

Parents fall prey to exam surcharges

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Ms Jane Frances Atima, a director, in the Directorate of Education Standards at the Ministry of Education said the extra fees charged are illegal.

Ms Atima also warned that students under Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education programmes should not be subjected to any fees as the that government caters for such charges.

"Government pays examination fees for students under UPE and USE. There is a budget line of money that comes from government to do that. Additional fees requested by schools are illegal," Ms Atima said. Meanwhile, Ms Kalule has advised schools to expedite the exam registration process to ensure candidates register in time and avoid falling prey to surcharges.

"The first deadline is on May 31. This is the first deadline and it doesn't attract any surcharge, but after the May 31 deadline, there will be a surcharge," Ms Kalule said.

According to Uneb, late registration attracts a 50 to 100 percent surcharge on top of the normal registration fees depending on the timing. The PLE late registration, usually runs from June 1 to July 31. Later registration would therefore raise the final fee from Shs34,000 to Shs68,000.

E-REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The e-registration exam system, which most schools currently use, is programmed with names of schools, subject combinations, and other embedded help systems.

It is user-friendly and many schools across the country have since embraced it. In 2023, Uneb indicated that they received complaints from parents about the extra exam fees. The examining body liaised with police to arrest all the culprits in schools.



Invigilators check S.4 students at Kibuli SS in 2024. PHOTO/FILE

Uneb fees: Schools defy govt limit, cheat parents

Paying through the nose. Parents have questioned inflated examination charges as schools and officials trade blame over Uneb registration fees. The looming deadline surcharges also makes life miserable for both candidates and parents.

BY JANE NAFULA

Early this month, the former deputy Lord Mayor of Kampala, Ms Doreen Nyanjura expressed alarm over the varying charges for national exam registration, attributed to the national examiner, Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb).

Ms Nyanjura has been supporting three Senior Four candidates, all of whom presented varying charges, as they are in different schools.

"Uneb registration tuition fees for Senior Four candidates, how much money is it exactly? Is the money set by the schools or Uneb?

How come each school has a different figure?" Ms Nyanjura asked.

"I have three students I am supporting and these are their figures, Shs350,000, Shs400,000 and Shs 250,000," she added.

Scores of parents have raised similar concerns, with some now seeking government intervention to save them from exorbitant charges amid difficult economic times.

"Uneb sets the amount of registration fees, but I don't know why schools continue squeezing more money from us," another parent argued.

"We are still struggling to clear tuition fees, yet we have to struggle to look for the extra money for registration that the schools are forcing us to pay."

This parent, whose daughter is in Senior Four, in one of the city secondary schools, declined to be named, for fear of being harassed.

According to Uneb's spokesperson Ms Jennifer Kalule, the official registration fees for this year stand at Shs34,000 for Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) candidates, Shs164,000 for Senior Four candidates and Shs186,000 for Senior Six candidates.

However Ms Kalule suspects that there could

be underlying reasons for this situation.

"Some schools could have their different administrative arrangements," she said.

Asked about this, Mr Hasadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the National Private Educational Institutions Association (NPEIA) criticised schools that over charge candidates, but stressed the need for students to pay some extra money to cater for costs associated with conducting Uneb examination registration.

"It is unfair for school administrators to over-charge students. We condemn it. Schools should be allowed to charge [something extra] in addition to registration fees set by Uneb to meet the costs that arise in the course of registration and running examinations," Mr Kirabira said.

"There are a lot of expenses involved in registration and conducting Uneb examinations. During registration, schools use internet, and take students' photos among other things... What schools should do is to separate registration fees from the extra charges," he added.

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