

# GOVT APPROVES NEW PATHWAY TO UNIVERSITY

PHOTOS BY MPALANYI SSENTONGOI

By Martin Kitubi

Edison Masereka, a student at Busitema University, is pursuing a bachelors in education.

However, Masereka did not score the needed two principal passes to directly enrol for a bachelor's degree.

Masereka did the History, Literature and Divinity (HLD) subject combination at Semuliki High School in Bundibugyo district, but, scored four points.

He blames his performance on a number of challenges, including school fees.

"When results were announced by Uganda National Examination Board, I had scored only four points. I could not repeat Senior Six because I did not have money and yet I wanted to join a university," Masereka said.

This is when he was introduced to the Higher Education Certificate (HEC) programme to join university.

Masereka is among other pioneers of the HEC programme, which has since been approved as the fourth pathway to university education.

According to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), students who do not principal pass can enrol for the programme and join university.

The HEC can also be utilised by students with only subsidiaries to join a programme of their choice.

Soon, arts students, directly from secondary schools, will



**Prof. Okwakol speaking during the sensitisation workshop on the HEC programme at Skyz Hotel in Kampala yesterday.** (Scan the picture using the New Vision digital experience to watch the video)

## WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SAY

**Lilian Gimuguni, Busitema University academic registrar**  
This programme can be implemented anywhere. It should be adopted by all universities going forward.

**Dr Milton Rwangire, director quality assurance at Bishop Stuart University**  
It is possible. We need to design stronger curricular.

also be able to enrol for science programmes at universities under the approved HEC

programme.

The programme was launched and piloted at Busitema University in 2019 and it is now ready for full operation across all universities.

However, to implement it, universities and colleges are required to apply to the NCHE for the specific programme.

## MINISTRY ON NEW PATHWAY

Prof. Mary Okwakol, the executive director of NCHE, confirmed that the programme is now part of the higher education qualification framework.

"We have been having three

## HOW IT WORKS

The Higher Education Certificate (HEC) is also intended for holders of UACE or equivalent qualification, who may not have attained sufficient grades to enroll for diploma or degree programmes in Uganda.

It will serve as a foundational programme for students whose foreign secondary school qualifications are not considered equivalent to UACE, but permit admission into higher education in a foreign country

A student who offered biology, chemistry and mathematics subject combinations but did not score the two principal passes required for medicine, they can also enrol for HEC for a year.

The student would undergo a rigorous HEC programme in biological sciences.

The year will be divided into two terms and the student must score an average cumulative grade point average needed to join a particular programme.

After this step, the student can apply for a degree programme.

Dr Cyrus Ssebugenyi, a principal education officer at National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), says it has been tested elsewhere in the world including the US.

Regarding whether arts students can enrol for science programmes at university, he said, it is possible.

However, Ssebugenyi noted that NCHE and the academia would be required to design befitting curriculum for such students.

As part of the proposals, a student who enrolled for history, economics and geography (HEG) subject combinations at A'level and wants to enrol for engineering, will have to undertake HEC programme in physical sciences.

After one year, the arts student would then qualify for an undergraduate course such as a bachelors in electrical engineering at university.

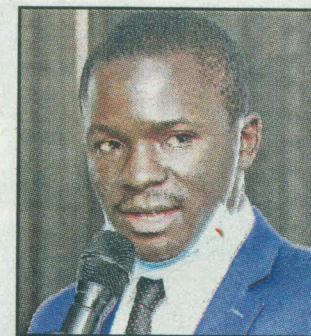
pathways to university and now, we have four, including HEC," she said.

The other three university entry pathways are direct entry, diploma holders and mature entry.

She made the remarks during

a conference with stakeholders on the HEC programme in Uganda, yesterday.

It was designed by NCHE in partnership with Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) and the MasterCard Foundation.



**Edison Masereka**

According to Okwakol, the HEC is intended to increase higher education enrolment.

At the moment, NCHE says, enrolment in higher education institutions has increased from under 10,000 in 1986 to over 259,000 students.

Despite this numerical growth, Okwakol says the gross enrolment ratio remains relatively low, at just 6.8% compared to 9% in the East Africa, 15% Africa and 25% globally.

At the same function, Ketty Lamaro, the education ministry permanent secretary, said HEC will be used as a bridge and access option to higher education in the country.

"I am aware that until, recently, university access programmes have only benefited persons who obtained qualifications from outside Uganda, but without a Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education or its equivalent," she said.

According to Lamaro, this meant that the initial policy guidelines on university access or bridging programmes were designed to support foreign students or those who obtained qualifications from elsewhere.

She said this was unfair to our learners.