

# School reopening deferred, universities asked to close

BY MARTIN KITUBI

The Government has ordered all education institutions, including international schools and tertiary institutions that had opened for the 2026 school period, to close with immediate effect.

According to the Government, these will open alongside primary and secondary schools whose opening date has been pushed to February 10, from February 2, 2026.

The changes in the date of school reopening were announced yesterday in a circular issued by the education ministry's permanent secretary, Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda.

According to the circular, the ministry cited learners' safety during the ongoing general elections as the reason for which the date for schools and university reopening was changed.

"Vice-chancellors, principals, headteachers, parents, guardians, school administrators, students and the public are hereby notified that Term 1 for the Academic year 2026 runs from Tuesday, February 10, 2026, to Friday, May 1, 2026," she added. The permanent secretary indicated that all school administrators are directed to adhere to the directive and the approved school calendar.

## WHAT THE CHANGES MEAN

The development implies that the school calendar will be shortened by one week for the ordinary primary and secondary schools in the country, from 12 weeks to 11. The number of school term days will also be reduced by eight days from 89 to 82 days during the first term. However, universities and other tertiary institutions will be affected most by the changes. Many universities, both private and public, have reopened this month for the second semester of the academic year 2025/2026.

The changes mean the universities and other tertiary institutions will have lost at least one month and two weeks this semester.



Turyagyenda



Openjuru



Lugujjo

While the universities had opened earlier this month, the Technical Vocational Education (TVET) institutions at the college level, such as the Health Tutor's College-Mulago, were to open on January 19, 2026, for the second semester.

While Prof. George Ladaah Openjuru, the vice-chancellor of Gulu University, appreciates the Government's move to protect learners, the changes, he said, will hurt universities most.

Once the second semester is stretched to July 2026, Openjuru warned that students will have a short break of just a week before they report for another academic year, which starts in August.

Hasadu Kirabira, the national chairperson of the National Private Education Institutions Association (NPEIA), feared that the changes would affect the implementation of the new lower secondary school

curriculum, which has topics that must be covered within a term.

In addition, he said, the schools will be forced to run through the curriculum to cover topics within the reduced school term days.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO S1 REPORTING DATE

However, it remains unclear whether the dates for the release of the 2025 national examinations series or the reporting dates for Senior One and Five will be affected by the slight change in the calendar.

According to the earlier school calendar, the selection and placement exercise for Senior One was expected to take place between January 29-30, January 2026, while that of Senior Five will take place between February 12 and 13, 2026.

On the other hand, the Senior One students will report for the first term on February 16, 2026, while Senior Five will report on February 23, 2026.

## VICE-CHANCELLOR'S FORUM

Prof. Eriabu Lugujjo, the executive director of the Uganda Vice-Chancellors Forum, asked universities to adhere to the changes. "I know several private universities have reopened this week. However, the Government has internal mechanisms to look into the feature and they must have seen something," he said.

## WHAT AFFECTED VARSITIES CAN DO?

In the meantime, Lugujjo advised universities to utilise a blended learning approach where they can teach both online and physically.

As soon as the ban on the Internet is lifted, Lugujjo indicated that the universities should be in a position to upload content online for students to pick.

Within this period, he said, the universities should send reading material, as well as assignments to the students, which must be covered, until they physically attend lectures on February 10, 2026.