

BY PHILIP WAFULA

KAMPALA. Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) last Friday released results of the 2025 Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) examinations conducted between November 10 and December 5.

According to the results, 165,172 candidates sat for the exams, including 72,374 (43.8 percent) females and 92,798 (56.2 percent) males. In terms of the number of Principal level passes, 98.9 percent (163,355) qualify for the UACE certificate.

While the results showed an overall improvement in performance compared to 2024, a significantly higher percentage of candidates who sat for UACE in 2025 can't be considered for admission to other tertiary institutions.

As per the results, 44,385 (26.9 percent) of the candidates scored two Principal passes, while 68,906 (41.7 percent) scored three Principal Passes. Also, 31,838 (19.3 percent) of the candidates obtained one Principal Pass, 18,152 (11 percent) scored one Subsidiary Pass, and 1,891 (1.1 percent) failed.

This is in contrast with 2024, where out of 140,888 candidates, 37,935 candidates (26.9 percent) scored two Principal Passes, 54,338 (38.6 percent) had three Principal Passes, 29,233 (20.7 percent) got one Principal Pass, 17,750 (12.6 percent) obtained a Subsidiary Pass and 1,632 (1.2 percent) failed.

Under the current regulations, a candidate requires a Subsidiary level pass in a Principal level subject to qualify for admission to other tertiary institutions.

To-date, university admissions to degree courses have been considering two Principal-level passes as the minimum requirement. If this consideration is maintained, that means 113,291 (68.6 percent) qualify to be admitted.

What options await 51,000 unsuccessful S6 candidates?

In cases where one Principal and two Subsidiary Pass levels are considered for admission to other tertiary institutions, for example, TVET institutions offering diploma level programmes, 145,129 (87.9 percent) candidates will qualify.

While releasing the results last Friday, First Lady and Minister of Education Janet Museveni encouraged those who were dissatisfied with the outcome to "try again" or "consider other education pathways".

Ms Museveni said the results indicate that more learners are progressing to tertiary education, with over 21,000 more candidates qualifying for university admission compared to the previous year.

This, she explained, expressed "confidence" that there were sufficient places in our tertiary institutions, both public and private, to absorb these learners. But she expressed regret that young people appear not to appreciate the available opportunities in our technical and vocational institutions.

Prof Anthony M. Mugagga, a lecturer of Educational Foundations and Management at Makerere University, said all is not lost for those students who failed UACE. He said the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has made alternative career progression for such students, but they must at least have two or at worst one principal (E).

Such alternatives are the Higher Education Certificate (HEC) programme, an alternative one-year endorsement by the NCHE and Ministry of Education as a bridging course to a Bachelor's Degree.

He further suggested that such candidates join teacher training colleges and train as primary or secondary diploma teachers, or join commercial schools, while others can enroll at colleges which offer Diploma in Information Technology (DIT).

Prof Mugagga says those with a biological background may enroll for a Diploma in Nursing, Midwifery, Clinical Medicine, or any other paramedical course, whose programmes require One Principal Pass.

Prof Mugagga advised others to go for the Uganda Vocational and Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB) National Diplomas in Engineering, Architecture, Business Studies, and Electrical, among others.

"UVTAB, now often under TVET, typically requires at least three UCE passes (Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics) in one sitting," he said.

Mr Swaibu Kitezala, the director of Jinja Progressive Secondary School and Lakeside Secondary School, Masese, in Jinja City, said arrangements should be made for the candidates to repeat.

"Some candidates aren't aware of that (HEC) programme and think that they can only repeat. I advise that they can apply for HEC as long as they only have Subsidiary Passes, and no Failure," Mr Kitezala said, citing Islamic University in Uganda, Gulu and Busitema universities as some of the candidates' potential destinations. He added: "Those with one Principal Pass can apply for a Diploma using their Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE), although it may depend on the course."