

NCHE grants Mountain of the Moon University charter status

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The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) has finally granted a charter certificate to Fort Portal-based Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) after 12 years of university service.

While officially handing over the certificate to MMU officials, NCHE executive director Prof John Opuda-Asibo said the university fulfilled all the conditions of obtaining a charter.

“When you look at our checklist, everything was just tick for Mountains of the Moon University. The university has been cooperative throughout this journey,” Opuda-Asibo said at NCHE offices on Thursday.



NCHE executive director Prof John Opuda-Asibo hands over the charter certificate to members of the MMU board of governors

He told the university officials that: “This is the grant of the highest authority for you to exercise the responsibility of running a university. This is a sovereign right given by the head of state in any part of the world but retains the power You have to guard your privilege jealously.”

Opuda-Asibo urged the university to ensure sustainability of the charter saying getting a charter is like attaining a PhD which one must at all time show that they deserved it.

NCHE expects MMU every after two years, to forward audit reports, benchmark and ensure that the university runs in perpetuity. NCHE director for quality assurance Dr Pamela Tihibikirra said an institution is granted a charter if it fulfills conditions such as having essential physical infrastructure, administrative and technical services, administrative block, lecture rooms, seminar

halls, special purpose rooms, library, laboratories, staff houses, among others as per the council's check list for capacity indicators.

This is in addition to qualified academic and administrative staff, bylaws and regulations approved by the governing council of the institution, programmes, curricula, student assessment procedures, examination regulations for initial and future programmes approved that are ratified by NCHE. Tihibikirra said MMU be willing to be inspected and visited whenever the council feels it is necessary after it has obtained a charter.

MMU vice chancellor Prof John M Kasenene pledged to fulfill the conditions of the charter saying this is another step towards improving academic services at all higher education levels.

“Without a charter, it became demotivating to the university and our antagonists made it a regular downgrading tool for the highly ranked MMU. So, the university and management had to apply for a charter status as a strategy to among others attract more students especially at post-graduate level,” Kasenene said.

He added that being chartered also aimed at forming a firm foundation for government to take over the university as directed by President Museveni on January 8, 2018. He explained that government will this financial year start with remunerating salaries of the university staff before extending to improvement of infrastructure in the next phase and eventually a complete takeover after one year.

According to Kasenene, it took the university one year to accomplish the whole process of charter preparation, application, defense, inspection, vetting and approval by NCHE and eventual submission to government.

The president assented to the MMU acquisition of a charter and endorsed it on December 20, 2018 and later gazetted on March 29, 2018. MMU's charter status brings the total number of private chartered universities to nine.

Others are; Ndejje, Bugema, Nkumba, Bishop Stuart, Kampala University, Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda Christian University and Kampala International University. This leaves more 32 private universities established between 2001 and 2016 still operating with provisional licenses.

Section 97 (3) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) states that “a provisional license shall be valid for at least three years from the date of publication in the gazette, within which the NCHE shall be monitoring the university to establish its viability for accreditation.”

This means that a provisional license being temporary in nature should not run indefinitely and NCHE can exercise its discretion under section 99 (2) of the same Act and section 5 (g) to instruct any private university to take necessary action.

NCHE head of university affairs Dr Pius Achanga said efforts are being made to engage universities with provisional licenses in August this year.

“We have put in a budget proposal to hold like a workshop for the affected universities to let them understand the implications of the law and benefits of having a charter. We want to have a formal discussion with them so that they do things the right way,” Achanga said.

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