



# Joint courses give graduates edge

If your interests lie in two different directions, you may need to consider a joint degree that encompasses both aspects and get the best of both worlds.

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If you are thinking about what course to study at the university that will ensure that you do not spend five years on the streets looking for a job, it is time to explore the possibility of killing two birds with one stone. That is the way employers are thinking nowadays.

With the constant changes in the economy, companies are always looking for ways to downsize their employee numbers while maintaining the business output at an optimum level. If a company is looking for a farm manager who can also do agricultural marketing, policy formation, resource economics and real estate appraisal, you will be at a disadvantage if you apply with only a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Instead, they will hire a graduate in Agribusiness. Few companies will hire two people to do the work that one person can do.

### Widening your options

When Ruth Asasira joined Makerere University's Faculty of Agriculture (now School of Agricultural Sciences) 10 years ago, she made a conscious decision to add value to her education.

"I did not want to study plain agricultural science. I wanted to fit into the whole value chain, so I applied for Agribusiness, which was a new course at the time. Agribusiness combines business management, economics and agriculture. I wanted to be involved in agriculture, but on the management side."

Today, Asasira works in the agricultural finance department of a prominent bank. "I still interact with farmers, but I help them manage their finances," she says.

Studying a joint course can open doors for you in different sectors. The fact that there was an economics major in Asasira's course means she can work in sectors that are not even related to agriculture.

For instance, instead of studying a Bachelor of Luganda, you can study a Bachelor of Arts with Luganda or Literature. Each of these is a standalone course on its own and any of them can get you employment.

According to Ronald Mutebi, a lecturer at Kyambogo University, "The advantage is that you will become highly qualified because you have diversified."

### Find your passion

Before you go down on a joint



Students of Makerere University during their graduation early this year. Joint honours courses produce multi-skilled graduates.  
PHOTO BY ABUBAKER LUBOWA

### JOINT COURSES WAY TO GO

### Wide scope

The job market is the same but when you study joint course you widen your scope when it comes to a job search because you can work in various fields.

DR GABRIEL KARUBANGA  
SPECIALIST IN RURAL AGRICULTURE

### Unseriousness

"Anyone can do a business degree, but to study a Bachelor of Science in Accounting of Cost and Management Accounting, one must love mathematics and be able to analyse and interpret figures."

ing for the sick but you cannot stand the operating table or the consultancy room, your best option is a business degree with a major in healthcare management.

Rebecca Bukenya, an accounting student at Makerere University Business School (MUBS), advises that one have the aptitude for the extra components in the joint course they are taking. "Anyone can do a business degree, but to study a Bachelor of Science in Accounting of Cost and Management Accounting, one must love mathematics and be able to analyse and interpret figures."

It is also important to match your passion with the career prospects of the field of study you have chosen. In the

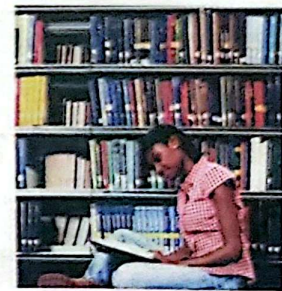
ever-changing workplaces in the private and informal sectors, traditional job descriptions are quickly fading out to accommodate the new roles that are a result of joint courses.

### Aiding innovation

Getting out of the box, with regard to your education choices, will open up your outlook towards taking calculated risks in employment.

"I would encourage students to consider joint courses instead because you graduate with two subjects named in your degree title," Mutebi says.

Besides, you do not have to sacrifice a course you are passionate about for the other.



### THE SETBACK

As with every good thing, there are a few disadvantages with studying joint courses. "In a thin job market, such as the one we have in Uganda, if you have a joint course, you run the risk of being shunned because you did not study those subjects in as much detail as those taking single courses," Ronald Mutebi, a lecturer at Kyambogo University, says. "If a company is looking for only a farm manager, that person can learn the rest of the skills needed on the job. There will be no place for a person who studied agribusiness. In the same way, if an agricultural organisation needs extension workers who have to go to the gardens and teach farming methods,



### Joint courses will open more doors

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RUTH ASASIRA