

Nawangwe directs CHUSS units to admit all qualifying PhDs

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University, has issued a directive to academic units to admit all qualifying PhD candidates, arguing that scaling up doctoral training is the only way to move the African continent out of poverty.

The Vice Chancellor and his delegation were on a tour to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) to assess the status of graduate training and research. Speaking to the leadership and staff of CHUSS, Prof. Nawangwe highlighted a gap in Africa's human resource capacity, noting that while the World Bank estimates the continent needs one million PhDs in the next 10 years to transform its economy, the current output is insufficient, Africa currently produces fewer than 40,000 PhDs annually, far below the required 100,000 per year.

"Any PhD [candidate] you send away, you are doing a disservice to Africa," Prof. Nawangwe stated, urging faculty not to turn away qualified applicants despite perceived constraints in staffing or space.

Nawangwe drew a contrast between Uganda's research output and that of global leaders like South Korea. He noted that while Uganda currently has a total of approximately 2,500 PhDs, South Korea produces 12,900 PhDs every year and maintains a total pool of 650,000.

"South Korea produces four times more PhDs every year than we have as a total, as a country," Nawangwe said, attributing South Korea's rapid economic rise and innovation including its status as a top shipbuilder and oil exporter despite lacking domestic crude to its investment in high-level human capital.

Nawangwe recognized Makerere's rising research profile despite historical challenges, noting that the university has emerged as a research powerhouse. The institution now brings in more than \$250 million annually through research grants, surpassing the University of Cape Town in this metric.

“With a total budget exceeding \$400 million, Makerere's financial resources are now larger than the national budgets of 18 different countries, including Burundi and Eritrea. The

university is also recognized by *Times Higher Education* as the most collaborative university in the world, with its researchers publishing with international peers more than any other institution.”

To address the challenges of increased enrolment, Nawangwe pointed to new infrastructure developments, specifically a new \$8 million graduate and research building. Donated by a philanthropist of Indian origin, the facility will provide specialized rooms for PhD and post-doc students.

Regarding supervision, the Vice Chancellor encouraged the faculty to utilize interdisciplinary supervision and international collaborations. He noted that many partner universities abroad are willing to support PhD supervision at no cost. He also suggested that master's students and graduate fellows be utilized to support teaching loads to free up senior professors for doctoral supervision.

"We have the capacity to double the number of PhDs," Nawangwe asserted, noting that Makerere's student-to-staff ratio remains above the global average. He concluded by emphasizing the need to mentor the next generation of early-career researchers to ensure the sustainability of the university's recent gains.

College seeks resolutions on Biometrics and Contract Terms.

The Principal, Assoc. Prof. Hellen Nambalirwa Nkabala appealed to the Vice Chancellor to address concerns over the biometric attendance system, arguing that it fails to account for weekend teaching hours and is affecting staff promotions. She noted that many lecturers teach on Saturdays and Sundays due to limited classroom space during the week.

Nkabala said the college had developed a proposal on workload distribution, recommending that teaching account for 30 percent of staff responsibilities, research and supervision 55 percent, and community service 15 percent. She added that the college was prepared to submit a formal position paper to university management for consideration.

“We are requesting that our staff who are not Ugandan, but are critical to the college, be given four-year contracts or even permanent appointments,” Nkabala said, citing the case of the college's only Museum Studies specialist, who is currently employed on a two-year contract.

She also acknowledged the Vice Chancellor's support in addressing some welfare concerns raised by staff.

School of Languages showcases progress in enrolment and partnerships

The Dean of the School of Languages, Literature and Communication, Assoc. Prof. Saudah Namyalo, highlighted the school's achievements, ongoing academic expansion, and the obstacles threatening the quality and sustainability of postgraduate education.

Prof. Namyalo said the school comprises five academic departments, including African Languages, Linguistics and Communication Skills, Literature, and European and Oriental Languages, offering instruction in both indigenous and international languages such as Luganda, Kiswahili, Runyakitara, Lusoga, Ateso, Chinese, Spanish, French, German, and Arabic.

She noted that the school's Centre for Language and Communication Services has become the government's recognized institution for translation and interpretation services while also providing short professional courses in languages and communication skills. Currently, the centre hosts approximately 600 students from 16 countries studying English language programmes.

As part of efforts to strengthen academic offerings and international relevance, the school has proposed the establishment of new centres, including the Centre for Arabic Studies and the Centre for Kiswahili Studies, while plans for Centres for African Studies and Chinese Studies are also in advanced stages.

The school currently offers two undergraduate programmes and six master's programmes, with three additional master's programmes in Luganda, Runyakitara and Kiswahili already approved by Senate and expected to be launched in the 2027/2028 academic year.

"We developed these programmes as a way of promoting our indigenous languages. We felt that combining them under one programme limited their growth and development," Prof. Namyalo explained.

The Dean emphasized the school's central role in teaching languages and communication courses across the university, serving multiple colleges and academic units.

The school currently has 61 PhD students and 282 master's students enrolled, with projections indicating that the numbers will rise to approximately 75 PhD candidates and more than 317 master's students following the latest admissions cycle.

The school has also built strong international partnerships with universities and institutions in China, Germany, Austria, Israel, South Korea and Russia. These collaborations have facilitated staff development, student supervision, language instruction and academic exchanges.

However, graduate training continues to face major funding constraints. Prof. Namyalo disclosed that only a small fraction of PhD students receive sponsorship, while the majority are self-funded and struggle to meet research, data collection and conference participation costs.

"Many of our students complete their PhD journey without ever attending an international conference, which limits their exposure to global academic debates and networks," she noted.

Other interconnected challenges, include difficulties in accessing research grants for fieldwork and international conferences, a shortage of senior academic staff to supervise the growing number of graduate students, limited mentorship capacity in highly specialized fields, the absence of qualified supervisors in some disciplines, inadequate research infrastructure such as updated library resources, specialized software and academic journals, as well as limited international exposure for students.

She further observed that heavy teaching, supervision and administrative workloads are placing significant pressure on academic staff, while concerns have also been raised regarding administrative requirements such as biometric attendance systems, which some staff believe do not adequately reflect academic productivity and scholarly contributions.

The Dean called for greater investment in postgraduate education, staff development, research infrastructure and international partnerships to ensure the school continues producing highly skilled researchers, language experts and communication professionals capable of contributing to national and global development.

School of Social Sciences seeks independent status to unlock growth and expand academic impact

The Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Dr. Justus Twesigye, said the school's historical significance, expanding academic portfolio, and growing partnerships position it for a more independent administrative structure.

Dr. Twesigye noted that the School of Social Sciences has played a foundational role in Makerere University's growth, having given rise to several key academic units, including the School of Law, the College of Business and Management Sciences, the School of Psychology, the Institute of Gender and Development Studies, and Makerere University Business School.

"Given our enormous capacity and potential, independent status would enable us to organize better, make decisions more efficiently, and serve the university and society more effectively," he said.

The school currently comprises three departments Political Science and Public Administration, Social Work and Social Administration, and Sociology and Anthropology and offers some of the university's most sought-after academic programmes.

At the graduate level, the school runs programmes in Social Work, Sociology, Public Administration and Management, International Relations and Diplomacy, Defence and Security Studies, and Security Strategy. It is also developing new programmes, including a Master of Arts in Anthropology and a Master of Humanitarian Action, Health and Displacement, to address emerging global and regional challenges.

According to Dr. Twesigye, demand for the school's programmes continues to grow. Recent admissions attracted more than 300 applications for graduate studies, while the school graduated 110 master's students and eight PhD candidates during the latest graduation ceremony.

The Dean emphasized that the school's influence extends beyond traditional academic training through strategic collaborations with government institutions and international universities. Notable partnerships include joint programmes with the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs at the National Defence College Uganda, the Senior Command and Staff College in Kimaka, and the Uganda Military Academy.

The school has also expanded its international reach through collaborations with universities in Portugal, Norway, Greece, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Belgium, and Germany, promoting research, staff and student exchanges, and internationalization of academic programmes.

In a further boost to its research and policy engagement agenda, the school recently launched the Great Lakes Centre for the Study of the United States, creating additional opportunities for scholarly collaboration and policy dialogue.

While highlighting these achievements, Dr. Twesigye noted that the school's rapid growth has intensified the need for enhanced institutional support. He pointed to increasing student enrolment, limited teaching space, staffing constraints, growing supervision demands, and the need for expanded research and learning infrastructure as key areas requiring attention.

The Dean observed that despite operating some of the university's largest programmes, the school currently relies on a relatively small academic staff to supervise graduate students, conduct research, and deliver teaching across a broad range of disciplines. He also highlighted the need for additional classroom facilities and improved support for early-career academics pursuing doctoral studies.

Dr. Twesigye argued that granting the School of Social Sciences greater autonomy would strengthen its ability to attract resources, improve service delivery, expand academic programmes, and respond more effectively to emerging societal needs.

"We are extremely talented and have enormous potential. With the right support and institutional framework, we can contribute even more to the university's mission and to national development," he said.

School of Psychology calls for modern facilities and specialized training laboratory to strengthen mental health services and research

The Dean of the School of Psychology, Dr. Martin Baluku, said the school's expanding academic programmes, community outreach initiatives, and growing student population require modern facilities that match its strategic role in advancing mental health, wellbeing, and human development.

Dr. Baluku traced the school's evolution from a psychology course housed within the Department of Psychiatry in the 1950s to its current status as an independent school established under Makerere University's collegiate system in 2011. Today, the school comprises the Department of Educational, Social and Organisational Psychology and the Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology.

The Dean also revealed plans to re-establish the Centre for Psychological Services to coordinate the school's growing community engagement and mental health interventions. The centre would provide an institutional framework for rapid psychological response during emergencies and traumatic events, building on the work already undertaken by staff members in communities affected by crises.

"We need a coordinated structure through which the university can respond to communities facing trauma and psychosocial challenges. Our staff are already providing these services, but largely as individuals rather than through an institutional mechanism," Dr. Baluku explained.

The School of Psychology currently offers a Bachelor of Applied Psychology programme with 480 students, alongside graduate programmes in Clinical Psychology, Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Organisational Psychology. The school also supervises 52 PhD students and continues to attract growing numbers of applicants for postgraduate study.

In addition to academic training, the school plays a significant role in supporting student wellbeing across the university. Through its counselling initiatives, student counsellors attached to halls of residence and hostels provide psychosocial support to hundreds of students annually.

The school's academic and research activities are further strengthened through collaborations with local and international partners, including Ohio University in the United States, the Federation of Uganda Employers, the International Youth Fellowship, and several professional and training institutions that support research, student training, and curriculum development.

Despite these achievements, Dr. Baluku noted that the school's infrastructure has not kept pace with its growth and expanding mandate. The school currently operates from aging buildings constructed nearly a century ago, with limited office space, inadequate classrooms, and facilities that require continuous maintenance.

He emphasized the need for modern structures that can accommodate teaching, research, student support services, and community engagement activities. Particular attention was drawn to the absence of specialized facilities required for professional psychology training.

According to Dr. Baluku, the school lacks dedicated therapy training laboratories and practical learning spaces equipped for specialized interventions such as child therapy, counselling simulations, psychological assessment, and advanced clinical skills development. The absence of such facilities limits opportunities for experiential learning and professional preparation for students pursuing careers in mental health and psychological services.

The Dean further highlighted the need for dedicated counselling and consultation spaces to support confidential mental health services for students and members of the public. He noted that some counselling services are currently conducted in temporary or open environments that are not ideally suited for sensitive psychological interventions.

Beyond infrastructure needs, the school continues to face challenges related to staffing capacity, graduate supervision, accessibility facilities for students with disabilities, and increasing demand for psychology courses across multiple academic units. The school's relatively small academic staff complement supports not only its own programmes but also psychology teaching in other colleges and schools across the university.

Dr. Baluku also called for measures to strengthen international student recruitment by introducing earlier admission processes for international applicants, enabling them to complete visa and travel arrangements in time for enrolment.

As demand for mental health services, psychological research, and professional training continues to grow, the School of Psychology believes that investment in modern infrastructure, specialized laboratories, and coordinated service centres will significantly enhance its capacity to train future psychologists, support communities, and contribute to national development.

School of Liberal and Performing Arts seeks enhanced staffing, space and research infrastructure to sustain growing graduate training and global partnerships

The school, represented by Dr. Charlotte Mafumbo, highlighted both its academic achievements and the strategic investments required to sustain its expanding teaching, research and community engagement mandate.

The school comprises four departments: History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies; Performing Arts and Film; Philosophy; and Religion and Peace Studies. These units collectively offer a wide range of academic programmes that include four PhD programmes and seven master's degree programmes, alongside undergraduate teaching that serves large student cohorts across the university.

Dr. Mafumbo noted that the school continues to experience strong demand for its programmes, with 41 PhD candidates and 84 master's students currently enrolled, in addition to large undergraduate classes drawn from multiple university units, with enrolment in some courses ranging between 300 and 600 students.

She further observed that the school is increasingly grappling with student progression challenges, particularly among graduate students who face financial and resource constraints that delay completion of their studies. This, she said, calls for structured interventions to improve completion rates and academic support systems.

Despite these challenges, the school has significantly expanded its research output and international collaborations. It has benefited from major partnerships and funding initiatives, including support from the Gerda Henkel Foundation, which has enabled the admission of PhD scholars, and a recent collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation and the University of Cambridge, which secured research grants for master's students working in refugee-hosting communities.

The school also maintains active Erasmus+ collaborations with several international universities, including institutions in France, Italy, Portugal, South Africa, and Central Europe, supporting staff and student exchanges, joint research, and academic writing workshops. Notably, the University of Johannesburg partnership has continued to provide fully funded writing workshops and academic development opportunities for PhD candidates and staff.

Dr. Mafumbo highlighted additional research and creative achievements across departments, including performing arts productions, philosophical research projects supported by RIF funding, and peacebuilding initiatives under Religion and Peace Studies. These include programmes on alternative dispute resolution, community policing, and religious dialogue in refugee and host communities, as well as training for the Senior Staff College of the Police in Bwebajja.

The school has also recorded notable public impact through artistic and scholarly outputs, including award-winning work in visual arts and creative performance, community theatre productions addressing land and heritage issues, and research contributions in cultural studies and social transformation.

However, Dr. Mafumbo emphasized that these achievements are increasingly constrained by limited academic staffing and inadequate infrastructure. The school currently operates with only two full professors and two associate professors, despite managing a growing cohort of PhD students and supervising large numbers of postgraduate and undergraduate learners.

She noted that the heavy workload on academic staff significantly limits time for research, publication, and academic progression, calling for affirmative action to strengthen staffing at senior levels and support early-career academics.

“With the current staffing levels, our PhD lecturers are carrying teaching and supervision loads that leave very little time for their own research and academic growth,” Dr. Mafumbo said.

The school also raised concerns over inadequate office space, limited graduate study facilities, and shortages of essential equipment such as computers and functional printers, which continue to affect teaching, research productivity, and student learning environments.

Dr. Mafumbo further pointed to the need for dedicated spaces for graduate students, including reading rooms and collaborative research areas, noting that the school is attracting an increasingly diverse student population, including regional and international scholars.

Despite these challenges, the school expressed appreciation for ongoing institutional support and emerging initiatives aimed at strengthening its infrastructure and academic environment, including proposed collaborations to develop a university museum in partnership with the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies and the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT).

“We are increasingly attracting regional and international students, and this growth requires us to rethink our infrastructure, especially spaces for reading, collaboration, and research,” Dr. Mafumbo added.

Institute of Gender and Development Studies calls for completion of building and clarification of institutional structure to strengthen academic delivery

The Acting Director of the Institute, Assoc. Prof. Ruth Nsibirano, highlighted two interlinked priorities, finalisation of the Institute's physical infrastructure and resolution of ongoing uncertainties regarding its administrative and academic placement within the university system.

Prof. Nsibirano noted that while the Institute continues to deliver core academic programmes in Gender Studies and Development Studies, alongside cross-cutting university-wide courses, its operations are constrained by unresolved structural questions that affect decision-making processes such as supervision appointments, examination coordination, and programme management.

She observed that the Institute's transitional positioning between different administrative structures has created recurring ambiguity about its reporting lines, despite its continued contribution to teaching and graduate training across the university.

"We keep moving back and forth. We are not sure when we operate as an independent institute and when we fall under the college structure. This lack of clarity affects our academic coordination and efficiency," Prof. Nsibirano said.

The Institute currently comprises two academic departments, Development Studies and Gender Studies and a centre responsible for delivering cross-cutting courses including Development Studies, Gender Studies, Communication Skills, and Political Economy. These programmes serve students across multiple colleges, making the Institute a key provider of interdisciplinary training within the university.

Prof. Nsibirano emphasized that despite high student demand and expanding programme offerings including new postgraduate programmes in Development Management and Practice, Humanitarian Response, and Gender and Agricultural Development, the Institute's effectiveness is limited by inadequate infrastructure.

She raised concern over the prolonged delay in completing the Institute's building, which has been under renovation for several years. The incomplete structure has significantly affected

office space, lecture facilities, graduate study areas, and access to essential academic resources such as library services.

“Our building remains unfinished, yet it is central to our teaching, research, and student support activities. This has continued to constrain how effectively we deliver on our mandate,” she noted.

The Institute also highlighted its growing role in graduate training, supervising PhD and master’s students drawn from Uganda and the wider region. However, Prof. Nsibirano pointed out that the lack of adequate space and facilities undermines the learning experience and limits opportunities for effective academic engagement.

She further explained that the Institute’s cross-cutting teaching responsibilities across the university have increased its workload, particularly in delivering courses in development studies, gender studies, and related disciplines to large student populations in other colleges.

While acknowledging ongoing collaborations with international partners and donor-supported projects that have strengthened research and postgraduate training, she stressed that infrastructural gaps continue to limit the full impact of these initiatives.

Prof. Nsibirano called for urgent completion of the Institute’s building and a clear resolution of its institutional status to improve coordination, enhance service delivery, and strengthen academic planning.

She added that addressing both structural clarity and infrastructure development would significantly improve the Institute’s capacity to deliver quality teaching, support graduate training, and expand its contribution to gender-responsive development and policy-relevant research.

New Policy changes and initiatives towards research-led Agenda

Makerere Innovation Centre pushes stronger IP protection and commercialisation of research outputs

Dr. Margaret Nagwovuma said the centre exists to ensure that innovations generated by staff, students, and communities are protected and transformed into viable products and enterprises.

“Please look up for the IP policy of Makerere, you come to us, we register you, after that, look up for what can be commercialized,” she said.

She revealed that the centre is currently handling 15 commercialisation projects and continues to support innovations ranging from health technologies to gender-responsive safety tools, including medical syrups under clinical trials, mosquito repellents, and assistive devices.

Dr. Nagwovuma emphasized that innovation at the university extends beyond physical products, noting that even social science outputs such as psychological tools, theories, and creative works can be patented.

She further urged researchers to leverage institutional support structures, including partnerships with URSB and URA, to accelerate commercialization and protect intellectual property.

Graduate training reforms introduce structured PhD system and digital research tracking

Assoc. Prof. Julius Kikooma said the university is targeting an increase in graduate enrolment to 40 percent, up from the current levels in the early 20s, through improved policy frameworks and streamlined processes.

A major reform is the introduction of a structured, cohort-based PhD by research programme designed to improve supervision, clarity of milestones, and timely completion.

“We now run the PhD by research as a structured cohort-based programme,” Prof. Kikooma said, noting that the model enhances organisation and completion rates.

He also announced the rollout of the Research Information Management System (RIMS), which tracks all stages of graduate research including proposals, supervision, fieldwork, and completion.

“Every staff who supervises a graduate student must have an account in RIMS,” he emphasized.

The directorate is also developing a supervision and mentorship curriculum and expanding funding support through PhD completion grants and early-career research programmes. An AI-based PhD initiative is also being developed under an international consortium of universities.

Makerere Writing Centre expands training in academic writing, grantsmanship and ethical AI use

Prof. Fredrick Muyodi, Chair of the Writing Centre, said the facility is designed to build capacity in academic writing, grant proposal development, and research communication across all disciplines.

“The major goal of the Writing Centre is to empower academic communities in writing, publishing, and research productivity,” he said.

The centre has conducted training in manuscript writing, grant writing, policy brief development, and AI-assisted academic writing, alongside development of a Minute Writing Toolkit for administrative efficiency.

Prof. Muyodi stressed that AI must be used responsibly in academic work, warning against misuse while encouraging ethical integration into teaching and research.

He said the centre, located in the Main Library, also provides mentorship spaces for researchers and graduate students and is expanding peer support systems across colleges

Makerere University Press calls for establishment of departmental journals to boost local publishing

Andrew Mwesigwa, speaking for the Press on behalf of Assoc. Prof. William Tayeebwa, said most departments across the university already have the capacity to host credible academic journals but continue to rely heavily on external publications.

“Potentially, every department in CHUSS has a journal,” he said, urging faculties to build institutional publishing platforms.

He noted that Makerere University Press now provides full publishing infrastructure, including ISSN registration, DOI assignment, and digital journal hosting systems to support indexing and global visibility.

Mwesigwa further encouraged departments to establish strong editorial boards and adopt consistent publication schedules, adding that sustained output is key to achieving international journal indexing standards.

Management addresses staff concerns on graduate training, workload, promotions and research systems.

Key concerns included inefficiencies in biometric attendance systems, heavy graduate supervision workloads, lack of recognition for examiners, inconsistencies in promotion decisions, tuition waiver challenges, graduate tracking gaps, and delays in system integration across university platforms.

The Vice Chancellor's delegation acknowledged concerns and confirmed that the university is working on integrating biometrics with systems such as RIMS and other institutional platforms to ensure comprehensive workload tracking, including supervision and research activities.

They noted that a Senate committee is reviewing workload analysis to guide fairer recognition and compensation structures, including potential future payment mechanisms for supervision and examination duties.

On promotions, management emphasized strict adherence to university policy and assured staff that any inconsistencies would be reviewed through appropriate governance channels.

Regarding graduate admissions and cohort issues, they clarified that students admitted mid-cycle can be accommodated through structured academic planning, provided proper documentation is submitted through departmental and board processes.

On tuition waivers, the delegation acknowledged concerns and indicated that policy reviews would consider staff who combine teaching and doctoral studies.

They also reaffirmed that the university council has approved flexible working arrangements up to 10:00 pm, including weekend teaching schedules, to support academic delivery needs.

Finally, management emphasized that ongoing reforms—including system integration, research commercialization, and graduate training restructuring—are intended to enhance efficiency, transparency, and academic productivity.

Compiled and Written by Jane Anyango, Andrew Twahirwa and Peninah Nalubega.

Photo credit: Peninah Nalubega and Andrew Twahirwa