

Prof Nawangwe says sustaining undergraduate slots while expanding postgraduate admissions will help "promote quality education, innovative, and responsive teaching and learning that transforms students' experiences and meets societal needs."

BY JANE NAFULA

Makerere University will maintain undergraduate enrollment while doubling postgraduate students from 3,874 to 7,744 over the next five years, the Vice Chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, has announced.

Unveiling the university's five-year Strategic Plan (2025/2026–2029/2030) yesterday, Prof Nawangwe - flanked by senior academic staff - said the move aims to widen access to quality education and align with Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP IV), which seeks tenfold growth.

"Our strategy is to increase the number of graduate students to at least 30 percent by 2030... Previously, we had almost 50,000 students, which sparked public outcry that students were studying through rumours because they could not fit in lecture rooms. We gradually cut our numbers to about 35,000," he said.

He added: "The Council is saying it is okay we can keep the numbers and make efforts to increase graduate numbers and achieve what we wanted to achieve," Prof Nawangwe said.

He emphasised that sustaining undergraduate slots while expanding postgraduate admissions will help "promote quality education, innovative, and responsive teaching and learning

Mak okays admission of 14,000 undergraduates



Makerere University Vice Chancellor Prof Barnabas Nawangwe (2nd left, seated), and Academic Registrar Prof Buyinza Mukadasi (2nd right, seated) with other senior academic staff during a press conference at the university yesterday. PHOTO/ JANE NAFULA

that transforms students' experiences and meets societal needs."

For years, Makerere had planned to trim undergraduate admissions to create space for postgraduate growth, with Academic Registrar Prof Buyinza Mukadasi earlier noting that intake would be cut from 14,000 to 12,000. That decision has now been shelved.

Prof Nawangwe stressed the need for government scholarships or loan

schemes for postgraduate students, warning that "only 10 percent of PhDs complete on time due to financial challenges."

He added, "We all know that research is what has liberated many countries. We must train as many PhDs and Masters students as possible to move our country out of poverty. If they are going to be self-sponsored, we are not going to achieve that."

Records show a PhD programme costs between Shs20m and Shs200m, with science programmes costing an arm and a leg compared to humanities.

Prof Julius Kikooma, the director of Undergraduate Training, noted that dropouts are allowed to return once they secure funds.

He said 31 percent of graduates at the 76th graduation ceremony were postgraduate students, a figure expected to

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rise to 50 percent by 2030.

Continuous assessment

Meanwhile, Prof Nawangwe revealed that as the university embraces the competence-based curriculum, continuous assessment will now carry 60 percent of the final mark, while examinations will account for 40 percent.

"There have been questions about our preparedness to take on students who have undertaken the new competence-based curriculum in high school. I would like to reassure the public that the university is not only ready but has always operated on a competence approach," he said.

Prof Mukadasi confirmed the new assessment structure will take effect in August 2026.

The Ministry of Education and Sports requires all universities to adopt competence-based training by 2027 to ensure smooth transition for students trained under the new high school curriculum.