

Enrolled. Sources say about 40 students of Master of Science and PhD Plant Breeding and Seed Systems are on MarCCI programme with half of them foreigners from 13 African countries.

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KAMPALA. Tension is brewing at Makerere University College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) after the college awarded scholarships to postgraduate students and invited them for studies without official admission to the university.

The post-graduate students, both local and international, have been at the main campus studying for more than a year now but without official admission letters or identity cards, implying they are not legally recognised by the university.

They were awarded scholarships to pursue Master and Doctorate degrees under the Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) programme funded by World Bank on a \$6m (about Shs22.2 billion) grant.

Sources close to the university but declined to be named said some frustrated international students who had travelled from Burundi, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania were constrained to return to their respective countries after efforts to have them admitted to the university failed.

"They have wasted my time and money. It was not easy to get a study leave from my workplace and I reach here there is all this mess," one of the affected students told *Daily Monitor* in an interview.

For close to two months *Daily Monitor* sought, without success, an explanation from CAES officials why they kept the students for that long without official admission but none was willing to speak on the matter.

The CAES public relations officer, Ms Jane Onyango, initially said the programme director, Dr Richard Edema, was out of the country and said he would give a response upon return.

However, Dr Edema has since declined to comment on the matter.

Subsequently, Ms Onyango referred *Daily Monitor* to the College Principal, Prof Bernard Bashaasha, who accepted an appointment for an interview but later cancelled it.

"We don't have what to say. Drop that story. I am busy in a meeting," Prof Bashaasha said before he hung up.

However, sources informed *Daily Monitor* that a board of Research and Graduate Training in the School of Graduate Studies last week approved a list of students on MaRCCI programme to be officially admitted to the university.

"Makerere is not a secondary school where admission can happen anytime of the year. These students applied after studying for a year. There should be an advert they were responding to and it had a deadline. This is an irregularity. If it is allowed to go on, it sets a bad precedent that people can do what they want at anytime. The bad characters can compromise the quality of teaching at the institution," the source reasoned.

Prof Buyinza Mukadasi, the Direc-

Mak on the spot over irregular postgraduate admissions



Admissions. Students check for their names on the Makerere admissions list in 2017. Makerere University College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences reportedly awarded scholarships to postgraduate students and invited them for studies without official admission to the university. FILE PHOTO

tor of Makerere University Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, downplayed the gravity of the matter, but admitted something had gone wrong.

He described the problem as an

'oversight' and said it's more administrative than academic, which cannot affect the quality of teaching at the university.

"The process was not well managed. It could have been managed

better. The board cannot admit without minutes from the School of Higher Degrees recommending successful applicants. In this case, the students formally applied recently and have been considered at the board level. It is upon Senate to admit retrospectively or defer them to the next intake. The students have been around studying. They have the requirements to the programme," Prof Mukadasi said in an interview.

However, he added that Dr Edema, the principal investigator, was cautioned to follow university processes in future and appealed to other staff who have written similar proposals and won grants with scholarships to tell their students to officially apply to the university for admission.

"If you have a grant, you can only give scholarships not admission to the university. If not, you stand a risk of giving a scholarship to a person who is not admissible to Makerere University," Prof Mukadasi said.

He added: "We have cautioned our young professor never to do it again. He should follow university processes. There was an oversight. We looked at the time the students have been studying, these are students from Congo, Ghana... They have been disorganised. We are proudly associated with a programme being funded by World Bank hosted at Makerere."

Prof Mukadasi, however, could not give the number of post-graduate students who recently applied for consideration for the 2018/19 intake.

Tuition costs

PhD students in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology pay Shs7m and Shs10.3m annually for local and international students respectively. Master's degree students pay Shs5m and Shs10m in the same order. The grant also takes care of the students' upkeep for the years of study at the university.

According to sources, about 40 students of Master of Science and PhD Plant Breeding and Seed Systems are on MarCCI programme with half of them foreigners from 13 African countries.

The World Bank-funded programme is one of the 24 African centres of excellence aimed at contributing to crop production needs in the region and improving curriculum delivery at graduate level.

About the board

The research and graduate training board is composed of 23 members. Each college is represented and other critical university organs like Senate, Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Makerere University Business School (Mubs). Since the board is a committee of Senate, these are already members of Senate who include college principals and deans who sit on the Senate.

HOW STUDENTS GET ENROLLED ON THE PROGRAMME

Prof Buyinza Mukadasi says: "When we advertise, students apply and we send the applications to the principals of the colleges who then forward the names to the Dean. The College Dean chairs the School Higher Degree Committee."

The School Higher Degree Committee submits its recommendations to the Board of Research and Graduate Training, which is a committee of Senate, the university's highest decision-making body. The Board considers the recommendations and decides whether the students should be admitted or not and forwards the decisions to the

University Senate for noting, not discussion. The Directorate of Research and Graduate Training then publishes the list of successful applicants and also communicates to them.

"In this case, we got information from the Director of Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement that students had arrived and at the university studying. I don't remember exactly when we got this information."

The processes at the lower level had not been completed. When we were given complete information that is when we considered the applications" said Prof Mukadasi