**UACE: Makerere launches study on poor performance in Biology**

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The Dean of School of Bioscience, Prof Arthur Tugume. PHOTO/COURTESY

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**What you need to know:**

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Makerere University  has commissioned a study, following the perennial poor performance of candidates in science subjects, particularly Biology, at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) level.
The  study,  under the office of the deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, aims at  averting the trend.

  The Dean of School of Bioscience, Prof Arthur Tugume, said the study will be done in two phases, starting with identification of the root causes of poor performance.
 This will be undertaken through analysing qualifications, competence, and availability of Biology teachers and technicians, the Biology curriculum,  how topics are segregated,  the state of laboratory,  the state of   field infrastructure for teaching Biology at A-Level and attitudes of learners towards the subject.
 The institution will come up with solutions and make  recommendations from the findings.

 “We are hopeful that in the medium to long-term the problems of poor academic performance in Biology at UACE and the ills thereof will be history, just as we solved similar problems that were in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics in the 1980s,”  Prof  Tugume said in a statement.
Makerere is not the only institution worried about the poor performance of students in Sciences, mostly Biology.
 The state Minister for Higher Education, Mr John Chrysostom Muyingo, last Friday while releasing the UACE results said  the government must commission a study to establish this perennial trend.

**A worrying trend**
Makerere University College of Natural Sciences (CONAS) through the School of Biosciences recently analysed the academic performance in Biology at UACE for nearly half a century and observed that since the late 1970s,  poor performance   subject has been the case.
 The college’s analysis of the 2018  exams, whose results were released in February 2019,  showed that a total of 13,061 candidates sat for Biology countrywide.  Of these only one candidate scored an A principal pass,  38 per cent scored at least an E , leaving almost 80 percent with the score of O or F (fail).
 In 2019, the analysis showed that only 44 candidates countrywide scored A in Biology.

But in 2020,  of the 15,058 candidates who sat for Biology,  1.2 percent (181 )scored A, 60.3 percent scored in the A-E pass level.  It was a good year,  since 89 percent, that is 13,401 candidates passed the subject. 1,656  failed.
But the trend of poor performance was noted in the  2022  exams.
According to the results, only 0.1 percent  (about 18 candidates) of learners scored A in Biology,  67.4 percent scored A-O while 32.6 percent (5,866 learners)  failed.
In comparison to Mathhematics, Chemistry and Physics  in the 2022 exams, Biology was the worst done science subject.
 The Uganda National Examinations Board reported that Mathematics and Chemistry recorded significant improvements at A pass level while Physics had a drop at A pass level but remained comparable at the A-E pass  level.

   Experts said the  continued poor performance in Biology  has affected the totality of life-sciences, academic and research ecosystem in Makerere University, several essential sectors, and government agencies whose mandates are hinged on Biology.