

# 32 universities face closure

By Apollo Mubiru  
and Raymond Kamusiime

Thirty-two universities that have operated for more than three mandated years under a provisional licence face closure if they do not expedite the process of acquiring a charter.

These universities have been given a 12-month ultimatum to acquire a charter be closed, the National Council for Higher Education's (NCHE), acting Executive Director, Dr Alex Mugisha Kagume, announced yesterday.

"We do not expect a university to operate on a provisional licence for years without upgrading. We are discussing and reminding them of a legal obligation to acquire a charter status," Kagume told a news conference yesterday.

According to NCHE, there are universities in the country which have been in existence for close to two decades but have never got a charter.

The affected universities have a combined student population of over 400,000, who may be affected by NCHE's decision.

Section 97 (3) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act requires that a provisional licence issued to a private university shall be valid for at least three years from the date of publication of the gazette by the NCHE.

A provisional licence is a certificate granted by NCHE to an applicant wishing to start a private university. At the point of application, a letter of interim authority should be valid.

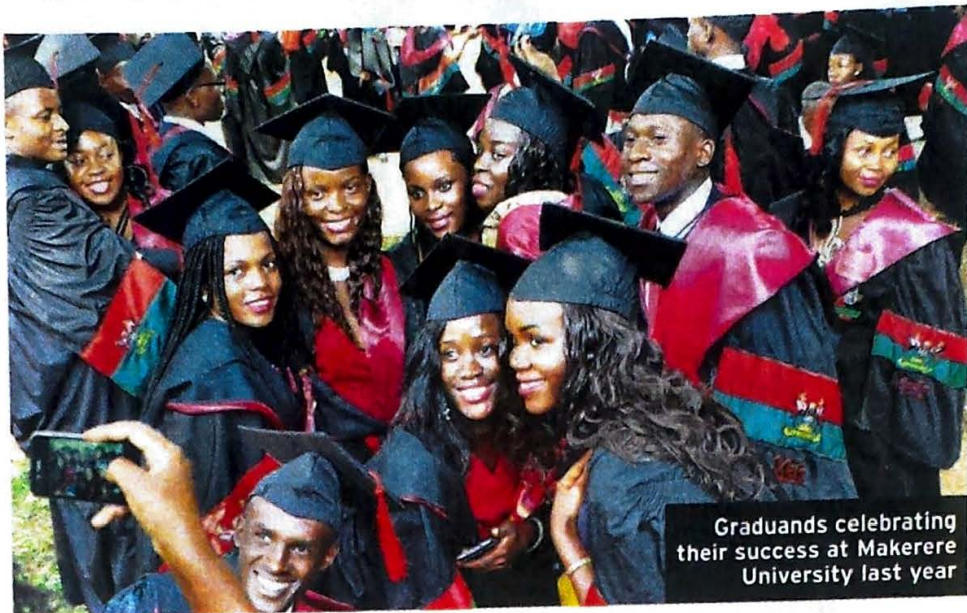
A charter is granted to universities that have satisfied all the conditions set for licensing.

Granted by the Head of State, it defines the governance of the university: its objects, statutes, ordinances, regulations, officers and powers, including those that allow the institution to award degrees.

Kagume addressed the media in the company of senior legal and corporate affairs officer, Faridah Bukirwa, director of quality assurance and accreditation, Dr Pamela Tibihikirra Kalyegira and head of institutions and programmes accreditation, Dr Pius Achanga.

He said the intention of holding dialogue with such universities was not to close them, but for quality assurance in higher institutions of learning.

"If they fail to adhere to the set guidelines, we shall close them. These universities should follow



Graduands celebrating their success at Makerere University last year

## UNIVERSITIES WITHOUT A CHARTER

- Aga Khan University
- Kumi University
- African Bible College of Uganda
- Uganda Pentecostal University
- St. Lawrence University
- Muteesa I Royal University
- All Saints University, Lango
- Clarke International University
- Cavendish University
- International University of East Africa
- Victoria University
- African Rural University
- Livingstone International University
- St. Augustine International University
- Virtual University of Uganda
- Uganda Technology and Management University
- African Renewal University
- Nsaka University
- Ibanda University
- University of Kisubi
- Kayiwa International University
- Valley University of Science and Technology
- Team University
- Great Lakes University
- ISBAT University
- Ankole Western University
- University of the Sacred
- Metropolitan International University
- Avance International University
- University of St. Joseph, Mbarara
- Nile University
- Fins Medical University

the law to remain relevant to Ugandans," Kagume said.

The affected universities yesterday had a day-long meeting at NCHE headquarters in Kyambogo, Kampala.

Uganda has more than 60 universities. Ten are public universities run by the Government, while 45 are private.

The chartered public universities are Busitema University, Gulu University, Kabale University, Kyambogo University, Lira University, Makerere University, Muni University and Soroti University.

Private chartered universities are

Mountains of the Moon, Uganda Christian University, Nkumba University, Kampala International University, Ndeje University, Bugema University, Bishop Stuart University, Kampala University and Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi.

### Universities react

Prof Venansius Byaramureeba, the chancellor of Ibanda University and chairperson of the board of directors, Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU), said chartering universities is good, but it should not be hurriedly done.

He said universities should be given time to build capacity in terms of human resource and infrastructure.

"The law does not provide for an upper limit for a university to be chartered. To me, the appropriate upper limit can be 10 years. NCHE lacks the staff and the capacity to check universities that seek to upgrade from a provisional licence to a charter status," Byaramureeba said.

He said for a university to be chartered, it should meet all the requirements, instead of attaining what he termed as an artificial upgrade, which may affect the quality of education.

Muteesa I Royal University vice-chancellor Prof Umar Ahmad Kasule said the ultimatum set is good enough for them to comply.

### Requirements for a charter

A charter is granted to universities that have demonstrated high quality in staffing, teaching and learning, research output, extension services, infrastructural development and good governance, among others.

For any institution to be accredited, NCHE must be satisfied after a series of inspections and visitations, that the institution concerned has adequate physical and financial resources, viable programmes, adequate qualified staff and structures of governance to deliver quality higher education.

The Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act states that charter is granted by the President as evidence that the university meets the requirements and standards of academic excellence set by the NCHE.