

# Impact of regulatory frameworks on the quality of distance education in Uganda's higher education: a case of Uganda Martyrs University-Nkozi (UMU)

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of regulatory frameworks on the quality of distance education in Uganda's higher education institutions with a focus on: identifying the existing regulatory frameworks for distance education, their impact and challenges as well as strategies to enhance them with a case of Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) using an exploratory design. Findings reveal that UMU implements different regulatory frameworks which include accreditation by the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE), quality assurance, credible and efficient assessment of the students and student support services. These have enabled the university to improve and maintain the quality of education through employing qualified staff, assessing students credibly, providing appropriate student support services and fostering open communication and collaboration among the students. These arise with challenges which included some distance learners being located in remote areas where access to online services is challenging due to poor internet and unreliable power sources, lack of proficiency in using digital platforms by some students and the rapid advancements in technology which leads to issues in data protection services. Therefore, government should put in place appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that higher education institutions comply with the existing regulatory frameworks.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 November 2024  
Revised 9 April 2025  
Accepted 12 October 2025

## KEYWORDS

Regulatory frameworks;  
distance education; higher  
education institutions

## SUBJECTS

Higher Education  
Management; Study of  
Higher Education; Education  
Policy & Politics; Open &  
Distance Education and  
eLearning

## 1. Background of the study

Higher education in Uganda had taken drastic precedence and development from early 1922 when the first University known as Makerere University was established arising from the later constituent college of the University College of London and the University College of East Africa and in 1970 became a fully-fledged University teaching and award graduate and undergraduate university programs (Omona, 2012). Its role in diversifying the higher education trail in the country cannot be underestimated with its input in the establishment of other Universities in the country and of today, close to 11 Public Universities are in existence (Charles et al., 2024). Looking at higher education in Uganda and the role of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in developing, monitoring and evaluating long-distance learning. Distance education in higher institutions of learning has evolved significantly since its inception in the late 19th century. The first form of distance education can be traced back to correspondence courses offered by universities like the University of London in 1858, which allowed students to learn from far away using mailed materials (Simonson et al., 2019). The advent of radio and television in the mid-20th century expanded access to education, enabling institutions to reach larger audiences. With the rise of the internet in the 1990s, online learning emerged, offering greater flexibility and interactive capabilities. Today, distance education has become a mainstream approach that incorporates

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implementing these strategies, the university will have effectively addressed the challenges of distance education and provide high-quality learning experiences for its students.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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