

Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) shifted from the previous awarding of distinctions, credits, pass, and failure in subjects and replaced them with the A, B, C, D and E scores.

BY MONITOR TEAM

Elite traditional secondary schools in the country yesterday tightened their Senior Five entry scores, with the majority admitting students who got A and B across all subjects in the 2025 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams.

Top schools, including Mt St Mary's Namugunga, Gayaza High School, Kiira College Butiki, Trinity College Nabbingo, Bweranyangi Girls School, and Maryhill High School, offered subject combinations to only students who scored straight A.

For instance, students who opted for Science combinations such as Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics (PCM); Physics, Chemistry, and Biology (PCB); and Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics (BCM), were required to have scored A across all the subjects.

Nevertheless, their admissions were still pegged to overall performance. This implies even if a student scored triple A across their combination options, but has posted lower scores in other subjects, they would not be admitted because the cut off score required is B in all the subjects.

The same criteria applied to students opting for Arts combinations, including History, Economics and Geography (HEG/Sub Math); History, Economics and Literature (HEL/Sub Math); and History, Divinity and Geography (HDG/ICT) in these schools.

But for Ntare School, Mbarara High School, Maryhill High School, Kibuli Secondary School, Kawempe Mus-

Top schools tighten Senior 5 entry scores



Head teachers and school administrators choose learners who meet their respective cut-off grades for admission during the Senior Five selection exercise at UMA show grounds in Lugogo, Kampala, yesterday. PHOTOS: GEOFFREY MUTUMBA

lim Secondary School, Bweranyangi Girls School, Kings College Budo, a student can opt for Science combination, provided he or she scored at least 2As and a B, while an Arts combination is offered to a student who has scored at least 2Bs and an A in their combination subjects.

A student who opts to study PCM, PCB, BCM, for example, must have scored 2As and a B in their subject combination, and for Arts, including subject combinations such as HEL/SM, HEL/SM, HDG/ICT, one should at least have got 2Bs and an A in their subject combinations.

Mr Emmanuel Kanyope, a teacher at Bweranyangi Girls School, said the school will admit 300 students to Senior Five this year, starting with the 180 placements the ministry has given them.

"Bweranyangi is a school of academic excellence, and without discriminating, our subject combination will take at least 2As and B to remain competitive. We were given 180 students and they all qualify, so we are taking them," he said.

Mr Wilson Ndeze, the deputy head teacher of Ntare School, said: "We are giving combinations based on the students' performance. So, a student with triple A qualifies for the Sciences, and one with 2As and a B in a combination in the Sciences. We give the Arts combination provided you have 3Bs."

Some schools such as St Henry's College Kitovu are taking only straight A grades for the Science combinations and ABB for the Arts.

Brother Siliaco Turyatamba, the deputy head teacher of St Henry's College Kitovu, said the school raised its cut-off scores after receiving far more applications than it could accommodate, yet many of the applicants performed well.

He said the school will admit only 180 learners out of the 530 that picked



Explanation.
The skills system is not anything less than the academic system which we have always known, so those big numbers are going to be trained in skills, generate jobs, and support others," Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports.

them as first choice.

Rural schools relax admission

But some average and rural schools have relaxed their admission scores, compared to last year.

Mr John Nabasa, the deputy head teacher of St Leo's College Kyegobe in Kabarole District, said last year, they considered students with only As and Bs, a decision that he attributed to failure to interpret the new grading system.

"But this time, for the Arts combinations, we are considering A to C, while for the Sciences, we are considering

those with As and Bs," he said.

Mr Nabasa added: "Last year, we were so strict on As and Bs for both the Science and Arts combinations because we were confused. We didn't understand the grading system, but we have now comprehended it."

Mr Fredrick Odwor, the deputy head teacher of Masinya Secondary School in Busia, said they relaxed the cut-off points for Arts combination from C to D, while the points for the Sciences were maintained at C.

He explained that the Arts subjects were adjusted from a C to a D in one group whose performance was not so good.

Mr Michael Yeko, the deputy head teacher of Sebei College Tegeres, said they have limited space and will avail slots to only 180 students.

He explained that their cut-off points for both the Arts and Sciences had been hiked from C to B due to improved performance and limited space.

Grading system

Under the new grading system, which started last year under the new lower level secondary competence-based curriculum, the Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) shifted from the previous awarding of distinctions, credits, pass, and failure in subjects and replaced them with the A, B, C, D and E scores.

According to Uneb, grade A means exceptional and demonstrates an extraordinary level of competence by applying innovatively and creatively the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations, while grade B means outstanding and demonstrates a high level of competence by applying the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations.

Grade C means satisfactory and demonstrates an adequate level of competency by applying the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situa-

tions. Grade D means basic and demonstrates a minimum level of competence in applying the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations, while grade E means elementary and demonstrates below the basic level of competency in applying the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations.

Some schools relaxed while others maintained last year's admission scores.

For example, Busoga College Moyo is taking a minimum of B scores for the Science combination subjects and A for the Arts.

More opt for Sciences

Like last year, more students have opted for the Sciences than the Arts.

In both Ntare School and Bweranyangi Girls School, the ratio of admission for the Arts and Sciences is 1:3.

Mr Ndeze attributed this to the promotion of Sciences by the government. "Most of the students who join are opting for the Sciences in line with the government policy of sponsoring science students in universities," he said.

He added: "The second attraction is the salary increment for science teachers by the government. So, the students find it will be easier to get employed and earn more money when they study the Sciences. Otherwise, the students will pass the Arts very well and are offered a combination of choices."

Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports, said the increasing number of students opting for the Sciences is a good move.

Over 140,000 left out

At least 144,008 students, a number that passed the UCE exams and attained a certificate of completion, will not be picked in the Senior Five selection and placement exercise at Kampala.

Officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports yesterday revealed that the two-day exercise that concludes today will see 284,620 students enrolled in 2205 private and government secondary schools.

Statistics from Uneb indicate that total of 428,628 candidates, translated into 99.08 percent of the number sat for the 2025 exams, passed and secured placements in Senior Five.

This implies that the ongoing selection will take in only 66.4 percent of the total number of students who passed.

Of the 284,620 that will be selected, 101,360 students will be enrolled in the government-aided secondary schools under the Universal Post-O Level Education and Training (UPOLET) programme, another 18,180 will be enrolled in 97 government-aided schools (non-UPOLET), and the remaining 164,280 will be enrolled in 1,369 private schools across the country.

Dr Turyagyenda said the unabridged students will go to vocational and other institutions of learning and get skills.

"The skills system is not anything less than the academic system which we have always known, so those big numbers are going to be trained in skills, generate jobs, and support others," he said.

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