

# Science push begins to show results as UACE Performance Improves

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On Friday morning at State House, Nakasero, education officials gathered to announce the latest Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) results. For years, these results have offered a snapshot of the country's education system, its strengths, its weaknesses, and the direction it is heading.

This time, the numbers told a different story.

After years in which science subjects struggled to keep pace with the humanities, the 2025 results released by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) suggest a shift may finally be underway. Performance in key science subjects, including Mathematics, Chemistry, Agriculture and Biology, has improved noticeably, while more students are choosing to study them.

For a country that has spent more than a decade urging young people to embrace Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), the change carries symbolic weight.

"We are beginning to see encouraging progress," UNEBC Executive Director Dan Odongo said while releasing the results. He noted that several science subjects showed stronger performance compared to previous years.

The figures help explain the growing



First lady Janet Kataaha Museveni holds the UACE 2025 results

optimism.

Biology, long considered one of the more accessible science subjects, recorded one of the clearest improvements. Of the 35,660 candidates who sat the subject in 2025, 64.4 percent obtained principal passes, the grades between A and E required for university admission. That represents a clear rise from 57.7 percent of 24,853 candidates in 2024.

Chemistry, traditionally one of the more challenging sciences for many students, also showed significant progress. 56.3 percent of the 37,134 candidates registered achieved principal passes, compared with 40 percent of 29,283 candidates the previous year.

The gains come at a time when the government has been steadily pushing schools to strengthen science education as part of a broader strategy to prepare Uganda's workforce for a more industrial and technology-driven economy.

State Minister for Higher Education John Chrysostom Muyingo described the trend as a positive sign that those efforts may be starting to pay off.

"The science subjects he said, pointing to the improved results, are important for innovation and job creation."

Behind the statistics lies a quieter but equally important shift: more students are enrolling in science subjects.

UNEBC data shows that the number of candidates registering for science courses continues to rise in many parts of the country. Mathematics, in particular, has become one of the most popular electives. This year, 70,132 candidates registered for Mathematics, making it the most widely taken optional subject after the compulsory General Paper.

The growing interest reflects a sustained national campaign to reposition STEM subjects at the centre of Uganda's development agenda.

Education and Sports Minister Janet Museveni welcomed the trend but cautioned that the humanities still play an important role in shaping society.

"While I fully recognise the invaluable role of the humanities in shaping societal morals, inculcating business values, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, and promoting cultural awareness and nationalism, STEM subjects remain the bedrock for industrial development," she said.

Over the past several years, the government has rolled out a series of interventions aimed at strengthening science education in secondary schools. These include upgrading laboratory facilities, supplying schools with laboratory equipment and low-cost practical kits, and expanding support for science teachers.

The hope is that stronger science education at the secondary level will translate into more students pursuing careers in engineering, medicine, agriculture, and technology—fields considered critical to Uganda's long-term economic transformation.

Yet the results also reveal how far the system still has to go.

UNEBC says many students continue to struggle with the practical components of science subjects, which require not just memorisation but hands-on experimentation and analytical thinking.

Odongo noted that limited exposure to laboratory work remains a major challenge for many candidates.

Some students misinterpret experimental procedures, leading to incorrect data. Others struggle to analyse results or present information clearly in graphs—sometimes using inconsistent scales on the X and Y axes. Many also find it difficult to draw conclusions from observations or write correct chemical equations.