



# Addressing Challenges in Student Recruitment and Retention: UCU's Experience

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# Major Catchment Area for Universities

- ❑ UACE Leavers: Our major applicants
- ❑ Diploma Holders & Mature Age entrants:  
Upgrading to degree level
- ❑ International applicants
- ❑ Postgraduate applicants



# UACE Registered Students

## Registered students: 2022 and 2023

- ❑ UACE candidates (2022): 97,890
- ❑ UACE candidates (2023): 110,553 (12.9% increase) from 2022).

## Gender parity

- ❑ Male (2023): 53,339 or 57.3%
- ❑ Female (2023): 47,226 or 42.7%

*Source: UNEB, 2024*

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# Candidates that sat UACE

□ 2022: 96,557 candidates

□ 2023: 109,488 candidates

13.4% increase.

*Source: UNEB, 2024*



# UACE Candidates by Gender (2023)

- Males: 62,628 (57.2%)
- Females: 46,860 (42.8%)

*Source: UNEB, 2024*



# UACE: Who Qualifies for Admission?

- ❑ Minimum requirement for admission is 2PP
- ❑ Candidates that obtained 2PP and above: **73.3%** (2023), compared to **70.3%** (2022).
- ❑ Candidates with 3PP: **47.9%** (2023) and **43.5%** (2022).



# UACE: Who Qualifies...?

## Candidates qualifying for university admission by numbers (2023 and 2022)

- ❑ 2023: 80,643 candidates
- ❑ 2022: 67,815 candidates

*Source: UNEB, 2024*



# Competition for UACE Applicants

❑ Total number of Universities in Uganda: 59

❑ Public Universities: 10

*(Busitema, Gulu, Kabale, Kyambogo, Lira, Makerere, Mbarara, Mountains of the Moon, Muni and Soroti).*

❑ University with a separate Act of Parliament: 01  
*(Islamic University in Uganda).*

❑ Chartered Private Universities: 15

*Source: NCHE, 2024*





# Private Chartered Universities (15)

- UCU*
- UMU*
- Nkumba*
- KIU*
- KU*
- Ndejje*
- Bugema*
- BSU*
- Victoria*
- ISBAT*
- ABU*
- AfRU*
- IUEA*
- Kisubi*
- Mutesa I.*



# Private Universities with a Provisional Licence (33)

- African Rural*
- Aga Khan*
- All Saints*
- Ankole Western*
- Apex*
- Avance*
- Cavendish*
- Clarke*
- Ebenezer*
- Equator*
- Fins*
- Great Lakes*
- Islamic Call*
- Ibanda*
- King Ceaser*



# Provisional Licence...

- Kumi*
- Limkokwing*
- Livingstone*
- Metropolitan*
- Nexus*
- Nile*
- Rwenzori*
- St. Lawrence*
- St. Peters*
- Team*
- St. Joseph*
- Sacred Heart*
- Valley*
- St. Ignatius*
- Uganda Pentecostal*
- Unicaf [Closing]*



# Other Degree Awarding Institutions (ODIs)

**Public: 01**

- ❑ *Uganda Management Institute*

**Private: 22**

- ❑ *YMCA Comprehensive Institute*
- ❑ *21 other institutes*



# Implications for Student Enrollment and Retention

1. Students have a myriad of choices: Many institutions are competing for limited national candidates.

- ❑ Candidates qualifying for university admission (2023) are 80,643 vs. 81 Universities & ODIs

**Assuming equal sharing**  
**UACE candidate ratio to institutions**  
**= 1: 996 students**

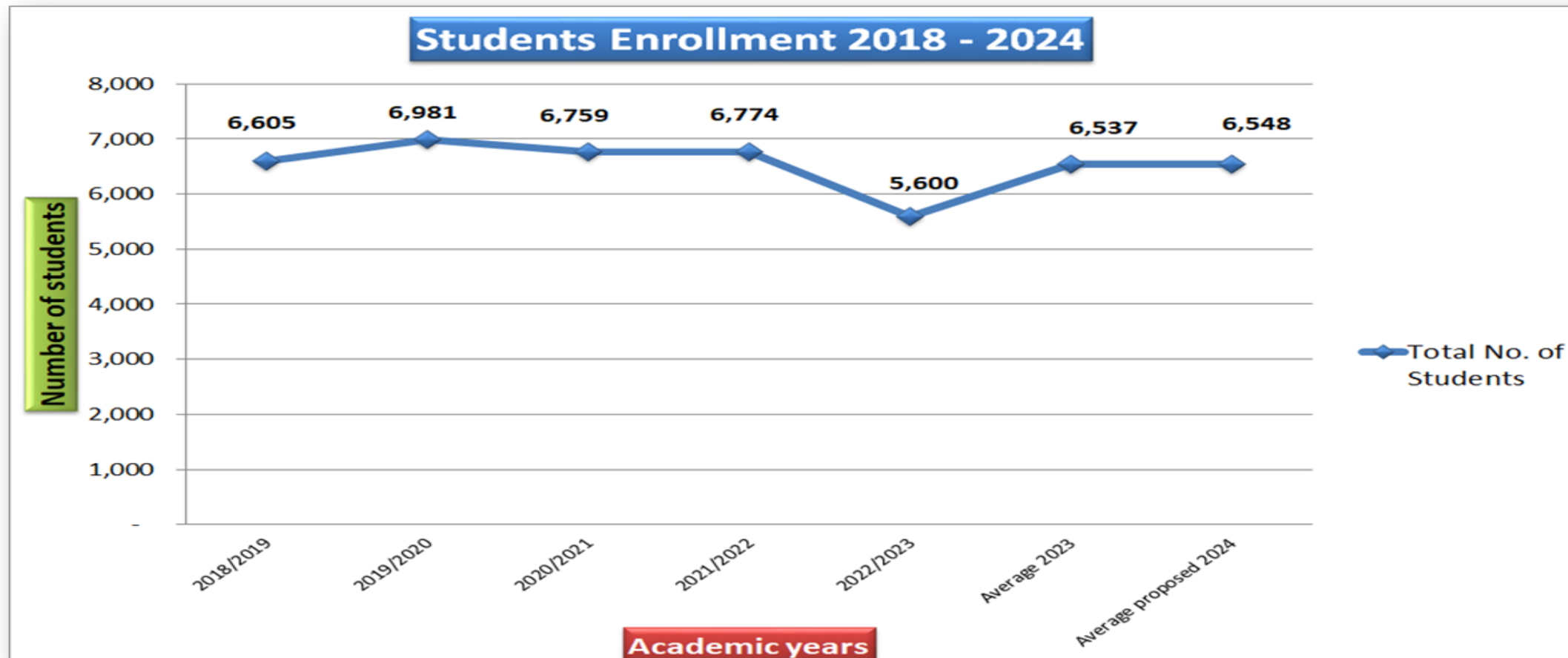


## Implications for enrollment & retention...

- ❑ In the USA, they forecast that by 2026, the number of candidates available for university admission will start dwindling.
- ❑ In Europe, many Universities are undergoing mergers or have closed due to dwindling enrollment numbers of national applicants.



# UCU Enrollment trend for Main Campus



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# UCU Current Enrollment (Jan. 2024)

□ Mukono & Kampala	=	10,353
□ Mbale UC	=	3,065
□ BBUC	=	1,528
□ Arua Campus	=	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	=	<b>15,546</b>





## Implications for enrollment and retention...

2. High costs of training at university level = high tuition and other fees = low enrollment and retention rates

- Have you studied your university admission vs. enrolment numbers? (UCU: About 6 out of 10 admitted students register, on average).
- How many students who register pay 100%? (UCU: About 90-95% of students pay to zero balance)



# Implications for enrollment and retention...

## 3. Tuition costs and infrastructure affects our student enrollment and retention.

- ❑ Big debate: Unit cost of training a university student - Do we charge less just to attract numbers?
- ❑ UCU: Housing stock in Mukono and Kampala is **2,778** against student enrollment of **6,537** students (2023).
- ❑ Much of the housing stock is provided by private hostel owners, whom we work with through Hostel Owners Associations to ensure quality service for students.
- ❑ On campus hosting is the first choice for parents.



## Implications for enrollment and retention...

### 4. Is our internationalization agenda helping to attract alternative enrollment of foreign students?

- Collaborations bring international scholars and students.
- UCU international student numbers:
  - September 2023 semester: **290 from 27 countries.**
  - January 2024 semester: **272 from 28 countries.**
- Customer care and special support services to students. International students have special needs.



## Implications for enrollment and retention...

### 5. Capitalize on our niche market in our marketing campaigns

- What is your university's niche market?
- What is UCU niche market?
- What are you doing to cultivate good relations with your key stakeholders?



## Implications for enrollment and retention...

### 6. Bridging the classroom and industry experiences: Professionalisation and skilling

- ❑ UCU has collaborations with professional accounting bodies which give students waivers
- ❑ Internship and industrial training



## Implications for enrollment and retention...

7. Character formation and soft skills through extra-curricular programmes.

8. Promoting research and innovation even at undergraduate level challenges students to engage their intellectual curiosity to create solutions.



# In Summary

1. Student enrollment and retention is greatly affected by a crowded HEI sector in Uganda.
2. NCHE: It is counterproductive to continue licencing new universities and ODIs in an already crowded market.
3. Good infrastructure is key if we are to attract international students to supplement our enrollment.
4. Internationalisation and research collaboration are key in boosting enrollment and retention.
5. The way we treat students on our Campuses matters.
6. Periodical self assessment (UCU had one in 2020-2021).



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