

Govt directs on technical college admissions

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and Martin Kitubi

The state minister for higher education, Dr John Chrysostom Musingo, has directed the Uganda Technical Colleges (UTCs) to admit certificate graduates who wish to upgrade for diploma courses.

Musingo said requirements for admission to tertiary institutions remains five passes at O'level, one principal pass and two subsidiaries at A' level in both arts and science courses.

This followed an outcry of students with national certificates or advanced crafts certificates intending to study diplomas, such as civil or electrical engineering, at UTCs, but had been denied admission.

According to the newly approved admission requirements by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), having a national certificate was no longer enough for one to upgrade to diploma level.

One had to have passed both physics and mathematics at O'level and should have their certificates in vocational and

technical courses.

Students also ought to have proven practical experience of at least two years in brick laying and concrete practice, carpentry, as well as joinery or plumbing.

However, Musingo called upon technical colleges to register certificate graduates who wish to pursue diploma courses.

Uganda has five technical colleges, including Bushenyi, Elgon, Kichwamba, Kyema and Lira UTCs, which offer diplomas.

"Regardless of what is new or what is old, that is our stand as a ministry, students should not be blocked whatsoever," he said.

"This does not mean that candidates with one principal pass must be admitted over those who have two."

He was speaking at the opening of the Joint Admissions Board (JAB) national selection exercise for Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) institutions on Tuesday at Makerere University.

The minister said the education ministry is promoting growth of vocational



Musingo

ON THE GROUND

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education and training as an alternative to mainstream

higher education, calling upon stakeholders to abandon the wrong perception, that vocational education is for failures.

The minister's reaction came after several people who had gathered complained, asking why students are being blocked from upgrading under the new NCHE requirements.

As part of the BTJET setting, a person who completes Senior Four would join a technical institute and obtain a National certificate. While upgrading, to technical colleges, they would consider the certificate and not the Senior Four results.

However, this changed early this year following the introduction of new entry requirements by the NCHE.

Dr Wilfred Nahamya, the deputy secretary at the Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board (UBTEB), said "UTCs are failing the progress of these students with the new admission requirements."

When asked about the fate of the students and the urgency of the matter, Benaddette Nambi, the deputy executive director NCDC, declined to comment, saying an official communique will be given at a later date.