



The Republic of Uganda

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

**Statement by the Minister of Education and Sports
First Lady, Janet K. Museveni,**

**On the Occasion of the
Release of Results for the 2020 Uganda Certificate of Education
(UCE) Examination**

**Friday, 30th July 2021
STATE HOUSE – NAKASERO KAMPALA**

**My Colleagues, the Honourable Ministers of State,
The Permanent Secretary and the technical team
from the Ministry of Education and Sports,
The Chairperson of UNEB and your technical team
The Media fraternity,
Ladies and gentlemen.**

Good afternoon to you all.

Each new day that unfolds brings us the opportunity to recognize that our God is always in charge in spite of the circumstances we go through.

Two weeks ago, we came together to celebrate the release of results for 736,942 (Seven hundred thirty-six thousand, nine hundred forty-two) of our children who completed their PLE for the year 2020. Today, we come in the same spirit of gratitude for 330,592 (Three hundred thirty thousand, five hundred ninety-two) of our young people who sat their O-Level Exams for the academic year 2020 in March/April 2021.

What is outstanding in today's results for the 2020 U.C.E. is that overall, performance is better compared with the preceding year. **Ninety-four** (94) percent of our young people who sat the 2020 U.C.E. passed compared with 91 percent in 2019.

To us as a nation, this kind of performance by our children should be testimony that God is still working good things in our midst in spite of the circumstances. God is still in charge! God has not held back on His blessings upon us because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He is still in the business of blessing us. We just have to dare count those blessings one by one. We shall be amazed at what God is doing in our midst.

So, on behalf of my Ministry, I extend our sincere gratitude to all – UNEB, Security agencies, the Local Governments, the leadership of the various Schools, Ministry of Health, and most of all the parents and guardians who did not give up.

I also extend our appreciation to our Partners in Development who supported us in various ways in developing and production of the Home-Study materials which were the key resource materials for continuity of learning for most of these candidates whose results we are rejoicing over today.

It is rather unfortunate that 4,324 (Four thousand, three hundred and thirty-four) fewer candidates registered for UCE in 2020 compared with 2019. As of now, the technical team at UNEB and the Ministry is attributing this reduction largely to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For instance, when Secondary Schools were assessed for readiness of compliance with the COVID-19 SOPs, only 94 (ninety-four) percent of them met the requirements. Therefore, there were 06 (six) percent of Secondary Schools deemed not safe for learners.

A natural phenomenon like the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a harsh reminder of the necessity of establishing an affordable and accessible public Secondary School in each Sub- County. As you know, this has been a policy commitment direction by the NRM government. It is possible that some of O-Level candidates whose schools could not re-open, were unable to find a nearby alternative and affordable school to complete their O-Level studies from.

Nonetheless, I would like to inform our listeners that there is hope and help is on the way. The NRM government is taking great strides in bringing an affordable and accessible public Secondary School to each sub-county that has none. By God's grace, once the lockdown measures have been eased, my Ministry shall be ready to commission at least ninety-five (95) brand new fully government-owned and complete Secondary Schools. Each of these schools is already staffed with 31 (thirty-one) teaching staff including the Headteacher.

These new Secondary Schools: fondly referred to as Seed Schools, are non-boarding Schools with a capacity for 400 students for both boys and girls. The facilities at these new government schools include six classrooms, fully equipped science laboratories, a library and ICT laboratory, a 400-seater multipurpose Hall, and four (04) staff houses among others. As the NRM government, we truly envision a future where no learner shall ever have to forego their O-Level studies for the reason of not having an affordable and accessible quality public Secondary School.

However, I would like to remind my fellow Ugandans that education is a shared responsibility by the parents and guardians, State and non-State actors. It takes the participation of the parent and guardian for the learner to gain the most out of his or her learning experience in a school setting. It does not matter if government puts these facilities in place, but the parents and guardians fail to play their role in ensuring that the child attains an education.

It is the mutual responsibility for parents, guardians, and the school environment to nurture and reinforce desirable behaviour in our young people. UNEB informs me that 15 (fifteen) girls gave birth during their examinations. My fellow parents and guardians, these young people, belong to you; first and foremost, before they become a responsibility of the State to offer them affordable basic services such as Education.

Besides the decline in the number of candidates who registered for UCE in 2020 compared with 2019, I did note too some issues that have become perennial in the performance of our young people at O-level. First, we are not seeing improvement in performance in the Science subjects commensurate to the investments we are making in this area as government. UNEB has done a good job by providing us with data that gives us a general idea that there is a problem.

I want to task the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports to give attention to providing credible answers to these perennial problems.

We have recruited more science teachers and enhanced their salaries to at least UGX 1.2 million per month for undergraduates. Public Secondary Schools have the best equipped and resourced Science laboratories. Additionally, we have had a program called SESEMAT to build capacity of Secondary School teachers in the area of pedagogy for teaching sciences. So, where and why is there a problem?

Similarly, Government has increased the Budget Allocation for the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) by 98.2 percent (that is UGX 4.077 billion), from UGX 4.15 billion to UGX 8.277 billion over the last 5 years. This was to strengthen the capacity not only support Local Governments in Inspection and Supervision but also to carry out inspection and supervision of post-primary education institutions which include Secondary Schools.

In spite of all these investments, learners still complain of being taught Science practicals infrequently. There are still complaints that laboratory equipment and resources are lying idle (and some still unpacked) in some government schools.

So, that is why today I am tasking our new Permanent Secretary to study this problem further and report to me with evidence-based solutions on the way forward.

It is gratifying to note that over the last five (05) years, there has been a consistent downward trend in the proportion of S.4 Candidates who register for U.C.E. but fail to sit the Exams. This is considering another positive trend where we have observed an increase in candidature by more than 30,000 students over the same period of time. The proportion of absenteeism has declined from 2.1 percent in 2016 to 0.8 percent in 2020 as the Executive Director of UNEB stated.

Nonetheless, as I mentioned two weeks ago during the release of Results for 2020 P.L.E., we must account for students who register but do not show up for Exams.

Therefore, I would like my Permanent Secretary to work with UNEB and trace where these 2,468 (Two thousand, four hundred and sixty-eight) students who registered for U.C.E. but did not show up for Exams are. What happened to them?

For our young people that passed the Uganda Certificate of Examination, you stand at crossroads of opportunities. The U.C.E. Certificate you have earned opens paths for you into the world of several post-secondary education opportunities. I come back to parents and guardians to say that your children need you most at this point of choice-making. "Which path should I take?" They may ask you!

There is a whole world of limitless possibilities in the Technical-Vocational training (TVET) sub-sector. However, it is also a path that our young people tend to despise. Even when opportunities open in TVET, our young people tend to shun them. Parents, please encourage your children to give serious consideration to this area of TVET.

Those that have been focused and committed, have earned a descent living by putting to work the skills they acquired through TVET. Therefore, I encourage our young people and their parents to seek more information about TVET institutions in your district or sub-region. Let your child know that TVET does open many more employment opportunities than they may find in the academia path.

Lastly, for those that successfully completed O-Level, the **Selection Exercise** will be communicated to you in due course but not before the lockdown has been lifted. This is similar to what I mentioned to the public when I released the 2020 P.L.E. Results a fortnight ago.

I did see and hear of some government-aided Secondary Schools carrying out on online applications and admissions shortly after the P.L.E. Results were released but before the government official selection exercise is even conducted as has been the practice.

As I have said before, there are some practices that are desirable and even preferable. As government, we do encourage and promote e-governance systems because we know the efficiencies, they bring along in conducting business.

However, as government before we adopt such practices, we always take into consideration the wider implications especially on equitable access to services by our people. Last year, my Ministry did embark on developing a Curriculum, Admissions, and Placement Policy as well as a Higher Education Policy.

These two Policies will among others pronounce clear systems, standards, and guidelines to regulate admissions and placement of students in our entire education system. Therefore, until then the current government approaches for selection and admission into entry levels for O-level, A-level, and post-Secondary education levels remain as is for public and government-aided institutions.

Furthermore, I want to use this opportunity to inform all concerned citizens listening to me, that, the re-opening of education institutions is constantly in our discussions as government but we try as much as possible to include in all our concerns, what will ensure learning for all and also good health for all in this very difficult season of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We have not forgotten that when the President announced this second lockdown, there had really been an outcry in the country that Government announces a lockdown because of the many sick students in schools and also the deaths in the country. Therefore, now that the lockdown has provided some calm in the country with a reduction in numbers of the sick in health centres, people have started calling for re-opening of schools, which we all want.

However, I want you to know that we are considering the sequence of re-opening that we will follow, which is realistic, as government finds the vaccines required for all our learners.

Therefore, what I want to ask you all my listeners is to trust your government and know that we are trying to do everything humanly possible to protect our people from this enemy of COVID-19. Where we fail, it is not because we have not tried or because we do not care. So please listen to what the President will say to the country tonight because it will inform what we will do, going forward.

Once again, I appreciate the parents, guardians, and teachers among others who made it possible despite the difficulties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. For those who were not as successful as you expected from your U.C.E., I encourage you not to lose hope. As long as you are healthy, God will make a way for you through which your life goals can be pursued – do not give up.

Keep safe by observing the SOPs for COVID-19 because it is not yet safe to put down our guard.

With that, it is now my pleasure to release the 2020 Uganda Certificate of Examination Results to the public.

Thank you all and God bless you.