

Retaking: How students can benefit

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University student cannot graduate if they have failed some course units in which case retaking becomes the only solution. File photo

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By Dorcus Murungi

When a new semester begins, a majority of students think of new course units, new lecturers and advancing higher in their studies. However, this is only for those that have ably passed their previous course units.

Some students unfortunately fail to pass all their course units because of lack of concentration, stress or missed course works thus need to retake those papers of which failure to do so they will not graduate when the time comes.

This leaves the students with no option but to find possible ways to incorporate this failed paper in their timetables.

Wesley Itaagi, a third year law student at Makerere University, observes that though these retakes are supposed to make students understand the concepts in the course unit, majority do not

benefit from them. He says a retake is an extra load for the next semester, which in most cases means divided concentration.

“If you have five course units for your next semester, two retakes will imply seven course units for that semester and it may be difficult to balance, especially if you are a weak student,” Itaagi says.

He also observes that students who usually retake find it hard to attend lectures of the failed course unit since these classes sometimes collide with their current timetable.

This, the Law student says, leaves a student with no option but to only show up for tests and probably hire mercenaries for course works if they are to get better grades.

And to him, this does not bring out the intended goal of a retake since the student’s concern is passing.

The way forward

According to Dr Grace Lubale, the head of department of teacher education at Kyambogo University, a number of students do not understand the concept of retaking.

He says many students do not inquire from lecturers the reason for bad grades and only wait for a time to re-sit the paper.

“A retake is supposed to make you a better person, to make you understand what you had failed before. This you can achieve by cognitively repeating and studying the course unit afresh, internalising the concept and sitting the tests and course works, but this does not mean that you are a failure,” he says. Asked why institutions should not do away with retakes, Lubaale says that would be impossible because universities want to produce students that are competent.

“The university regulations require a student to retake a course or courses when next offered again in order to obtain at least the pass mark (50 per cent) if they had failed during the first assessment in the course or courses. So it is upon the student to choose when they can best retake these course units,” he notes.

Make the most of it

Shadrack Nantamba, a lecturer of Social Sciences at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, says when a student retakes a course unit, they are supposed to attend all the prescribed lectures/tutorial/practical/fieldwork in the course or courses, satisfy all the requirements for the coursework component and sit for the examination.

To Nantamba, students are not advised to register for courses and retakes that fall beyond the set normal semester load to avoid timetable clashes. “This will not give you opportunity to concentrate on what you failed, but will instead put you on unnecessary pressure that might affect your general performance,” he advises.

He adds that a student is not allowed to retake more than five courses at a time. The lecturer adds that students should always register for these retakes early enough such that it gives lecturers time to know their number and probably give them extra attention.