The Work of the Academic Registry

by

G. O. Emerole, Academic Registrar

1. Section 5(1), Schedule I of the Draft Act of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, provides for five 'other officers of the University' "all of whom shall be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the day-to-day administrative work of the University except as regards matters for which the Bursar is responsible ....." Sub-paragraph (2) provides that the Academic Registrar, by virtue of that office, shall be Secretary to Senate, Congregation and Convocation.

2. Schedule of Duties

2.1 The Schedule of duties for the Academic Office provides that the Academic Registrar shall be responsible for the administration of all academic matters other than academic planning and development.

2.2 The missions of the University have been clearly stated, namely:
   (a) Teaching and Learning
   (b) Production of skilled manpower
   (c) Research
   (d) Public Service

2.3 The above functions can only be accomplished under certain conditions -
   (a) good students
   (b) dedicated academic staff
   (c) reasonable facilities
   (d) adequate supporting services to admit, enroll and keep records of students.

3. Origins and Growth of the Profession

3.1 The significance of the Academic Registry is amply stated in 2.3(3) above – namely: admission, enrolment and records of students. The Registrar's role in this direction could be traced back to the medieval Universities of the 12th Century, i.e. Bologna (Italy), Paris (France) and Oxford (England). These Universities, like more recent institutions needed specialized administrators to support their academic operations, e.g. records, finances, facilities. At Bologna the Registrar's title, ridelli generale and the

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duties included "preceding the Rectors on public occasions, collecting the votes at Congregation, visiting the schools to read statistics and degrees, announcing lectures to students .......". However an 'academic officer' with the title of Registrar was appointed in Oxford by 1446. His duties included registering the names of graduates. In 1506, a 'registrar' (Robert Hobbs) was appointed in Cambridge. In 1544, the duties of his successor, the 'Registrary' included "reviewing all applicants for matriculation". Later at Oxford, Cambridge and other British Universities, the Registrar was assigned the responsibilities of Secretary for all academic bodies. The scope of the work of the Registrar has since been enlarged considerably.

3.2 In America, the Registrar's record-keeping function was a part-time duty rendered by academics, e.g. at Harvard till the mid 19th Century. That was the general pattern in other American Universities (Yale, Cornell, etc.). However, the need for full-time professional support for accurate and efficient registration procedure was keenly felt early in the 20th Century, as the Institutions grew in size both in student numbers and course offerings.

4. Support Services Provided by the Academic Registry

Within the scope of support services provided by the Academic Registry, the following are prominent:

(i) Admissions
(ii) Students Records
(iii) Examinations
(iv) Secretaruship of Statutory Bodies and Committees.

5. Admissions - Objectives & Philosophy

5.1 'Admission is a social process' (Thresher 1966). The principles governing admission varies from time-to-time and from place-to-place. For the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, the principle is that "as much as possible and without sacrificing academic standards, admission of students into the University should be made in such a way as to reflect the Federal character of the Institution". This is in keeping with the Federal Government guidelines on Admission.

5.2 The guidelines are briefly as follows:

(i) Older Universities

(a) 40% from all the States of the Federation
(b) 30% from the locality of the University

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(c) 20% for students from educationally less developed states
(d) 10% – others to be left at the discretion of the University.

Federai Universities of Technology
(a) 20% from locality of Universities
(b) 80% at the discretion of the Universities, provided they admit students from all over the country.

For the University of Technology, Owerri, the catchment area includes Anambra, Rivers, Cross-River, Imo and Benue States.

The Federal Government Policy on admissions may be regarded as an attempt to reconcile excellence and scholastic achievement with universal demand for access to higher education.

5.5 The activities of the Admissions Office are briefly as follows:

(i) Review of University Regulations on entry qualifications.

(ii) Admission procedure for undergraduates in collaboration with JAMB.

(iii) Servicing of Admissions Committee – Recommendation of candidates for admission takes account of merit, locality, educational disadvantage, federal character, female representation and foreign students.

(iv) Checking of credentials for matriculation (with the aid of micro-film print-out of WAEC (GCE) results.

(v) Control and distribution of JAMB forms.

(vi) Co-ordination of JME Examination.

(vii) Liaison with academic units in evaluating transfer records of applicants seeking admission by transfer. To ensure that forged transcripts are not submitted in support of admission by transfer –

(a) insist that all transcripts be issued directly from the issuing institution and they bear appropriate signatures;

(b) contact with issuing institution if any irregularity is detected;

(c) exercise special care in handling credential from foreign countries because of high incidence of forged transcripts.
(viii) Evaluation of previous academic work with degree requirements of the University is not easy. In carrying out this assignment, care is taken to ensure that students expelled from other Universities on grounds of misconduct are not accepted.

(ix) Change of degree programmes.

(x) Maintenance of appropriate admission statistics.

(xi) Response to initial enquiries about admission - requests for information and application forms and follow-up correspondence.

5. The Admissions Office has a major responsibility to ensure that admission objectives and procedures are developed and maintained. The question of ethical conduct is of paramount importance. Opportunities abound for unethical behaviour. The job, therefore, calls for personal integrity. Unless standards of good behaviour are maintained, serious harm could be done to the individual and to the image of the University.

6. Student Registration & Records

6.1 Certain groups activities are located in the Records Section of the Academic Registry. These are registration, grade reporting, and recording. The services provided are:

(i) Maintaining and updating students record system.

(ii) Student identification system including registration number in collaboration with the Chief Security Officer. The main purpose of a student identification system (usually a unique number) is to help in positive identification of students for record purposes. It also helps in identifying students with identical or similar names.

(iii) Provision of transcript service. The transcript is a complete educational record of an Institution and an effective means of communicating educational information.

(iv) Enrolment statistics as required by federal and state agencies.

(v) Preparation of matriculation register.

(vi) Issuing Examination reports.

(vii) Guidelines for registration. Registration in the broadest sense includes:
- the development of a well balanced curriculum,
- with classes distributed throughout the hours of the day and days of the week.
Examinations

7.1 The following activities are handled by the Examinations Section:

(i) Organisation of Semester Examinations (in co-operation with Schools).
(ii) Review of examination scripts.
(iii) Preparation of lecture schedules in co-operation with Schools.
(iv) Computation of examination results and follow-up action.
(v) Withdrawals - including those for academic reasons.
(vi) Examination time-tableing.
(vii) Requisition for stationery and other materials required for examinations.
(viii) Enforcement of academic regulations.
(ix) Certification - the certification of graduates is one of the most important responsibilities of the Academic Registry. This involves careful checking of records to ensure that the student has fulfilled all academic requirements. Usually at the beginning of the final year a list of possible graduands is prepared and checked with academic units. Academic records of such possible graduands up to the penultimate year are also checked with Academic Units. The certificates carry the official seal of the University as well as the signature of the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Registrar. Before certificates are released the graduands must be cleared of all indebtedness to the University.

7.2 The above list excludes the physical handling of examination question papers. The move away from the centralization of production of examination question papers has been introduced in the older Universities. The reasons for decentralization include:

(i) Avoiding leakages - centralization of production of question papers in one office implies early collection of manuscripts months ahead of the actual examination dates.
(ii) Draft question papers submitted to the central point several months ahead do not take into account the actual grounds to be covered by the lecturers. In extreme cases, candidates are made to take examinations in topics not actually covered in lectures.

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