

The reform follows a directive from the Ministry of Education and Sports, which requires all tertiary institutions to adopt the Competence-Based Education and Training (CBET) framework by the 2027/2028 academic year.

BY TAUSI NAKATO

Universities across Uganda are stepping up preparations to fully implement the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) ahead of the 2027 deadline, marking one of the most significant reforms in the country's higher education system in recent years.

The transition is aimed at producing graduates equipped with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and competencies aligned to the demands of the modern job market.

The reform follows a directive from the Ministry of Education and Sports, which requires all tertiary institutions to adopt the Competence-Based Education and Training (CBET) framework by the 2027/2028 academic year.

The policy builds on earlier curriculum changes introduced at lower secondary level in 2020, whose first cohort is expected to join university in 2027.

Last year, the government also rolled out a revised upper secondary curriculum for Senior Five and Six, shifting from a knowledge-based model to an integrated, learner-centred competency approach.

Several subjects were streamlined and merged to reduce content overload and enhance practical learning.

Under the new assessment structure, continuous assessment covering coursework, tests, projects, and practical work will contribute 20 percent of a student's final score, while national examinations will account for the remaining 80 percent.

Process

Education stakeholders say the shift is expected to transform teaching and learning in universities, making graduates more work-ready and responsive to industry needs as the 2027 deadline draws closer.

In preparation for the 2027 deadline, universities are revising curricula, training lecturers, strengthening industry partnerships, and upgrading facilities to support practical, competency-based learning.

The Gulu University Vice Chancellor, Prof George Openjuru Ladaah, said the institution is about 80 percent ready to implement the CBC, with staff already trained and programmes being revised, pending approval from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).

"We have already trained our staff and they are revising programmes, but the process is still ongoing due to National Council procedures," he said.

He added that lecturers are already familiar with the new framework and that competence-based learning is partly already practiced in universities through practical training.

Prof Openjuru said universities are awaiting students from the reformed

Varsities race to meet 2027 new curriculum deadline



Graduands walk past the Ivory Tower at Makerere University during the 2026 graduation ceremony. Universities are required to polish their curriculum to make it more practical. PHOTO/GEOFFREY MUTUMBA

and are proposing a 50-50 split between examinations and continuous assessment.

He urged the government to speed up approval of curriculum amendments to ensure smooth roll-out.

The Makerere University Academic Registrar, Prof Buyinza Mukadasi, said the institution is highly prepared for the CBC, estimating readiness at about 90 percent ahead of the 2027 roll-out.

"We've always had internships and continuous assessment systems. In many colleges, especially Health Sciences, we have been using programme-based learning methodologies," he said.

Prof Buyinza added that the university has already shifted toward continuous assessment models, with a 60 percent coursework and 40 percent final examination structure in some programmes.

"We are already there. Our staff have been retooled to teach and assess under this system," he said.

Prof Buyinza explained that the CBC approach focuses on learner-centred education, problem-solving, and stronger links between universities, industry, and communities.

"It focuses on the learner, giving them capacity to solve real societal challenges through practical engagement with industry and the community," he said.

He also highlighted ongoing investments in digital learning platforms, laboratories, workshops, and curriculum review to support the transition.

"We have reviewed our curriculum, trained staff, and strengthened infrastructure. We are now investing in online learning systems, infrastructure, and curriculum review to strengthen preparedness," he said.

On readiness, he said Makerere University is already about 90 percent pre-

WHY THE CHANGE?

The transition is aimed at producing graduates equipped with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and competencies aligned to the demands of the modern job market.

However, the Executive Director of the Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum, Prof Eriab Lugujjo said most current partnerships between universities and industry are informal, emphasising the importance of stronger collaboration.

The Mountains of the Moon University Vice Chancellor, Prof Pius Coxwell Achanga, said the institution is actively preparing for the CBC Lightroom, with a structured plan, staff training, and curriculum reforms already underway ahead of the 2027 deadline.

"We have set up a committee to guide the transition, supported by senior administrators and academic staff. They will develop a framework for implementing CBC, including timelines, challenges, and staff training," he said.

Prof Achanga said the university has costed the transition process at about Shs3b to support curriculum development, staff retooling, and accreditation processes.

He also revealed that the university is working with international partners, including a German institution which has provided about Shs4b (1 million Euros) to pilot CBC implementation in agriculture.

"We are using this support to pilot competency-based learning in agriculture in partnership with government and industry stakeholders," he said.

will begin fully with new student intakes, while transitional arrangements are being made for continuing students.

However, he emphasised that success will depend largely on adequate funding and government support rather than numerical targets.

"The key issue is not percentages. The question is how we get the support needed to implement the curriculum effectively," he said.

The Kyambogo University Vice Chancellor, Prof Eli Katunguka Rwakishaya, said the institution is steadily preparing to implement CBC, with staff training and programme adjustments already underway.

He estimated the university's readiness at about 65 to 70 percent, expressing confidence that it will be ready by 2027.

However, he acknowledged several challenges, including limited infrastructure such as laboratories, workshops, ICT tools, staffing gaps, and staff attitudes toward the transition.

"Those are challenges, but they will be addressed as implementation progresses because we are diligently following the NCHE guide," he said.

Funding support

The Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum said universities are generally ready to implement CBC, but success will depend on government support, infrastructure development, and funding, especially for private institutions.

Speaking on the transition, the forum's executive director, Prof Eriab Lugujjo, said universities have embraced the reforms but face varying levels of preparedness across disciplines.

"Effectiveness depends on support systems, especially for private institutions struggling with salaries and

by discipline, and full implementation across all programmes by 2027 may not be realistic. You cannot say all universities will meet the deadline fully. Some may reach 70 percent or less," he said.

He highlighted key requirements for CBC implementation, including lecturer training, laboratory and workshop upgrades, and improved teaching infrastructure.

"We are focusing on training lecturers, improving laboratories and workshops, and strengthening teaching methods," he said.

Prof Lugujjo, the former vice chancellor of Ndejje University revealed that NCHE is rolling out a phased training programme where selected university representatives will be trained and later support colleagues in their institutions.

He also emphasised the importance of stronger collaboration between universities and industry, noting that current partnerships are mostly informal.

"There is no strong legal framework linking universities and industry. We need policies that encourage and promote these partnerships," he said.

Prof Lugujjo added that the Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum serves as a platform for coordination, policy dialogue, and sharing best practices among universities. However, he said it is still too early to define exact success percentages for the transition, adding that the 2027 deadline remains ambitious and will require continuous assessment.

The Public Relations and Corporate Affairs Officer at NCHE, Mr Saul Wai-golo, said the council has already developed and shared approved CBC guidelines following consultations with universities and vice chancellors.

"We issued the guidelines after a consultative process and we have already communicated them to institutions," he said.

He added that the current phase focuses on training institutions across the country, with workshops planned in four regions where representatives from universities will be trained and later share the knowledge with others.

"We are now in the training phase. We will train two people from each institution who will go back and train others," he said.

Mr Waigolo acknowledged that challenges remain, especially related to infrastructure, equipment, staffing, and funding, which vary across institutions.

"Competency-based education requires infrastructure, equipment, and trained staff. Funding is a key issue," he said.

However, he said NCHE is not rushing to judge readiness, stressing that compliance will be assessed as the transition progresses.

"We don't want to cross the bridge before we come to it. We shall meet institutions, assess progress, and move together," he said.

Mr Waigolo added that while concerns exist, NCHE is working closely with institutions and government to ensure smooth implementation of the new curriculum.

According to NCHE, Uganda has more than 60 accredited universities