

730,000 pupils face selection today

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BY AL-MAHDI SSENKABIRWA

Heads of secondary schools or their representatives from across the country are today converging in Kampala to embark on a rigorous selection exercise of learners joining Senior One this year.

During the two-day exercise taking place at UMA Show Grounds, Lugogo, a total of 730,233 candidates who passed the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) will be placed in either secondary schools or vocational and tertiary training institutions where they put their first or second choices.

As usual, competition for placement in prestigious traditional schools like St Mary's College, Kisubi, Gayaza High School, Ntare School, and Kibuli Secondary School is expected to be stiff, given the fact that such schools only admit learners with top aggregate scores, usually between four and seven.

Usually, cut-off points are determined by candidates' performance. If examinations are difficult, schools raise their cut-offs, if performance is poor, cut-offs drop.

So, despite a slight increase in the number of candidates obtaining Grade One in last year's PLE, the drop in the number of candidates scoring Aggregate 4 is likely to push top-performing schools to maintain or relax cut-off points for Senior One entrants to meet



Headteachers from different schools take part in the Senior One selection exercise on January 30, 2025 at UMA multi-purpose hall in Lugogo. PHOTO/MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

their enrolment targets.

According to the 2025 PLE results released on January 30 by Uganda National Examination Board (Uneb), only 338 candidates managed to score Aggregate 4 across the country.

Most top primary schools had fewer candidates with an Aggregate 4, while others did not get any at all. Of the 338 candidates (who got Aggregate 4), 220 came from schools around Wakiso, Mukono, and Kampala.

In the 2024 cohort, 400 candidates attained an Aggregate 4 compared to over 700 who got the same score in 2023.

A Primary Seven candidate is deemed to have passed the exams if he/she garners between Aggregate 4 and 28. Usually, government schools implementing free education programmes take all candidates with an aggregate between four and 28.

Mr Ishaka Mbalirwa, the head teacher of Madinah Islamic SS, Nsangi, said his school will take candidates with Aggre-

2025 PLE RESULTS

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gate 4 up to Aggregate 18.

"We believe in nurturing the learner to reach his/her full potential, which is why we absorb even those with second grades. In most cases, Senior One learners we consider to be weak surprise us when they perform better at Senior

One," he said in an interview yesterday.

Mr Rogers Katerenga, the head teacher of Fort Portal SS in Fort Portal City, said he will give priority to learners who gave the school their choice.

"We will also consider those who come directly to the school. We have sufficient facilities to accommodate many learners."

At Kisinga Vocational SS, Kasese, the head teacher, Mr Benjamin Masereka, said they will only admit candidates with Division One and Division Two.

Senior One entrants will start their academic year on March 2.

In 2024, a total of 786,981 PLE candidates passed the national examinations and were eligible to join Senior One. However, fewer than 600,000 students were selected under the official process to join Senior One.

How cut-off marks are determined

Cut-off points for any given school are determined by the Ministry of Ed-

ucation based on the number of candidates who sat for the exams.

The ministry sets the cut-off points using an automatic computerised system that allocates students according to general performance and first choice preference of pupils. However, a school can also wriggle out of the maximum depending on the available facilities and the number of students who choose it as their first choice.

The rest, even if they fall in the bracket of admissibility, are 'sold' to other schools during the selection exercise. In the morning, heads of schools or their representatives will receive intake lists of students they intend to admit based on the required aggregates determined by the respective schools.

Usually, schools receive three lists. The first list contains students who meet the set cut-off points for placement in their first-choice schools, while the second list includes students who selected a particular school as their first choice but were not admitted due to limited slots or failure to meet the required points. The third list comprises unplaced candidates due to errors in school selection during the application process.

Available statistics from Uneb show that of the 807,313 candidates who sat for the exams from 15,388 examination centres, 91,990 (11.39 percent) passed with first grade compared to 84,301 in 2024. But it should be noted that the candidature increased by 20,332 over the last year.

Another 388,293 candidates passed in Division Two compared to 397,589 who sat in the 2024 cohort.

A total of 165,226 candidates were in Division Three, while 84,724 passed in Division Four.

A total of 77,080 (9.55 percent) candidates completely failed the exams compared to 64,252 (8.2 percent) of the previous year, indicating an increase in failures by 12,829.

This means that all these candidates who failed exams do not qualify for government sponsorship under the free secondary education scheme, which is going into its 19th year of implementation.

Additional information by Felix Aineboona, Denis Edema, Moureen Biira, Alex Ashaba.

2025 Senior One cutoff points

School	Boys	Girls
Ntare School	7	
Nabisunsa Girls		7
Kings College, Budo	5	5
Kawempe Muslims SS	7	8
Makerere College	6	6
St Mary's College-Kisubi	5	
Namilyago College	7	
St Mary's Kitende	5	6
Mt St Mary's Namagunga	7	
Gayaza High School	6	
Trinity College, Nabbingo	6	
Jinja SS	7	8
Immaculate Heart Girls, Rukungiri		6
Kibuli SS	6	7
Ndejje SS	7	7
Mary Hill High School	6	
St Peter's Nsambya	9	9
Bweranyangi Girls SS		8
Gombe SS	8	8

Kitunga High School	8	
St Leo's Kyegobe	8	
St Henry's College, Kitovu	7	
St Joseph's College Layibi	8	
Muntuyera High School	8	
Kyeizooba Girls		9
Busoga College, Mwiri	8	
Dr Obote College	9	
Sacred Heart Secondary School		9
St Mary's College Rushoroza	8	10
Masaka SS	12	14
Madinah Islamic SS, Nsangi	18	18
Hamony High School, Semuto	18	18
YY Okot Memorial College	19	
Wanyange Girls		10
Masheruka Girls		10
Nabumali High School	11	13
Teso College Aleot	12	
Budini SS Kaliro		15
St Peter's College, Tororo	10	
St Paul College	11	12

Iganga High School	12	14
Mengo SS	7	7
Kitgum HS	23	23
Kamonkoli College Budaka		15
St Paul's College Mbale	12	13
Luzinga SS Kamuli	20	22
Katikamu SDA SS	12	12
Kennedy SS, Kawuku	15	15
Tororo Girls SS		10
Mbale SS-	15	17
Masaba SS	13	15
Bukedi College Kachonga	15	18
Kigezi High School	12	
Mbale College	11	12
Kashaka Girls		12
Kigezi College Butobere	19	
Kibubura Girls		12
St Paul's SS Bukinda	19	20
Kinyasano Girls Rukungiri		12
Bwogyera Girls S Ntungamo		15
Nyakasura School	10	11

Kakungulu Memorial-Kibuli	10	10
Lubiri SS	9	10
Ruyonza School	11	13
Nyabubale SS	11	14
Bukoyo SS	11	13
Makobore High School	12	
Old Kampala SS	11	13
Nganwa High School	12	
Mityana Town SS	15	16
St Joseph SS Kyankwazi	13	13
St Joseph's College, Ombachi	13	
Iganga SS	9	9
Ngara Girls		15
Lango College	16	
Kotido SS	16	27
St Charles Lwanga, Koboko	19	
Arivu SS	21	26
St Mary's College, Lacor	20	28
Butaleja SS	15	20
St Kalemba SS Kayunga	10	12