

# Govt orders schools to follow the new school calendar

By Martin Kitubi

**T**owards the just concluded elections, the Government has ordered all education institutions that had opened for the 2026 school period, to close.

Although international schools were allowed to reopen about a fortnight later, the opening dates for other schools remains unchanged.

## OPENING DATE

According to the Government, the general primary and secondary schools opening date was deferred to February 10, from February 2, 2026.

The changes in the date of school reopening were announced in a circular issued by the education ministry permanent secretary, Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda.

According to the circular, the ministry raised learner's safety during the ongoing general elections as the reason for which the date for schools and university reopening was changed.

"The ministry hereby informs you that due to the general elections and to ensure the safety of all learners, all schools and education institutions across the country are directed to reopen on Tuesday 10, February,



**Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda**

2026. For avoidance of doubt, this includes all international schools, tertiary institutions and universities," the circular signed by the permanent secretary reads.

"Vice-chancellors, principals, headteachers, parents, guardians, school administrators, students and the public are hereby notified that Term 1 for the Academic year 2026 runs from Tuesday February 10, 2026 to Friday, May 1, 2026," she added.

## WHAT THE CHANGES MEAN

The development implies that the school calendar will be shortened by one week for general primary and secondary schools in the country,



**Prof. Eriabu Lugujjo**

from 12 weeks to 11.

The number of term one days will also be reduced by eight days from 89 to 82.

However, tertiary institutions will be affected most with the changes because many had reopened. The changes mean tertiary institutions will have lost at least one month and two weeks this semester.

While the universities had opened earlier this month, the Technical Vocational Education (TVET) institutions at college level, such as the Health Tutor's College-Mulago, was to open on January 19, 2026, for second semester.

Prof. George Ladaah Openjuru, the vice-chancellor of Gulu University,

said: "As universities, we had already opened the second semester which must end in May. But with the changes in dates, it means the second Semester will be stretched to July 2026."

Once the second semester is stretched to July 2026, Openjuru warned that students will have a short break of just a week before they report for another academic year which starts in August.

"We will have to sit down and see how we will handle this. It is going to be tight," Openjuru added.

## NEW CURRICULUM AFFECT

On the other hand, Hasadu Kirabira, the national chairperson of National Private Education Institutions Association, said the changes will affect the implementation of the new lower secondary school curriculum.

"We appreciate that government knows the stability of this country better and it explains the changes in the calendar. However, whenever the calendar changes like this, it means learners will not rest enough. It also affects the preparation of candidates for final examinations," Kirabira said.

However, it remains unclear whether the dates for the release

of the 2024 national examinations series or the reporting dates for Senior One and Five will be affected by the slight change in the calendar.

According to the earlier school calendar, the selection and placement exercise for Senior One was expected to take place between January 29 -30 January 2026, while that of senior five, will take place between February 12 to 13, 2026.

On the other hand, the Senior One students will report for first term on February 16, 2026 while Senior Five will report on February 23, 2026.

## UNIVERSITIES URGED TO ADHERE

Prof. Eriabu Lugujjo, the executive director, Uganda Vice Chancellors Forum, asked universities to adhere to the changes as by the education ministry.

"I know several private universities had reopened this week. But I want to say that the Government has internal mechanisms to look into the future and they must have seen something. I, therefore, urge universities to adhere to this call," Lugujjo said.

In the meantime, Lugujjo advised universities to utilise a blended learning where they can teach both online and physically.