

Cavendish University: Training graduates for a changing world



Cavendish University's Careers and Employability Centre equips students with practical and professional skills. PHOTO/S. OTAGE

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BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

As the world of work continues to change rapidly, universities are being challenged to rethink how they prepare graduates. Jobs today require more than academic certificates. Employers are looking for people with skill, those who solve problems, use technology, and adapt quickly to new environments.

Cavendish University Uganda has responded to this challenge with a clear and practical approach.

According to the university deputy vice chancellor, Associate Professor Osunsan Olutayo, the university is focusing on preparing students not just to graduate, but to succeed in a fast-changing world.

Prof Olutayo noted that the university is structured into main faculties: Law, Business and Management, Science and Technology, and Socio-Economic Sciences and each faculty is designed to ensure that learning is not only theoretical, but also practical and connected to industry needs.

"Our aim is to shape graduates who are useful to society. Our students are expected to own their learning; lecturers guide, probe, and facilitate rather than perform as the sage on the stage," Prof Olutayo said.

Prof Olutayo noted that the University's Careers and Employability Centre equips students with both practical and professional skills for the modern workplace like communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and digital fluency as well as introducing them to artificial intelligence, not as a gimmick, but as a tool to be used responsibly and within clear ethical bounds.

He also noted that through the centre, students are also guided on how to prepare for interviews, write CVs, and build career paths helping students with skills that help them survive and succeed in real working environments.

Exposure to real world

The university engages in partnerships and programme exchange which gives students opportuni-

ties to study and collaborate across Africa and beyond.

"Through student exchange, many of our learners have studied across Africa and beyond. Partnerships deepen that exposure. Internships and industry linkages ensure that learning is not trapped in the classroom," Prof Olutayo said.

He said such experiences broaden student's perspectives, exposing them to diverse cultures, ideas, and professional environments.

"Cavendish University Uganda is the only university in Uganda, and likely among the few in Africa, working with Riipen, a global experiential learning platform. Here, students do not sim-

ulate work; they do it. They engage real companies, tackle real problems, and deliver real solutions while still in class," he said.

Deliberate AI approach

According to Prof Olutayo Cavendish University is very intentional in how it handles Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning noting that AI is now part of everyday life and will continue to shape future jobs and industries.

Students are trained to understand how AI systems work. They learn how data is collected, processed, and used to make decisions. They are also taught how to build simple AI models and

apply them to real-world problems.

However, the university goes beyond technical training. It also focuses on awareness and responsibility.

Prof Olutayo emphasised that students and staff are expected to understand that AI is not perfect. It can produce biased results, and sometimes it can generate incorrect information, often referred to as "hallucinations."

"We are deliberate in our approach to artificial intelligence. Our Bachelor of Science in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence equips students with strong foundations in data analysis, machine learning, and responsible AI use. Graduates are prepared to contribute to the evolving AI landscape while accessing opportunities in data driven decision making, innovation, and emerging digital careers," he said.

He added; "All students are encouraged to use AI within the guardrails of our institutional policy, and our learning platforms are AI enabled to support this integration. Both staff and students are expected to be AI literate. This goes beyond knowing types of AI or how to write prompts. It includes understanding how data powers AI systems, recognizing the risks of bias, and being aware that AI can produce hallucinations or inaccurate outputs."

Prof Olutayo explains that AI should be treated like other tools such as calculators, computers, or even cars noting that these tools help people work faster and more efficiently, but they do not replace human thinking.

Preparing law students

The Faculty of Law at Cavendish University is another strong example of the university's practical approach.

According to Mr. Moses Kayima Nyanzi, the Programmes Coordinator Faculty of Law and Lecturer in Banking and Intellectual Property Law, the law programme is designed to reflect how legal education and practice actually work today.

The programme is structured in a way that goes beyond classroom lectures. Students engage continuously through digital platforms where they access learning materials, participate in discussions, and complete assignments at their own pace making

learning more flexible and continuous.

Mr Nyanzi explains this system helps students stay engaged even outside lecture hours. Learning does not stop when a class ends; it continues through discussion, research, and practical application.

"We invest heavily in mentorship and growth. As a product of this system myself, a former Cavendish law student who has grown through the ranks to a Program Coordinator. That trajectory is not incidental; it reflects an institutional commitment to identifying, nurturing, and retaining talent."

He added; "Our best students are not just graduates; they are becoming researchers, tutors, and future academics within the same ecosystem."

For Mr Nyanzi students learn legal principles but also apply them through drafting documents, solving case studies, and participating in moot court exercises which ensures that they are not only knowledgeable but also practical.

The programme also integrates legal technology and AI and students are taught how to use digital tools in legal research and document preparation. At the same time, they are trained to use these tools ethically and responsibly.

To ensure students are ready for Uganda's justice system, the university works closely with institutions such as the Law Development Centre and the Judiciary of Uganda where by practitioners are involved in teaching and mentoring students, giving them real insight into legal practice.

"We align our training with institutions such as the Law Development Centre and the broader justice system, ensuring our graduates understand both substantive law and procedural realities. But beyond that, we prepare students for the human realities of legal practice, client interaction, ethical dilemmas, and institutional constraints," Mr Nyanzi stated.

He added; "This is done through simulations, mentorship, and direct engagement with practitioners from institutions like the Judiciary of Uganda."

Mr Nyanzi emphasised that the university's blended learning model also prepares students for modern professional environments.

Internships are a key requirement in the law programme. In their third year, students are placed in law firms, courts, government offices, and corporate organisations.

Mr Nyanzi explains that these placements give law students hands-on experience and help them understand the realities of legal work.