

NCHE starts verification of certificate courses

By David Lumu and Martin Kitubi

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has started the verification process of institutions offering certificate courses, saying that by the end of next month, restructuring of these courses from one year to two years, will be rolled out.

According to the executive director of NCHE, Prof. John Opuda-Asibo, following the Government's decision to restructure certificate courses from one year to two years, various institutions have tendered in recommendations, which NCHE officials are currently reviewing.

The purpose of the review, Opuda-Asibo explained, is to ensure that certificate courses offered by institutions in the country are in line with the requirements of the education Ministry.

Opuda-Asibo also warned that institutions that ignored the June 30 deadline would be forced to comply with the decision that NCHE will take against them.

In a May 24 letter to academic registrars of universities, other degree awarding institutions and other tertiary institutions, Opuda-Asibo set the June 30 as the date for licensed and accredited higher education training institutions to declare all their post O'level certificate programmes.

Requirements

The institutions were also required to declare lists of all students admitted to the said post O'level certificate programmes indicating the criteria for admissibility with copies of supporting documents.

After the review, Opuda-Asibo said the recommendations would be sent back to the institutions for re-scheming if the certificate courses that they are offering are not in line with NCHE requirements.

"We are conducting assessment and compiling what institutions have sent to us. We will advise them on what they should consider before approval," Opuda-Asibo said in a telephone interview.

Last month, NCHE ordered all institutions of higher learning to stop offering one-year



John Opuda-Asibo

certificate courses, saying they contravene higher education standards.

"...all post O'level certificate programmes must be of a two-year duration to be equivalent to A'level of Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC)," Opuda-Asibo said in his letter stopping the one year certificate course training.

Post-O' level certificate programmes are mainly pursued by students, who complete senior four, but cannot afford or did not qualify for A' level admission.

Purpose of review

The review by NCHE is meant to harmonise the certificate training in the country. However, some institutions have recommended that the Government should first develop a uniform syllabus for the various certificate programmes rather than changing the duration from one year to two years.

According to the Minister of State for Primary Education, Rosemary Seninde, the rationale behind NCHE's decision to review the duration of certificate training from one year to two years, is that fact that one-year certificate course cannot be used when students want to upgrade.

Seninde added that a two-year certificate after O' level will be equivalent to A' level and students will be eligible to enroll for a diploma.

Seninde, however, clarified that the review or change from one year to two years certificate training will not affect tailor-made courses geared towards empowering people with skills.

Additional reporting by Clissy Namugerwa