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# Students loan scheme: 500 complete courses

About 530 students from the cohort of learners who received loans to finance higher education have completed their respective academic programmes, and are set to graduate between now and early next year, according to the education ministry.

The student loan scheme was launched in 2014/2015 academic year and there were 1,201 undergraduate students in the first group of beneficiaries.

The Higher Education Students' Financing Board, which manages the loan scheme, said 1,273 students were given loans in the 2015/2016 academic year and an additional 1,325 received funding in the 2016/2017. This

brings to 3,799 the number of students that have received loans from the Government in the last three academic years.

According to the board, a 529 out of the 1,201 undergraduate students in the pioneer cohort, have completed their courses. They will be given a grace period of one year after graduation, before starting to repay the money loaned to them, including a 7% interest rate.

The board said the 7% interest rate is "a value retention fee" in a volatile economic environment. Some of the students in the first cohort, according to the board chairman, Prof. Callisto



Minister Muyingo

Locheng, were admitted for courses running for over three years and some of them will complete together with the ones who received money in the second year, but are doing the three-year programmes.

According to the Minister of State for Higher Education, Dr J.C. Muyingo, the board started advancing loans to diploma students in other higher institutions of learning in the second year of the scheme designed to enhance access to higher education for students from cash-strapped families.

The board said 1,200 students will receive loans in the next academic year. The budget for the scheme has been increased from sh6b in 2014 to sh23.3b, including an additional sh5.3b that the ministry allocated this year.

## Deadline extension

Muyingo yesterday announced

the extension of the deadline for submission of applications for loans.

The board called for applications on May 22, and set August 4, as deadline for receiving requests for the next academic year. The minister said the deadline has been extended to August 18, for undergraduate applicants and August 31, for those intending to pursue diploma studies.

The decision to extend the deadline was prompted by the delays in admissions by the public and private universities, since an admission letter is a prerequisite to enrol on the scheme, Muyingo said, at a press conference at the Media

Centre on Monday.

The education minister also said unlike before, students with disabilities, who intend to pursue humanities, will also receive loans in the next academic year.

## Repayment

In addition to the one year grace period after graduation, students also have twice the number of years they spent pursuing a particular course to repay the money.

According to the board's executive director, Michael Wanyama, if a student was given a loan for a three-year programme, they have six years to complete repayment.