

UCE results: Sciences trail arts despite improved teacher pay

BY DAVID WALUGEMBE

KAMPALA. The 2025 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results have reignited debate within the education sector after arts subjects outperformed sciences, despite government efforts in recent years to prioritise and enhance remuneration for science teachers.

Data released by the Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) shows that science subjects recorded a decline in top grades, with more candidates clustering in average performance bands. In contrast, arts subjects — led by Christian Religious Education (CRE) — posted stronger results.

Of the 432,163 candidates who sat the examinations from 3,975 centres, 99.69 percent qualified to progress to post-UCE institutions. Female candidates accounted for 52.7 percent of the total candidature.

Uneb Executive Director Daniel Odong said candidates particularly struggled with the practical components in science subjects, which require learners to interpret scenarios, develop hypotheses, and apply problem-solving skills in real-life contexts — core principles of the new curriculum.

In Physics, the percentage of candidates scoring A dropped to 0.8 percent in 2025 from 1.9 per cent in 2024, while B grades declined to 15.5 percent from 20.7 percent. Similar trends were recorded in Chemistry and Biology.

Mathematics also registered a drop in A grades from 3.8 per cent in 2024 to 1.5 per cent in 2025, although B and C grades improved.

By contrast, arts subjects posted stronger performances. CRE led the group, followed by Geography, English Language, and Art and Design. Performance in History and Political Education slightly declined but remained rel-

atively stable compared to sciences.

The results have revived scrutiny of the government's 2022 decision to enhance salaries for Science teachers while Arts teachers remained on lower pay scales, a policy intended to boost science education and address staffing shortages.

Dr Maria Gorreti Nakabugo, the executive director of UWEZO, said while improved pay may have helped address retention challenges in sciences, it has not resolved systemic issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher upskilling, and resource gaps.

"We need to interrogate whether the issue is about resources or the preparation of science teachers themselves," she said, calling for balanced motivation across disciplines.

Mr Hasadu Kirabira, the national chairperson of the National Private Educational Institutions Association (NPEIA), cited teacher shortages and



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the high cost of laboratory equipment as major constraints.

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cannot afford equipment," he said.

Mr Filbert Baguma, the general secretary of the Uganda National Teachers' Union (Unatu), added that last year's teachers' strike disrupted learning and may have affected performance.

"We expect the government to address the teachers' welfare. They are in the budgeting process. While teachers returned to school, they are waiting to see what government will do," he said.

He urged authorities to equip schools with modern teaching facilities, noting that some institutions lack electricity, solar power, and basic instructional materials, especially in rural areas.

Findings in the 2025 Auditor General's report reinforce these concerns. At least 136 government schools reportedly lack science laboratories, while 270 operate with inadequately equipped labs. Additionally, 182 schools lack libraries, and 233 have libraries without essential books.