

What makes a university

By Andrew Masibde

Joining a university is an opportunity that many seek eagerly. Consequently, one has to carry out a lot of research to get a university that will offer them quality education. Prof. Emmanuel Nawangwe, the vice-chancellor of Makerere University, says a degree is a huge financial investment and prepares one for the world of work.

"The seriousness you pay while making the best choice of a university or course, always counts in future," he says. He notes that many people face challenges when choosing the right university. "This is because there are hundreds of universities to choose from," Prof. Nawangwe says.

Though deciding where to study looks to many like a huge task, Prof. Nawangwe says it becomes easier if you have a clear idea of what makes a good university. One of the qualities to consider when choosing a university is the quality of staff, according to Prof. Nawangwe. He notes that the university is not about teaching alone. The university should have the capacity to conduct research. He also says a good university should have appropriate facilities.

The university should have space for co-curricular activities to help students exploit talents among others, he adds. "If the university does not have these, look for another, lest you get disappointed at the end of your academic journey," he says. Emmanuel Almazua Akiki, a teacher educator and IT professional, says a number of universities are always advertised on many platforms. However, before one zeros down on one of them, it is mandatory that one visits their websites to find out what various universities offer.

He says it is wrong to only consider ranking as the key indicator of a good university. There is more to look out for when choosing a university besides rankings which always focus on published work online. Filter universities according to your needs. Look at the convenient location and the course that you want to pursue, Akiki says. Akiki adds that before you look for the university, ask yourself what you desire to get out of your post-secondary experiences.

Some might want to have less of research opportunities, library resources and courses in a particular discipline, while another might prefer courses. "Does that university offer these opportunities? This question can be answered after carrying out ground work early enough," he says. Joshua Oculu, the director of Youth Sports Uganda, advises that one should take time to visit various universities to see how they operate. He says this will help one decide at times the parents, make a decision based on what they have observed. "Travel to the university if

What a good university should have

ITEM	GOOD	CAN BE IMPROVED	UNACCEPTABLE
1. LAND FOR CAMPUS URBAN	10-30 acres	3-10 acres	Less than 3 acres
2. LAND RURAL	50 or over	30-50 acres	Less than 10 acres
3. GOVERNANCE	In control of policies	Operational	To be elected
(i) Present course	Supervision of academic policy	Monthly visits	Meets with staff and students
(ii) Administration	Appointed legally by council	Prospects administrative structures	Staff and student unions consulted
(iii) Staff and Student Unions	Staff and student unions involved fully	Staff and student unions consulted	Staff and student unions absent
4. INFRASTRUCTURE	2.50 sqm per 1 student	2 sqm per 1 student	1 sqm per 1 student
(i) Classroom space	2.5 sqm per 1 student	2 sqm per 1 student	1 sqm per 1 student
(ii) Library space	3 sqm per 1 student	2.5 sqm per 1 student	1 sqm per 1 student
(iii) Science laboratories	3 sqm per 1 student	2.5 sqm per 1 student	1 sqm per 1 student
(iv) Computer laboratory	3 sqm per 1 student	2.5 sqm per 1 student	1 sqm per 1 student
(v) Administrative staff	5 sqm per 1 staff	4 sqm per 1 staff	3 sqm per 1 staff
(vi) Academic staff	5 sqm per 1 staff	4 sqm per 1 staff	3 sqm per 1 staff
(vii) Sports field	1 field for 500 registered students	1 field for 1000 students	1 field for 2000 students
(viii) Facilities For Disabled	All buildings	All classrooms	Only in a few
(ix) Newsvin Class, Showering	1 field for each sport for 1000 students	1 field for each sport for 1000 students	1 field for each sport for 1000 students
(x) Health, Bath, Hot water and Cold water	1 field for 500 registered students	1 field for 1000 registered students	1 field for 2000 registered students
(xi) Conference Hall	One for 500 registered students	One for 750 registered students	One for 1000 registered students
(xii) Student union offices	20 sqm per 100 registered students	20 sqm per 100 registered students	20 sqm per 100 registered students
5. ACADEMIC STAFF			
(i) International Ratio	1:15	1:20	1:25
(ii) Professional experience	1:10	1:15	1:20
(iii) Medicine, Veterinary	1:10	1:15	1:20
(iv) Nursing, Dental	1:10	1:15	1:20
(v) Science-based	1:10	1:15	1:20
(vi) Other professions	1:10	1:15	1:20
(vii) Qualifications (Staff Dev)	80% of staff	70% of staff	60% of staff
(viii) PhD holders	70% or more staff	60% of staff	50% of staff
(ix) Contact hours For Academic Staff	10 hrs/week	8hrs/week	6hrs/week
(x) Percentage of Part Timers (Research and diversity)	30% of staff	20% of staff	10% of staff
6. RESEARCH FACILITIES			
Students library book ratio	1 computer / 1 student	1:30	1:50
Access to Internet	1:2000 access	1:1000	1:500
7. FINANCIAL HEALTH			
Percentage of budget received	100%	80%	70%
Percentage of total cost recovered	100%	80%	70%
Proportion of budget spent on salaries	50%	60%	70%
Percentage of income derived from fees	25-30% of budget	40%	50%
8. FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED	All facilities available	Most of the facilities in place	Facilities are being put in place
9. GENDER SENSITIVITY	Comprehensive affirmative action strategies	70% of the facilities in place	Facilities are being put in place
10. STRATEGIC PLAN	Being implemented	Has been approved by university council	Being drafted
11. RESEARCH PROJECTS BY STAFF	Over 10 books a year	5-10 books a year	1-4 books a year
12. RESEARCH PROJECTS BY STAFF	Over 10 projects per year	5-10 projects per year	1-4 projects per year
13. RESEARCH STATE OF ART	Graduates employed by YEAR OF GRADUATION	80%	60%

a great choice for learners

Before you look for the university, first ask yourself what you desire to get out of your post-secondary experience



Prof. Nawangwe says one of the qualities to consider when choosing a university is the quality of staff

least twice and spend as much time there as possible. Talk to as many people as possible. If possible you can also bring someone along for a second opinion," Oculu suggests. He adds that you are likely to be living at the university for three to five years, so find out what is on offer

become aggressive and having an internship will definitely put you ahead of the pack. Ensure that the university offers all these opportunities," he says. Prof. Venansius Baryamureba, the former vice-chancellor of Makerere University and founder of Uganda Technology and Management University, advises that before you choose a university, find out if it is accredited. "This will mean that it is officially licensed and has been vetted and reviewed by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) that it meets its basic academic standards for higher education."

Prof. Baryamureba adds that most universities will readily provide this information to the public. "A university can be nationally or regionally accredited. Within the university, specific schools, departments or programmes can also have their own accreditation. This ensures that your degree will be recognised by employers and other institutions of higher education," he stresses. Your search should not only be narrowed to popular universities, "but also universities that are not as popular, but they may have something extra that would open doors for you upon graduation," Prof. Baryamureba says.

"Why should you join a university that offers courses that are not relevant to the market?" he stresses. "If you prefer a more hands-on approach when learning, then look for a university that offers that. It does not make sense applying for a prestigious university that does not have what you want to achieve," Prof. Baryamureba stresses. John Oyambi, the principal national guidance officer at the Office of the Prime Minister, points out that the location of the university should also be put into consideration. He advises that one should look at the location of the university, so that they do not make wrong decisions. "If you are comfortable travelling long distances for lectures, then you will have to put aside an extra budget for transport costs," Oyambi says. Before choosing any university, it is important to find out the quality of students who graduate from that university you want to apply to. "You can find out from former employers you hope to work for someday; whether they often employ graduates from that university you want to apply to. Talk to experts, find out from any connections that you might have, to understand the kind of opportunities that are open to graduates," he stresses. "This research will help you to find out whether there is demand for the course you want to study at that university. If not, then it is wise to consider another university," Oyambi says.

outside the curriculum. Find out what kind of placement opportunities they offer. Also, that partner with institutions during holiday breaks for study opportunities abroad for students. "There are also universities that partner with institutions during holiday breaks for study opportunities abroad for students. Competition for jobs has

THE BIGGEST STORIES FROM UGANDA

Anytime, anywhere

www.newvision.co.ug

Stay up to date and informed wherever you are in the world.

UGANDA'S LEADING DAILY

A Vision Group product.