if cash is being moved.

Perception and Recognition

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Perception: importing = low faith in local HE	Some see foreign awards as implying weak confidence in domestic provision.	TNE model that encourages mutual benefits between local HEIs and their foreign partners will instil more confidence and mutual respect, like a dual degree option for instance.
Employer acceptance varies	Some employers may prefer local degrees; confidence depends on local relevance.	No employer as a rule is expected to discriminate against any degree, whether local or foreign if the regulatory processes and procedures required by Nigeria's laws are adhered to. Any reported breach by an employer is sanctionable.
Students don't see extra "weight"	Many students did not view UK awards as carrying more value in Nigeria.	Many Nigerians and students respect UK degrees and value them because many top technocrats and CEOs in Nigeria are products of UK varsities. It's the issue of cost because of currency conversion from foreign to the local Naira that is often a possible disincentive. So, it is advisable that TNE models should denominate their fees in the local currency.
Clarity on equivalence	Students and employers need transparent mapping of levels/credits/outcomes.	Any potential TNE model should ensure robust quality assurance processes and procedures that do not devalue earned credits, levels and academic outcomes of either of the partners.
Evidence of graduate outcomes	Need demonstrable employability/progression benefits to justify TNE choice.	TNE degrees would always be valid for employability and career progression once it is confirmed that the quality assurance processes in the TNE model are not compromised to lower standards. So, to mitigate this, TNE is advised not to become a degree awarding mill.
Communications & guidance	Students want clear contacts, timely updates, simple processes for credit/complaints.	• A robust student support structure would be required to provide an enabling environment for learning, and to make learning a pleasant experience. • Cut down the bureaucracy and bottlenecks. Enhance the use of technology to ensure instant and regular feedback.

Environmental and Sustainability

Barrier	Brief description	Potential Mitigations
Environmental footprint of travel	Travel for set-up and QA adds environmental impact (noted as a factor).	• Use virtual platforms for meetings, quality assurance, and administrative coordination to reduce international travel. • Establish Robust Quality Assurance (QA) Frameworks with regular monitoring and evaluating programs to ensure sustainable environmentally friendly standards are maintained by each party. • Build local capacity by training Nigerian staff to handle on-site quality assurance and partnership activities. • Training should also include developing capacity for building and gaining carbon credits locally. • Set up regional hubs or collaborate with British Council or West African partner networks to manage operations locally. • Plan travel efficiently by combining multiple activities in one trip, opting for longer stays, and choosing eco-friendly airlines or routes. • Implement joint carbon offset programs through tree planting, renewable energy projects, or verified carbon offset partners. • Include clear environmental sustainability goals in the TNE agreement, with annual carbon impact reports and sustainability performance benchmarks.