

# Education ministry to revise nursing admission grades

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L-R: Commissioner BTVET Hajjat Safina Kisu Museene, Education ministry permanent secretary Alex Kakooza, UNMEB chairperson Hajjat Mariam Walusimbi and UNMEB executive secretary Helen Mukakarisa Kataratmbi during the release

The Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examinations Board (UNMEB) has called for a review of entry requirements to nursing and midwifery certificate programmes.

The board wants a minimum of credits in all the required subjects at ordinary level and principal passes in sciences at advanced level. Currently, the maximum admission level for certificates are passes, while diplomas are maintained at credit level in Science subjects including English and Mathematics.

Speaking at the release of the 26<sup>th</sup> series of state final exam results in Ntinda, UNMEB chairperson Hajjat Mariam Walusimbi said the increasing failure rates at certificate level have prompted the board to call for adjustments.

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“We want institutions to admit students that are trainable,” Walusimbi said. “In the past, anyone with F9s would join nursing until we upgraded to passes. Now, we need to do away with passes and have the right people in our health training institutions.”

She added that the nursing and midwifery profession affects life of human beings in the most vulnerable state and any skills gap may cause loss of a life. She argued that the profession that people contemplate to join needs a lot of Science and Art subjects that one needs to have attained the knowledge at an early stage to ease their training in higher institutions.

UNMEB’s proposal comes two years since the Education ministry reviewed admission requirements for grade III primary teachers from passes in both English and Mathematics to credits.

The ministry of Education permanent secretary, Alex Kakooza, who released the results at UNMEB offices agreed with the proposal, thus urging the board to document all the required adjustments in the entry levels for nursing and midwifery courses.

“In the past, only those who used to pass highly would join nursing and teaching. This is an interesting development from UNMEB and I want to assure you that we shall consider this as a ministry,” Kakooza said.

“I want to you put this proposal on paper, discuss it in your relevant councils and then submit it to the ministry to see how we can help you move forward.”

He, however, tasked the ministry’s Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) department to consult the world of work and make reference to international standards to ensure that the revision does not affect principles of equitable access to quality education. Kakooza explained that due to the low entry requirements, training institutions are overwhelmed with student enrollments yet the number of qualified health tutors remains low.

“The congestion is too much...Already, there’s a request on my desk from a nursing school requesting not to admit students this year [2019] due to congestion so that we give them time to release some students,” he said.

To further improve performance, Walusimbi asked the ministry to liaise with the Health ministry to consider upgrade of health centre IVs to expand practicum areas and absorb the ever-increasing number of students. This is in addition to establishing new nursing and midwifery schools in districts that do not have any schools but have training hospitals.

## LOW PERFORMANCE

During her presentation, the UNMEB executive secretary, Helen Mukakarisa Kataratambi, noted that diploma candidates continued to outperform their certificate counterparts in all programmes. At least 6,666 diploma and certificate candidates sat for the examinations from December 3 to 14, 2018 from 95 accredited health institutions compared to 6,772 candidates who sat in November 2017.

Of the 6,666 candidates, 1,830 were diploma students and 4,836 certificate students. Kataratambi said at least 5,552 candidates passed the examinations at both levels. According to the statement of results, out of the 4,836 certificate candidates, 3,992 (82.5 per cent) passed; with the only 22 candidates excelling at distinction level, 2,532 credit level, 1,438 at pass level, 762 were ungraded while 82 candidates missed the examinations.

At diploma level, of the 1,830 candidates, at least 1,560 (85.3 per cent) passed. Of the 1,560 candidates, 60 passed at distinction level and 1,152 and 348 at credit and pass levels respectively.

More 254 diploma candidates were ungraded while 16 were un-presented. Kataratambi said the board is still investigating why some students missed the examinations. She, however, attributed the poor performance to high enrollment amid inadequate teaching staff, lack of training space and school fees challenges that disrupt student's concentration.

"The programmes that majorly contributed to a high failure rate were Certificates in Nursing and Midwifery. These two programmes have a high demand which increases tutor to student ratio and reduces tutor to mentor contact which is critical in these fields," Kataratambi said. Kakooza echoed the finance ministry's recent approval to recruit more tutors in all TVET institutions next year.

Effective today, transcripts for the June 2018 candidates are ready for dispatch to authorized personnel of training institutions after the board transited from issuance of result slips.

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