



Makerere awards 236 first class degrees

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A total of 236 students out of 13,296 are to graduate with first class degrees from Makerere University this week. This is almost 1% of the total number of graduands.

It is the highest number of first-class degrees recorded in the history of the country's leading public university, according to records from the academic registrar's office.

There were 220 and 180 first-class degrees in 2010 and 2009 respectively. This means 16 more students have scored first-class degrees compared to last year.

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A first class honours degree is the highest class of degree awarded at undergraduate and post-graduate level. It indicates outstanding academic achievement and ability.

Academic performance at Makerere University has improved over the past five years, with more students getting first class degrees.

This year, more first class degrees were recorded in science courses than in the arts.

Those done best were in computer science with 26 degrees, civil engineering with 10, mechanical engineering with 10 degrees and agribusiness management with nine degrees.

The number of male graduands who excelled exceeded that of the females this year. Out of the 236 students who scored first class degrees, only 94 or 39% were females.

According to statistics from the university, it was only in 2007 when more females got first class degrees than males.

Out of the 56 first class degrees recorded, 30 were scored by females.

This year's overall best two graduands were girls. Barbara Nansamba emerged the best with a cumulative grade point average (CPGA) of 4.9 in computer science.

Nansamba, who comes from Bamunanika in Luweero district, told New Vision that she wasn't surprised since she had always been the best in class from first year.

Nansamba attributed her excellence to hard work and determination.

"Being the first born in the family and raised by a single mother, I knew I had to work twice as hard to excel and set the best example for my siblings," Nansamba said.

She said she had applied for a master's degree in the US and expected to return and lecture at Makerere.

Nansamba was followed by Barbara Nakacwa Wamala, who scored a CPGA of 4.89, also in computer science.

The best male, Julius Ssemenda, came third with a CPGA of 4.83 in quantity surveying.

Ritah Namisango, Makerere University's senior spokesperson, attributed the increase in the number of first class degrees to the wider integration of information technology in the institution's operations.

"Unlike in the past, students can register and conduct a lot of other activities online. This saves time.

"They, for instance, no longer queue for long hours to get books in the library. All one needs to do is search for electronic journals and other library materials online," she explained.

Namisango, however, noted that as unemployment increases in the country, education has become more competitive, making students work harder.

"Until recently, graduating meant getting employed automatically. Our students know that to compete favourably in today's stiff job market, one has to concentrate, understand what is taught and perform well," she said.

Meanwhile, Namisango said the graduation ceremony, which will run from today to Friday, will be held at the university's freedom square. The ceremony will start at 9:00am each day.

Graduands and their guests are prohibited from carrying mobile phones, alcohol and packed food and drinks to the venue.

Firearms, large bags, cameras and pocket radios are also banned for security reasons.

Established in 1922 as a technical school, Makerere University is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Africa and is ranked among the best on the continent.

This article can be found on-line at: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/743929>

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