

Highlights of the A' Level Needs Assessment Study Report (2022) (On the webpage)

In October 2022, the NCDC Governing Council approved the A' Level Needs Assessment Study report on the Ugandan Curriculum. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the current state of competencies of the A' Level graduates in Uganda.
- ii. To determine the desired competencies expected of A' Level graduate for continuous learning and absorption in the world of work.
- iii. To analyse factors that affect A' Level learners' acquisition of the desired competencies in the teaching and learning process.
- iv. To assess the available and alternative training options for 'A' Level learners based on the goals and priorities of the country.

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THE REVIEW OF THE A' LEVEL CURRICULUM OF UGANDA

3.0 Highlights of the A' Level Needs Assessment Study Report (2022)

In October 2022, the NCDC Governing Council approved the A' Level Needs Assessment Study report on the Ugandan Curriculum. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

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- vii. To analyse factors that affect A' Level learners' acquisition of the desired competencies in the teaching and learning process.
- viii. To assess the available and alternative training options for 'A' Level learners based on the goals and priorities of the country.

3.1 Methodology

A mixed methods research design was adopted with both quantitative and qualitative research techniques adopted in the collection and analysis of the numerical and non-numerical data. The study used questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, document reviews and consultations to gather the data for this report. The summary of the population, sample size and technique is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Population, Sample Size, Sampling Technique and Instruments

Category of respondents	Parent Population	Sample size	Sampling technique	Tool used
Headteachers	2,000	291	Systematic sampling	Questionnaire
Teachers	10,000	1,746	Systematic sampling	Questionnaire
S6 students	101,000	1,380	Convenience	FGD guide
University registrars	42	8	Purposive	Interview guide
University lecturers	8,000	24	Purposive	Interview guide
University students*	200,000	384	Systematic sampling	Questionnaire

University students		120	Convenience	FGD guide
Tertiary institution registrars	140	20	Purposive	Interview guide
Tertiary institution lecturers	2,000	60	Purposive	Interview guide
Tertiary institution students*	100,000	383	Systematic sampling	Questionnaire
Tertiary institution students		300	Convenience	FGD guide
A' level leavers (employed, self-employed & unemployed)	120,000	552	Convenience	Interview guide
Parents	51,000	184	Convenience	Interview guide
Human resource officers (UPDF, UPF, UPS)	6	6	Purposive	Interview guide
Sector skills Council members	5	5	Purposive	Interview guide
Members of the private sector (PSFU, UMA, UFA)	500	250	Purposive	Interview guide
UNEB test developers	15	15	Purposive	Interview guide
DIT Assessors	5	5	Purposive	Interview guide
UBTEB learning area heads	5	5	Purposive	Interview guide
UNATU members	5	5	Purposive	Interview guide
TOTAL	594,723	5,743		

3.3 Summary of the Study Findings

The study findings revealed the following:

Objective 1: The current state of competencies of the A' Level graduates

Strengths of A' level leavers

- i. A' level leavers have expanded their general knowledge of national and global issues
- ii. they can ably understand and interpret technical concepts

- iii. they learn new concepts faster
- iv. in terms of skills; some A' level leavers have good computer skills
- v. reasonable communication skills
- vi. reasonable critical thinking skills
- vii. positive attitude towards learning

Weaknesses of A' level leavers

- i. A' level leavers' knowledge is more theoretical than practical
- ii. they lack the knowledge to interpret the subject matter
- iii. they have limited comprehension ability
- iv. They are weak in computing mathematical problems
- v. They have limited creativity and innovativeness
- vi. A' level leavers have a negative attitude towards work
- vii. lack self-discipline
- viii. They are not trustworthy

Objective 2: The desired competences expected of an A' level leaver that are critical for continuous learning include:

- i. Basic knowledge of tools/content in the subject area
- ii. ICT skills
- iii. Communication skills
- iv. Practical or hands-on skills
- v. Critical thinking skills
- vi. Creativity and innovation
- vii. Problem-solving skills

The desired competences expected of an A' level leaver that are critical for the world of work include;

- i. A positive attitude towards vocational and hands-on work
- ii. Resilience
- iii. Ability to apply knowledge to solve everyday life challenges,
- iv. vocational skills,
- v. ICT skills,

- vi. Business and entrepreneurship skills
- vii. Creativity and innovation
- viii. Problem-solving skills,
- ix. flexibility and adaptability
- x. critical thinking
- xi. project management skills
- xii. public relations
- xiii. communication skills,
- xiv. conflict resolution skills,
- xv. hard work
- xvi. Honesty, self-esteem and respect

Objective 3: Factors That Affect A' Level Learners' Acquisition of the Desired Competencies

- i. Policies towards skills improvement are not being implemented as planned
- ii. A' level students have negative attitudes towards vocational subjects
- iii. ICT is not well integrated into the teaching and learning process
- iv. A' level teachers use teacher-centred methods in the teaching and learning process;
- v. Theoretical teaching is widely practiced at A' level;
- vi. Subjects/content at A' level are not related to the labour market needs in Uganda;
- vii. There is inadequate instructional materials for A' level students in schools
- viii. The present mode of assessment does not promote the acquisition of desired competences at A' level
- ix. The assessment at A' level is mainly in the form of the traditional pen and paper tests

Objective 4: Available and Alternative Training Options for A' Level

- i. For the majority, Homeschooling is not necessary for Uganda at A' level

- ii. open schooling is necessary at A' level for Uganda
- iii. blended learning is necessary at A' level
- iv. differentiated A' level is necessary, it should be considered for A' level education in Uganda.
- v. The study further revealed that vocational education should be introduced at the A' level
- vi. A' level of education in Uganda should be made more practical

4.0 A-Level subject menu scenarios from consultative workshops

Based on the four regional and consultative workshops with university lecturers and administrators on the A-level subject menu scenarios, three scenarios were proposed as detailed below;

4.1. Scenario 1: Two essential principals, 3rd vocational and one subsidiary (GP)

The first scenario proposed is to have two essential principal career subjects as required at university and other tertiary institutions and the third one as vocational oriented subject and General paper as a subsidiary compulsory subject. The two principal career subjects will be for direct career progression to universities and other tertiary institutions while the vocational/ technical module will provide employable skills to every learner. This menu will encourage the early specialisation of students since they will be taking only two essential principal career subjects. The vocational subject will help students to acquire the necessary practical skills in case they do not join the university and other tertiary institutions.

This scenario would be very expensive for schools, the government and parents because offering a vocational subject as a principal compulsory subject requires additional practicum spaces, teachers and teaching materials. In addition, at joining the university a student would be disadvantaged in case they fail one/any of the essential subjects.

4.2 Scenario 2: Two essential principal subjects, 3rd General Paper and one module in vocational

The second scenario proposed is to have two essential principal career subjects as required at university and other tertiary institutions and with a General paper as a principal relevant subject composed of communication skills, ICT skills, Research skills, Entrepreneurship skills, Health education and sustainable development and Basic Mathematics. Introduce at least one Module in the Vocational/ Technical subject area examined by DIT as a Subsidiary. The two principal career subjects will be for direct career progression to universities and other tertiary institutions while General Paper will provide the generic skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are expected of every A' level learner. The upgrading of General Paper from a subsidiary to a principal with six suggested modules that address the skills requirements demanded by the industry and the community. The vocational module will help students to acquire necessary practical skills in case they do not join the university and other tertiary institutions. Additionally, this menu will encourage the early specialisation of students since they will be taking only two essential principal career subjects. This scenario is less expensive since vocational will be handled as a module compared to being offered as a principal subject.

The challenge with this scenario is the limitation of choices for students joining the university in case one fails one/any of the essential subjects.

4.3 Scenario 3: Three essential principal subjects, two subsidiaries (GP and Vocational Module)

The third scenario is maintaining the current three essential principal subjects with two subsidiaries (General Paper and Vocational Module). The unnecessary content and duplications should be removed across all principals. The general paper should cover additional content on communication skills, ICT skills, Research skills, Entrepreneurship skills, Health education and sustainable development and Basic Mathematics. This scenario will give more

career choices as they join university and the international market may require three principal subjects.

The reviewed curriculum will be competence-based (more demanding in terms of time, resources and facilities), it is not feasible to have three career subjects and two subsidiaries in a competency-based system.

Based on the profile of an A-Level leaver from the field findings, a learner should possess basic knowledge of research, the ability to live with others, integrity, knowledge of what is happening around (Society), awareness of the direction of his/her career, creative enough to act within the environment- using the available resources, positive attitude towards self-employment, be a team player, critical thinker, problem solver, creative and innovative, possess good communication skills, cooperative and a self-directed learner, able to compute mathematics, ICT proficiency, resilient and adaptive, possess basic knowledge of content in the subject area, possess practical or hands-on skills, positive attitude towards hands-on work, able to apply knowledge to solve everyday life challenges, possess vocational skills, possess business/entrepreneurship skills and possess project management skills.

4.4 Proposed Scenario

Scenario 2 (having two essential principal subjects and 3rd one as General Paper and one module in vocational) is recommended. This menu will encourage the early specialisation of students since they will be taking only two essential principal career subjects. Additionally, the scenario is less expensive since vocational will be handled as a module compared to being offered as a principal subject and not overloaded in terms of content.

4.5 Recommendations of the study

The study recommended as follows;

- i. The current 'A' level system should be re-examined; the aims and objectives of advanced secondary education should be revisited.
- ii. The curriculum should be reviewed since it does not fully cater for the needs and aspirations society. The reviewed one should be inclusive,

- vocational and competence based. Differential and blended learning are recommended as alternative learning modes for A' level education.
- iii. The 'A' level curriculum should be reviewed to emphasise critical thinking and problem-solving skills, creativity, resilience, adaptability, cooperation and self-directed learning, positive attitude towards work, self-discipline, integrity, honesty and other shared values.
 - iv. ICT should be integrated in the teaching and learning process of the A' level curriculum.
 - v. 'A' level curriculum menu should be reviewed such that every A' level student offers 3 principal subjects and 1 subsidiary subject selected as follows;
 - a. Two (2) Principal Essential subjects in line with his/her future career.
 - b. General paper as a principal relevant subject composed of the following modules:
 - i. Communication skills
 - ii. ICT skills
 - iii. Research skills
 - iv. Entrepreneurship skills
 - v. Health education and sustainable development
 - vi. Basic Mathematics
 - c. Every 'A' level student must offer at least one Module in a Vocational/ Technical subject area examined by DIT as a Subsidiary if he/she is not offering it as a principal. A student that offers a vocational subject as a principal subject will be examined by UNEB but is free to be examined by the DIT on any module from the subject.
 - vi. Key stakeholders (Teachers, Learners and Parents) should be sensitised on the positive role of vocational/technical subjects for individual and national development

- vii. The MoES and private school proprietors should increase funding for 'A' level education to take care of the vocational/technical subjects because they are capital intensive.
- viii. The career guidance and counseling function in MoE&S and secondary schools should be strengthened.
- ix. NCDC, DES and the Department of Teacher Education in the MoES should ensure that learner centered teaching learning strategies that promote interactive teaching and active learning are implemented in schools.
- x. NCDC and UNEB should change the current system of assessing learners' achievement and replace it with one that promotes the acquisition of competences and practical skills with a significant component of continuous assessment.

Based on the above recommendations, the Advanced level curriculum should therefore be revised putting into consideration the findings and recommendations of the A' level Curriculum Needs Assessment study report.

4.5.1 Justification for Reviewing the A' Level Curriculum.

- i. To align the A' Level Curriculum with the Current Lower Secondary Curriculum.
- ii. To cater for the increasing changes in assessment and Pedagogy for example constructivism, collaborative learning, project-based learning, problem-solving learning and learner-centred approaches. To produce an A' level leaver with 21st Century skills (critical thinking and problem-solving skills, creativity, resilience, adaptability, cooperation and self-directed learning, positive attitudes towards work, self-discipline, integrity and honesty).
- iii. To mitigate the high unemployment challenges in Uganda