

Don warns of low-quality lawyers as LDC scraps pre-entry exams

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Pre-entry exams to LDC have been scrapped

A Makerere University senior Law don has warned Ugandans to brace themselves for low-quality advocates following the suspension of pre-entry examinations at the Law Development Center (LDC).

Dr Kakungulu Mayambala said that those behind the suspension of the pre-entry exams seem to be more interested in admitting a big number of students and are not bothered about quality issues that come with it. The aim of introducing pre-entry according to him wasn't to make it hard for lawyers to become advocates or to attain their post-graduate diploma in legal practice, but to determine their competences to comprehend what's trained at that level.

The Uganda Law Council directed LDC in a memo issued on Wednesday to admit 1,680 students for the bar course for this academic year. Of these, 1120 will study at the Kampala campus and 560 at the Mbarara campus.

Last year, only 657 students passed the pre-entry to join the bar course. The memo that suspended the exam for two academic years, also directed that application for the course whose deadline was Friday last week, be reopened such that even those that had passed pre-entry in previous years but hadn't joined the center be admitted in addition to those that had passed their Bachelors degrees but the failed the pre-entry exams.

When asked about the criteria for admission with the new directive, Hamis Lukyamuzi Ddungu, the manager administration at LDC, said it's not yet agreed upon. He said students are set to start school on September 23.

However, over the years, with repeated failures, politicians, students, and businesspersons who own universities have continuously asked the Law Council to end pre-entry examinations, saying many students get frustrated when they complete their law degrees with flying colours but cannot proceed to become advocates.

But when he appeared before the Legal Affairs Committee of parliament in 2017, LDC's Frank Nigel Othembi told legislators that of the over 12 universities offering law courses, only about five provide thorough teaching. He said he was planning to conduct research to establish whether pre-entry exams were still relevant. Last year, MPs recommended that the exams be scrapped.

Some of the issues raised by those against the exam are that it was never about quality control but a money-making venture for the Law Council and that some Law dons had started coaching students preparing for the exams at exorbitant prices.