ICONIC UNIVERSITY
OPEN, DISTANCE & E-LEARNING

SOKOTO-NIGERIA

DIRECTORATE OF ACADEMIC PLANNING
QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

POLICY ON STUDENTS' PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has revolutionized the education landscape by providing flexible and convenient learning opportunities to a diverse group of learners. At Iconic Open University, we pride ourselves on being among the pioneers in the field of ODL in Nigeria, and strive to provide our students (Icons) with a high-quality learning experience. However, the University recognizes that certain academic programmes—particularly in the sciences, health sciences, engineering, agriculture, and the creative arts—require hands-on practical exposure that cannot be fully replicated through interactive texts or virtual simulations alone.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning in Nigerian Universities explicitly acknowledge that while ODL students should not be required to attend classes or have face-to-face contact, exceptions are justified for **examinations, periodic facilitation, and practicum** . This policy establishes the framework for the organization, supervision, and quality assurance of practical sessions and student placements in laboratories, hospitals, workshops, and studios, ensuring that Iconic graduates meet the competency standards expected of their disciplines while maintaining the flexibility that defines the ODL mode.

The scope of this policy covers all programmes with mandatory practical, clinical, industrial, or studio components, including but not limited to: Sciences, Nursing, Public Health, Environmental Sciences, and Creative Arts. It complements the Policy on Course Material Development, the Facilitation Guide, and the Policy on Staff Development, by addressing the unique logistical and pedagogical challenges of delivering practical competencies at a distance.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The specific objectives of this policy are to:

1. Establish a structured framework for the planning, delivery, and assessment of practical sessions and student placements across all relevant programmes.
2. Ensure that practical experiences are aligned with the learning outcomes stipulated by the NUC Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) and the Iconic University curriculum.
3. Define the criteria for selecting and partnering with external facilities (hospitals, laboratories, workshops, studios) for student placement.
4. Outline the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders—students, facilitators, supervisors, and partner institutions—in the practical training process.

5. Institute robust supervision, monitoring, and quality assurance mechanisms to guarantee the safety, relevance, and rigor of practical training.
6. Provide for the equitable access of all Icons to practical training opportunities, irrespective of geographical location.
7. Establish protocols for the assessment and certification of practical competencies.

3.0 DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

3.1 Practical Session: A structured learning activity conducted in a laboratory, workshop, studio, or clinical setting where students apply theoretical knowledge through hands-on experimentation, creation, or clinical practice.

3.2 Student Placement: The assignment of a student to an approved external facility (hospital, industry, workshop, studio, or research laboratory) for a defined period to gain supervised practical experience, often referred to as SIWES (Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme), clinical rotation, teaching practice, or field work.

3.3 Practicum: A supervised practical experience that is integral to the completion of a degree programme, designed to develop professional competencies under real or simulated conditions.

3.4 Partner Facility: An external institution or organization (hospital, laboratory, industry, studio, or workshop) that has entered into a formal agreement with Iconic Open University to provide supervised practical training or placement opportunities for students.

3.5 Clinical Rotation: A period of supervised clinical practice in a healthcare setting, required for programmes in Nursing, Medicine, Public Health, and allied health disciplines.

3.6 SIWES: The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme, a national programme coordinated by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) that provides students with industry-based practical experience.

3.7 Studio/Workshop Practice: Supervised creative or technical production activities in settings such as art studios, design workshops, engineering workshops, or media production facilities.

3.8 Supervisor: A qualified professional either an Iconic facilitator or an approved external supervisor responsible for overseeing, guiding, and assessing students during practical sessions or placements.

4.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled in programmes with mandatory practical, clinical, industrial, or studio components.
- All facilitators and academic staff involved in the design, delivery, supervision, or assessment of practical sessions.
- All partner facilities and external supervisors engaged by the University for placement purposes.
- All administrative units (Directorate of Academic Planning, Faculties, Quality Assurance, Legal, and Finance) involved in the coordination of practical training.

This policy does **not** apply to:

- Purely theoretical courses with no practical component.
- Non-credit-bearing extracurricular activities.
- Internships or placements undertaken voluntarily by students outside the requirements of their programme.

5.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5.1 Curriculum Alignment: All practical sessions and placements must be directly mapped to the learning outcomes and competency requirements of the relevant course and programme, as stipulated in the NUC CCMAS.

5.2 Safety and Welfare: The safety, health, and welfare of students during practical sessions and placements are paramount. All partner facilities and internal laboratories/workshops/studios must meet established safety standards.

5.3 Supervised Competence: Practical training shall be conducted under the supervision of qualified professionals who can guide students and assess their developing competencies.

5.4 Flexibility with Rigor: While practical sessions necessarily involve some measure of scheduling and physical presence, the University shall endeavor to organize them in intensive, block-mode formats (e.g., residential schools, weekend sessions, or regional clusters) to minimize disruption to students' other commitments.

5.5 Equitable Access: The University shall establish regional practical centres and partnerships to ensure that students are not unduly disadvantaged by geographical location.

5.6 Quality Assurance: All practical training, whether conducted internally or at partner facilities, shall be subject to the University's quality assurance processes, including periodic review and student feedback.

6.0 ORGANIZATION OF PRACTICAL SESSIONS

6.1 Internal Laboratories, Workshops, and Studios: Where Iconic Open University maintains its own facilities, practical sessions shall be organized as follows:

- **Scheduling:** Practical sessions shall be organized in intensive blocks (e.g., one-week residential schools per semester, or weekend sessions) to accommodate ODL learners. The schedule shall be published at the beginning of each semester.
- **Group Size:** Practical sessions shall be conducted in small groups to ensure adequate supervision and hands-on access to equipment. The maximum group size shall be determined by the nature of the practical and the available facilities, but shall not exceed a ratio of **1 supervisor to 15 students** for laboratory and workshop sessions, and **1 supervisor to 10 students** for clinical or studio sessions involving hazardous equipment or close supervision needs.
- **Safety Induction:** All students must undergo a mandatory safety induction before their first practical session, covering emergency procedures, equipment handling, and conduct expectations.
- **Attendance:** Attendance at practical sessions is compulsory. Students who miss a session due to extenuating circumstances may be permitted to make up the session at the discretion of the Programme Coordinator, subject to availability.

6.2 Virtual and Remote Practicals: Where pedagogically appropriate and permitted by the relevant professional body, the University may deploy virtual laboratories, simulations, or remote-access experiments as **supplements** to—not replacements for—hands-on practical training. Such virtual components shall be clearly identified in the course materials, and students must still fulfill any mandatory physical practical requirements stipulated by the NUC or professional accrediting bodies.

6.3 Home-Based Kits: For certain disciplines (e.g., introductory biology, chemistry, or physics), the University may provide home-based practical kits containing safe, accessible materials and detailed manuals. Students who use home-based kits must submit photographic or video evidence of their work for assessment. Home-based kits shall only be used where the practical can be safely

and validly conducted without direct supervision, and where the learning outcomes can be adequately achieved.

7.0 STUDENT PLACEMENT IN PARTNER FACILITIES

7.1 Identification and Approval of Partner Facilities: The relevant Faculty, in collaboration with the Directorate of Academic Planning, shall identify and approve partner facilities for student placements. Approval shall be based on:

- Accreditation or licensing status of the facility (e.g., Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, relevant professional bodies).
- Availability of qualified preceptors/supervisors.
- Adequacy of facilities and equipment for the intended learning outcomes.
- Willingness to enter into a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Iconic Open University.
- Health and safety standards.

7.2 Formal Agreements: All partnerships shall be governed by a written MoU specifying:

- The roles and responsibilities of the University and the partner facility.
- The number of students to be accommodated per period.
- The supervision arrangements and qualifications of external supervisors.
- Insurance and liability provisions.
- Confidentiality and data protection requirements.
- Procedures for dispute resolution and termination.

7.3 Placement Process: The placement process shall follow these steps:

1. **Eligibility:** Students must have completed the prerequisite courses and be in good academic standing to be eligible for placement.
2. **Orientation:** Students shall attend a pre-placement orientation covering professional conduct, ethical requirements, documentation, and emergency procedures.
3. **Assignment:** Students shall be assigned to partner facilities by the Programme Coordinator, taking into account student location, facility capacity, and learning needs. Students may request specific facilities, but final assignment rests with the University.

4. **iCampus Daily Report/Logbook and Documentation:** Each student shall maintain a virtual logbook documenting daily activities, procedures observed or performed, and reflections. The logbook shall be reviewed and signed by the external supervisor weekly.
5. **Supervision Visits:** An Iconic facilitator shall conduct at least **one supervision visit per placement period** for placements lasting four weeks or more, to assess student progress, welfare, and the quality of the placement experience.

7.4 SIWES Coordination: For programmes where SIWES is mandatory, the University shall designate a SIWES Coordinator within each relevant Faculty. The Coordinator shall liaise with the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), maintain records of student placements, ensure compliance with ITF guidelines, and process documentation for students' allowances where applicable.

7.5 Clinical Rotations: For health-related programmes, clinical rotations shall be organized in accordance with the guidelines of the relevant regulatory bodies (e.g., Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria). Rotations shall cover the required clinical areas, and students shall be assessed using validated clinical competency assessment tools.

8.0 SUPERVISION AND ASSESSMENT

8.1 Qualifications of Supervisors: Supervisors (internal and external) must possess:

- Relevant academic or professional qualifications (minimum of a master's degree or equivalent professional certification, with higher qualifications preferred for senior supervision roles).
- At least two years of professional experience in the relevant field.
- Demonstrated competence in supervising or mentoring learners.
- For clinical placements, current registration with the relevant professional regulatory body.

8.2 Roles of Supervisors:

Supervisor Type	Responsibilities
Internal Facilitator	Designs the practical framework according to curricum; conducts on-site supervision visits; moderates assessments; provides academic support; ensures alignment with course outcomes.

External Supervisor	Provides day-to-day oversight at the partner facility; guides students in practical procedures; signs off on logbook entries; provides input into final assessment.
Programme Coordinator	Oversees the entire practical/placement process for the programme; manages logistics; liaises with partner facilities; ensures compliance with this policy.

8.3 Assessment of Practical Competencies: Assessment shall be based on a combination of:

- **Continuous Assessment (60%):** Logbook review, supervisor evaluations, practical reports, and observed performance of procedures.
- **Final Practical Assessment (40%):** A structured practical examination, clinical competency assessment, or portfolio review, as appropriate to the discipline.

8.4 Grading and Moderation: Practical assessment results shall be subject to internal moderation by the Faculty and, where required, external moderation by an examiner appointed by the University. A student must obtain a **pass mark of 50%** in the practical component to proceed to the next level of study or graduate, unless the relevant professional body stipulates a higher standard.

8.5 Failure and Remediation: Students who fail the practical component shall be required to repeat the practical session or extend their placement, subject to the approval of the Faculty Board. A repeat fee may apply. Students who fail twice may be required to withdraw from the programme, in accordance with the University's academic regulations.

9.0 HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE

9.1 Safety Standards: All internal and partner facilities must comply with relevant health and safety regulations. The University reserves the right to withdraw students from any facility deemed unsafe.

9.2 Hazardous Materials and Equipment: Students handling hazardous chemicals, biological materials, or dangerous equipment shall receive specific training and shall be provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). No student shall be permitted to use hazardous equipment without demonstrated competence and supervision.

9.3 Student Welfare: Students on placement shall have access to the University's student support services, including counseling and academic advising, remotely. The Programme Coordinator shall be the point of contact for any welfare concerns arising during placement.

9.4 Reporting of Incidents: Any accident, injury, or safety incident occurring during a practical session or placement must be reported immediately to the Supervisor and the Programme Coordinator, and documented in the University's incident reporting system.

10.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Vice Chancellor/Academic Board	Approves the policy; provides resources for practical training infrastructure and partnerships; oversees strategic decisions regarding placements.
Dean of Faculty	Ensures that practical components of programmes are adequately resourced; approves partner facilities; oversees the quality of practical training within the Faculty.
Head of Department/ Programme Coordinator	Manages the day-to-day organization of practical sessions and placements; liaises with partner facilities; ensures student compliance with requirements; monitors student progress.
Directorate of Academic Planning	Provides logistical and administrative support for practical sessions; coordinates regional practical centres; ensures alignment with ODL policies and NUC guidelines.
Internal Facilitator/ Supervisor	Delivers practical instruction; supervises students; conducts assessment; provides feedback; conducts supervision visits for external placements.
External Supervisor (Partner Facility)	Provides day-to-day supervision; mentors students; signs off on logbook entries; contributes to assessment.
Quality Assurance Unit	Conducts periodic reviews of practical training; collects and analyzes student feedback; ensures compliance with accreditation standards.
Legal Unit	Drafts and reviews MoUs with partner facilities; advises on liability and insurance matters.

Students	Attend all mandatory practical sessions; comply with safety rules and professional codes of conduct; maintain logbooks; complete assessments; report concerns promptly.

11.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REVIEW

11.1 Student Feedback: At the end of each practical session or placement, students shall complete an evaluation form assessing the quality of supervision, adequacy of facilities, relevance to learning outcomes, and overall experience.

11.2 Supervision Reports: Internal facilitators shall submit a supervision report for each placement visit, documenting student progress, facility conditions, and any issues encountered.

11.3 Periodic Review: The Directorate of Academic Planning, in collaboration with Faculties and the Quality Assurance Unit, shall conduct an annual review of the practical training component of each programme. This review shall consider:

- Student performance data and pass rates.
- Feedback from students, supervisors, and partner facilities.
- Compliance with NUC and professional body requirements.
- Adequacy of facilities and resources.
- Any incidents or safety concerns.

11.4 Accreditation Compliance: The University shall ensure that all practical training components meet the standards required for accreditation by the NUC and relevant professional bodies. Evidence of practical training shall be maintained and made available for accreditation visits.

12.0 BUDGET AND RESOURCES

12.1 Budget Allocation: The University shall allocate a dedicated annual budget for practical training, covering:

- Maintenance and upgrading of internal laboratories, workshops, and studios.
- Consumables and equipment.
- Student insurance.

- Supervision costs (including transport and allowances for supervision visits).
- Partner facility fees, where applicable.
- Home-based practical kits.

12.2 Cost-Sharing: Where partner facilities charge fees for student placements, the University may require students to contribute towards these costs, subject to approval by the Vice Chancellor and clear communication to students at the point of admission.

12.3 Regional Practical Centres: The University shall explore the establishment of regional practical centres in strategic locations across Nigeria to reduce the travel burden on students and ensure equitable access to practical training.

13.0 REVIEW AND REVISION

This policy shall be reviewed every **three (3) years**, or earlier if required by changes in NUC regulations, professional body standards, or institutional strategy. The review shall be coordinated by the Directorate of Academic Planning in consultation with Faculties, the Quality Assurance Unit, and partner institutions.