



Graduates jubilate at the Law Development Centre in Kampala recently.

the syllabus covered at law school – so, the pre entry is to test whether students, who are assumed to be knowledgeable about the principles and their application, actually know them. “You will discover however, that students from traditional law schools perform well, because these are well established in terms of staff, working conditions among others in contrast to newly set up universities,” he says.

The high failure rates

However, the high failure rates remain high. This year for example, the exam attracted 1,797 lawyers, and only 814 qualified for the bar course. This year's performance was healthier than last year's where 1,650 lawyers sat for, and only 572 passed the exam.

“Overall, it's a combination of factors that account for the failure of law students for the LDC pre entry exam. Hamis Lukyamuzi the LDC spokesperson says. He however adds that the Law Development center is not tasked with setting the exam but instead, “...just admits lawyers who have passed the pre entry exam.”

WHAT THEY SAY

How necessary are LDC pre-entry exams?

Pre-entry exams can be a nightmare. Fates of men and women are sealed at the altar of a four-hour examination and their stellar performance and hard work at school reduced to ash by a 26 page teaser of an exam without which, they cannot skip the hurdle to the next tour of study.

BY DESIRE MBABAALI

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The pre-entry examination for admission to the Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice course at the Law Development Centre is one such exam that students leaving law school dread though some are in concurrence with the idea of subjecting students to another test that does not conform to the orthodox school curriculum and style of examination.

Edwin Mugumya, a lawyer from Makerere University, calls his experience with the LDC pre entry exams unforgettable. “We invested a lot of time preparing for pre entry exam. But the preparation does not start only a few months to the exam. You start preparing for them the day you get admitted to law school,” he says.

The little time towards the exam is just for refreshing oneself about all things you studied Mugumya says. “So if I was asked what it takes to pass the exam, I would say three things: God's grace, proper appreciation of the law and composure during the exam,” he continues.

Indeed, like Nathan Kasule testifies, it takes more than just a lot of reading to pass the exams. “I have gone through a number of pre entry past papers, and this year's paper was the easiest. It took me about two months to prepare, but I didn't pass.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Who is an ombudsman in the constitution?
- What is the disadvantage of plagiarism to a student?
- What is the importance of coursework to students?
- If parents make an agreement to pay fees by delivering agricultural products to act as compensation for fees, where is the accord and what is the satisfaction in the question?
- How many constitutions has Uganda had since independence?
- If you are a lawyer, and you do not want to practice law, how else would you help society?
- Someone said words about his friend.

The public said, nothing had changed and that they continued seeing him as he is. Do you take that as defamation?

- A husband and wife entered a supermarket, picked items, but the husband ordered it should be put in the wife's bag and won't be paid for. They were later arrested. Is there a defense for the wife?
- What are the various ways technology helps in the study of the law?
- Would you recommend Uganda to adopt a bi cameral parliament?
- Why do you think the members of parliament are allowed to determine their own salaries?

It was a surprise that left me wondering whether it is the marking or a different guide that is followed, the details of which are not divulged to students because I knew I had done the best,” he says.

What it takes.

“In my considered opinion, the exam tests not just your knowledge of the law, but your appreciation of the same. Law as a course is not mechanics. It's ever changing. Each case depends on its own facts. So, the study of law should in effect equip the stu-

WHY A BAR COURSE

Asuman Nyonyintono, a lecturer at Law Development Centre, says “One can practice law without going at LDC or passing the bar, but they will be doing this on a more theoretical level. One can only be an advocate or represent someone in court only if they passed the bar.

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THE NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES THAT HAD STUDENTS AT THIS YEAR'S PRE-ENTRY EXAMS AT LDC.

dent with such abilities to make use of the law, or apply it to different scenarios. And that's precisely what the law council pre entry seeks to test,” Mugume says.

Why pre-entries?

Universities such as Makerere and Uganda Christian University and Makerere University subject their undergraduate students asking to join law school to a pre entry. So, why another exam after four years of law school?

“We have liberalised the teaching of law, and because someone has done a law degree, it cannot be assumed that they have what it takes. Remember, the bar course prepares lawyers to practice law, therefore, the pre entry is used to check the quality of lawyers – who will tomorrow be practicing,” Francis Gimara, president of the Uganda Law Society says.

Furthermore, Dr Anthony C.K. Kakooza, Dean of faculty of law, Uganda Christian University says that the nature of pre entry exams is that it focuses on the practical side of the law – which unfortunately many law programs don't have, this makes them relevant. “Many people hesitate to talk about this but sincerely, LDC cannot accommodate all the 9 and more accredited law schools in the country. They therefore take stringent measures to regulate the numbers,” he adds.

In addition, Dr Ronald Kakungulu Mayambala, a senior lecturer at Makerere University's school of Law says that the LDC pre entries are set on

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