

New A-Level grading system

Change. The National Curriculum Development Centre says changes are part of the A-Level curriculum launched one year ago and will take effect end of this year ...**P.4**

The aligned A-Level Curriculum was launched in February 2025, and its pioneers will sit for end-of-cycle assessments later this year.

BY JANE NAFULA

The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) is putting the finishing touches on changes to the grading system for A-Level under the new Advanced Secondary Curriculum, a senior officer at the body has confirmed.

Mr Gilbert Gift Siima, the manager of the Secondary Department at NCDC, told this publication yesterday that the system will shift from the current letter grades A, B, C, D, E, O, F to A, B, C, D, E, and will be effected this year.

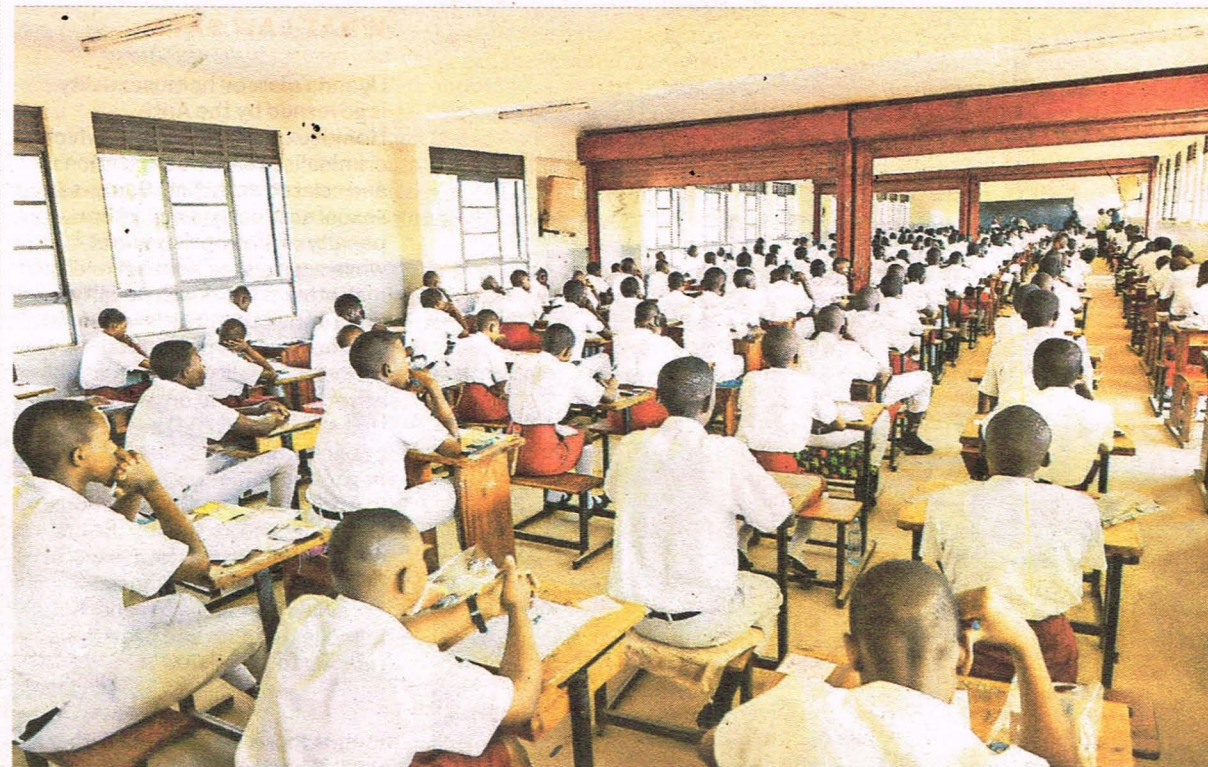
“Yes, it is going to be A, B, C, D, E but what is important in that A, B, C, D, E is the descriptor that talks about what a child is able to do. The grades don’t put food on the table but what puts food on the table is what this child able to do. After we have done that, Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) will pick up from there and then we finalise. These discussions continue up to the point of release of the results of the first cohort of the aligned A-Level Curriculum,” Mr Siima explained.

He added: “The procedure of coming up with the final grade is still ongoing because after this, Uneb is going to have another panel where NCDC is represented, we sit and finalise. But where we have reached, we are confident to say this is what it is. What happens is that along the way, as we continue piloting, testing and doing a number of things, Uneb will pick up from here because there are other pretests that they have to do and after that, we might see some slight adjustments but those ones are normal and they are usually minor.”

Mr Siima explained that under the new arrangement, two students may both earn an A in Fine Art, but the descriptors will distinguish their levels of achievement.

According to NCDC, the new grading scale proposes A = 5 points, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, and E = 1. Under the old system, A carried 6 points, B 5, C 4, D 3, E 2, and O 1.

NCDC explains new A-Level grading system



Senior Six candidates of Kololo High School prepare to sit for an examination last year. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

Teachers attending ongoing online training confirmed the development.

Mr Joshua Ewo Moi, the deputy head teacher of Fr Aloysius Secondary School in Kole District and a Physics teacher, said: “We were informed that the grading will be A, B, C, D and E and they have descriptors per construct. Just like for O level, A stands for exceptional achievement, B is outstanding performance, C is satisfactory performance, D is basic understanding and E is elementary understanding.”

However, Mr Siima noted that the final decision is still in the pipeline.

According to NCDC documents shared with teachers, end-of-cycle assessment will be construct-based. A construct is an abstract representation of a unifying theme that ties together knowledge, skills, and competencies. Learners may earn different grades across constructs within the same sub-

COMPARISON OF GRADING SYSTEMS

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Under the old system, A carried 6 points, B 5, C 4, D 3, E 2, and O 1 for A-Level candidates.

ject, with averages determining the final grade weight.

The Uneb spokesperson, Ms Jeniffer Kalule, said the new grading system will only be effected after the exams body signs off on the assessment framework.

“As of now, we haven’t gotten there, until we sign the assessment framework,” she explained. On principal pass-

es, Ms Kalule added: “The grading system has to go through various processes before such a decision is taken. That comes at the tail end.”

The new A-Level grading system comes a year after government revamped O-Level grading in 2024, shifting from numerical distinctions, credits, passes, and failures to letter grades A-E, as part of Uneb’s competence-based curriculum introduced in 2020.

Mr Ewo also revealed that the number of papers per subject will change.

“For Physics for example, there shall be two assessments, one will be the theory and the other for practicals. We have been having Paper I, II and III. What used to be Paper I and II have been combined into a construct. Then the practical will come from life challenges,” he said.

Mr Ewo added: “Previously, students used to be guided from the beginning

to the end. They could follow instructions but this time around, they will only be given the apparatus and scenarios so that they build up instructions by themselves, carry out experiment following their instructions and then do analysis and conclusion.”

The aligned A-Level Curriculum was launched in February 2025, and its pioneers will sit for end-of-cycle assessments later this year.

The new grading system for A-Level also comes after government changed the O-level grading system in 2024, moving from a numerical grading system of distinction, credits, passes and failures, to a letter grading system using A, B, C, D, and E.

This change was part of the Uneb’s implementation of a competence-based curriculum for O-level introduced in 2020.

On March 6, NCDC began a week-long online training for teachers and administrators on assessment under the new curriculum.

Subjects covered include Physics, Geography, Music, Clothing and Textiles, General Paper, Economics, Chemistry, IRE, CRE, Art and Design, History, Literature in English, Mathematics, Biology, ICT, Kiswahili, Agriculture, Local Languages, Entrepreneurship, Subsidiary Mathematics, and Food and Nutrition.

The NCDC spokesperson, Mr Deo Bwambale, said the government has invested heavily in both O-Level and A-Level competence curricula to ensure Uganda’s education system produces all-round learners fit for today’s competitive labour market.

He noted that regional orientations in schools, training of master trainers, and online sessions have been conducted, with materials uploaded to the NCDC website and YouTube channel.

“Some people have been saying A-Level curriculum was not reviewed. This is not true. The curriculum was reviewed to make it competence-based and learner-centred. There was introduction of Project Based Learning, activities of integration. Some of the content was removed,” he said, adding, “Everything else we have done. Teacher training has been done, materials have been printed and copies distributed to schools across the country.”

Mr Bwambale said the sessions unpacked the different areas of the curriculum and enabled teachers to know areas in the curriculum that had been adjusted. Adjustments were made in several subjects, including Entrepreneurship, Geography, and Economics.