

Makerere University resumes lectures

By Marin Kitubi

Makerere University lecturers are to resume work today, two months after the university was closed on the orders of President Yoweri Museveni. This followed a sit-down strike by the academic staff association (MUASA).

According to a letter issued last week by Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu the vice-chancellor of Makerere University, lectures for the first semester of academic year 2016/2017 will resume today and end on January 29.

According to the letter, all members of university staff are required to resume work immediately, following the communication by the chairperson of the university council regarding the re-opening of the institution.

When contacted on Saturday, Ddumba-Ssentamu said both teaching and non-teaching staff had already reported on duty and were waiting to carry out their respective duties.

All continuing students were required to report for lectures today to complete their first semester of the academic year 2016/2017, he said.

The university was closed on November 1, 2016, after the dons' sit-down strike had entered a second week.

Lecturers were demanding over sh54.8b in incentive arrears up to October, 2016. The university spends sh3.7b every month on lecturers' incentives for teaching evening and weekend programmes, which management says is no longer sustainable because of inadequate funding.

The President later appointed a nine-member visitation committee led by Dr Abel Rwendeire, who said they will take not less than three months inquiring into the financial and management affairs of the university.

"Council shall review the decision on the incentive after a special audit report has been received and the decision taken shall be effective July 1, 2017," university council chairperson Eng. Charles Wana-Etyem said in a letter to MUASA.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Ddumba said students are required to complete payment of all fees by the 12th week of the semester, in this case, by Monday January 16, two weeks after resuming studies.

MUASA called off their strike early last month after the university paid lecturers the November salary and incentive for one month.

He explained that failure to comply with the policy slows down the implementation of university programmes.

"Why should they (students) fail to comply? Students must stop delaying the running of the institution. Delayed payment of tuition draws back the institution plans," he noted.

"Students in other universities pay on time following their tuition policies and they do not strike. These policies were not invented by me, but the Government, university management and students."

With no break off, end of semester exams will commence immediately after lectures on January 30, and will run for two weeks and five days.

Soon after the examinations, all students will have a week residential break. Thereafter, the 67th graduation ceremony will commence and last four days. The second semester is expected to start on February 27.

With about 11,000 students expected to graduate, Ddumba noted that only those who have cleared their tuition fees will be allowed to graduate.

He explained that one-week's break has been offered to enable students prepare for the second semester and for parents to meet their children's requirements such as tuition fees.