

# URA to collect tuition for all government universities

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Targeted. Makerere students at the main building. The university questions how defaulters will be handled under the new system. FILE PHOTO

## In Summary

- **Checks.** The Finance ministry says the move is aimed at curbing the misuse of some tuition revenue.
- Mr Bruhan Byaruhanga, a member of Kyambogo University Council, said they were waiting to see how URA will execute the tuition collection because each university collects different amounts of fees.

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By Damali Mukhaye

**Kampala.** The Ministry of Finance has directed Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) to start collecting tuition for all government universities across the country in a bid to curb fraud.

Mr Jim Mugunga, the ministry's spokesperson, yesterday confirmed that the new system is intended to establish how many students each university has and how much money they collect each academic year.

He said the ministry realised that some tuition revenue in some public universities is abused and decided on collecting the fees using a single account by URA to minimise misuse.

“We realised that there was abuse of funds in our institutions of learning because some of the tuition is being collected but not used. Some tuition is stolen while some money just disappears. So, let URA collect this money, let this money come as government revenue and let it be budgeted for and appropriated,” Mr Mugunga told Daily Monitor by telephone yesterday.

It is not clear how the initiative will be implemented since institutions have varying fees structure and functional fees.

He also said the new move will check the problem of ghost students, bureaucracy and costs in public universities.

“The current system is bureaucratic and keeps government unaware of tuition as a revenue that flows into the institutions. It also complicates the accountability process and duplicates bank costs of running related accounts.

“Once we get to know how much each institution is collecting, we shall facilitate timely release of money back to the universities to take care of students, staff and institutional support,” he said.

Mr Mugunga said the strategy will also streamline accountability, remove duplicity and minimise costs that have impeded revenue mobilisation.

“Tuition is actually government revenue and not money that belongs to universities. Historically, when revenue collection was not streamlined, the ministry had allowed institutions to collect on its behalf as we built internal capacities and get most institutions networked and strengthened. URA is, therefore, ready and the most suitable agency to handle this task,” he said.

The move comes a few days after Makerere University management officials appeared before the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament and were probed on why they failed to collect tuition fees from more than 80 students many of whom had already graduated and rent from several tenants in the university premises.

The officials led by the university secretary, Mr Charles Barugahare, were giving responses to queries raised in the 2017/18 Auditor General's report.

Key among the queries was that the university management did not collect Shs148.9m from 81 students who sat exams in 2017.

Mr John Muwanga, the Auditor General, also added in his report that 32 of the students appeared on the graduation list of January 2018 yet they had not cleared their tuition arrears of Shs65.2m.

The Makerere Vice Chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, said if URA takes over the tuition fees collection, it will be a big relief to the university.

He, however, questioned how URA will manage the fees defaulters.

"We will be relieved if URA takes over fees collections. But we do not know how they will do this and who will be responsible for defaulting students. We have managed them because we know their academic status and we use that to ensure they pay," Prof Nawangwe told Daily Monitor by telephone yesterday.

"We are ready to cooperate but no one has approached as about this new system and we do not know when it starts," he added.

Mr Jerry Bagaya, the academic registrar of Gulu University, said they had not received the implementation plan on how the new process will operate.

"Once we understand the modalities of how they are going to collect the tuition, we shall appreciate on whether it will help us or not," Mr Bagaya said.

Mr Bruhan Byaruhanga, a member of Kyambogo University Council, said they were waiting to see how URA will execute the tuition collection because each university collects different amounts of fees.

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