



Sciences for Prosperity

UGANDA NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

**Strategy
2024-2029**

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The Strategy at a Glance

What is the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS)?

Founded in October 2000, the Academy is a non-profit, service-oriented, and membership-based organization. It provides evidence-informed science advice to the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the nation on all matters of science, technology, and development. It draws its membership from all disciplines and professions that place a premium on the scientific method. **The Academy uses the word “sciences” in an inclusive way, bringing together knowledge from the natural sciences, health sciences, biological sciences, social sciences mathematics, arts, and humanities.**

What is the added value of the Academy?

The Academy values its **independence and non-political structure**. Thus, it provides a neutral platform for open dialogue about contentious matters based on credible evidence and respect for differing perspectives.

The Academy's Fellows, the most distinguished scientists in Uganda and beyond, provide their services to the nation on a *pro bono* basis, demonstrating their commitment to giving back to society. Their combined knowledge, wisdom, and experience enable the Academy to differentiate itself from think tanks, consultancies, and advisory entities. **The value of the Academy's services greatly exceeds any associated costs.**

What is unique about this strategy?

This strategy builds on past achievements and provides a blueprint for the Academy's future. It focuses on new and emerging technologies, best scientific practices, innovation, continuous learning, and decolonization of knowledge systems. Its write-up blends traditional and modern approaches to strategy formulation.

What is the Academy’s vision?

To be the premier national academy of sciences in Africa, facilitating societal transformation.

What is the Academy’s mission?

To apply integrated knowledge of the sciences, arts, and humanities to foster systemic shifts in mindsets and practices crucial to our sustained national development.

What are the Academy's core values and practices?

Scientific Inquiry
Human-Centered Design
Sustained Learning
Humility
Transparency
Relationality

A History of the Uganda National Academy of Sciences

Established in October 2000, the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) has had three distinct phases during its evolution. In the first phase, a group of distinguished academics and professionals signed its founding charter with the explicit goal of honouring scientists who have contributed to developing their disciplines and Uganda. This goal appealed to the Academy's founders. The Academy started with one office for its Secretariat within the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) premises.

The second phase started in 2004 when the Academy added a service component to its goals. Beyond its honorific role, the Academy would leverage its membership's combined intellectual wisdom and experience to provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Government of Uganda (GoU). They believed the scholarly community was critical to the nation's development. The Academy would serve as a neutral platform for scholars from every discipline and field of speciality to come together and advise the nation.

With the addition of a service component, UNAS became a significant partner of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) through its African Science Academy Development Initiative (ASADI). ASADI, an eleven-year capacity-building program funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, enabled UNAS to hire qualified staff to run its programs, develop its governance structures, increase its stakeholder base, and produce its initial policy advisory products. By the time ASADI ended in 2015, UNAS had established procedures for providing apolitical, authoritative, and credible advice to the GoU and other stakeholders. It also enabled UNAS to relocate its Secretariat to a more spacious one at Makerere University. A summative evaluation of the ASADI program followed by a resolution of the African science academies identified UNAS as the lead science academy in Eastern Africa (i.e. Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania).

The third phase started at the end of April 2015, when the ASADI program ended, and UNAS had to fundraise to finance its programs. Without a stable funding source, ASADI-trained staff left the Academy, leaving behind those who had received minimal training through ASADI. For two years, the Academy's leadership marshaled available resources in the face of an existential crisis.

In 2017, the Academy published its first post-ASADI consensus study on urban governance in Uganda. It did so with little money and strategically positioned UNAS as a thought leader in urban governance in Africa. Two more reports in 2018, one on urban health in Eastern Africa and another on rural-urban linkages in sub-Saharan Africa, signalled the Academy's renewal. Along with a new five-year strategic plan (2018-2023), UNAS focused on revitalizing the productive capacities of the Academy. By 2023, the Academy had published over ten consensus studies in five years. The membership grew from 82 to 148, with an emphasis on including qualified scientists from underrepresented disciplines, socio-economic backgrounds, and gender. The Academy tripled its annual revenues. The fourth phase of the Academy's evolution begins.

The Academy's Operating Context

The need for credible, authoritative, and contextually relevant evidence-informed policy advice remains vital to achieving Uganda's national development goals. As such, the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS), the peak science advice entity in Uganda and Eastern Africa, must respond to Uganda's unique evidence needs and provide leadership at regional and continental levels.

The Academy's previous five-year strategic plan sought to make science advice foundational to decision-making in Uganda and beyond. The COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies showcased the Academy's role in providing timely and independent advice to the Government of Uganda and other stakeholders during challenging times. They also allowed UNAS to reflect on its capabilities and what it needed to remain relevant in Uganda's development and contribute to global scientific efforts to address common challenges.

The challenges of misinformation and disinformation renew the Academy's resolve to strengthen evidence-informed decision-making. The Academy operates in a highly volatile, unpredictable, complex, interconnected, and ambiguous world. To serve society, UNAS must adapt its evidence-provision processes to address problems that transcend disciplinary and sectoral boundaries.

The Committee on Strategy Development and Implementation undertook to assess the Academy's strategic positioning and effectiveness in collaboration with key stakeholders. The Committee adapted traditional strategy analysis tools (i.e., SCOA, McKinsey's 7s, and PESTEL) to guide the preparation of this strategy and operational plan.

These analyses revealed a diverse, adaptive, and uniquely positioned Academy that provides timely evidence-informed policy advice to the Government of Uganda and the nation. The need and value of the Academy have become even more pronounced with the acceleration of misinformation and disinformation and a marked global decline in trust in scientific evidence.

SCOA Analysis as Applied to UNAS

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| <p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinguished and diverse Fellowship 2. Robust governance structure 3. Loyal and experienced Secretariat 4. Economic value of <i>pro bono</i> services 5. Strong stakeholder relationships | <p>Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overextended Secretariat 2. Publicity and communication of advisory work 3. Sub-optimal engagement of the full fellowship 4. The current process for selection of Fellows 5. Increasing competition and creativity of consulting firms and think tanks |
| <p>Opportunities</p> | <p>Aspirations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UNAS Home |

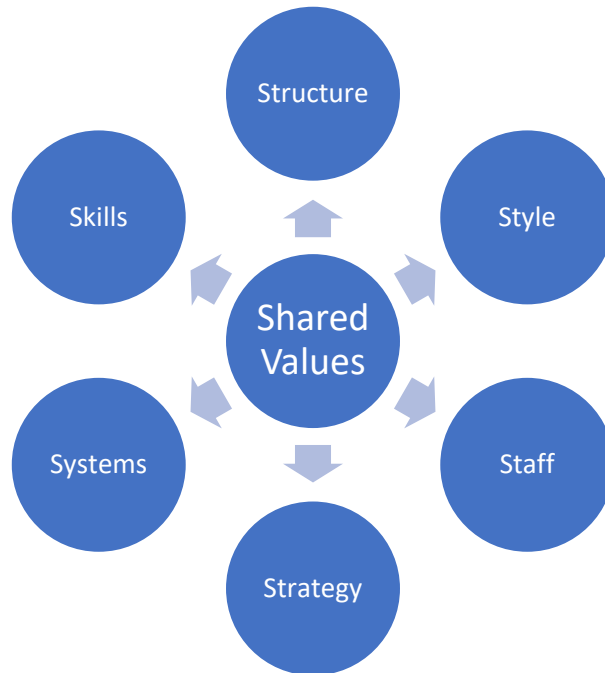
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government's stated interest in evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) 2. Increased investments in transdisciplinarity in science, technology, innovation, and development programs 3. The fourth industrial revolution | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Broaden the stakeholder base 3. Increase domestic financing of the Academy's activities 4. Bolster the Secretariat's human resources 5. Increase the visibility and appreciation of the Academy |
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PESTEL Analysis as Applied to UNAS

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| <p>Political</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competing political interests 2. Influence of global political agendas | <p>Economic</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Widening inequalities in income distribution 2. Decreased external development funding 3. Limited domestic financing |
| <p>Social</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marked decline in trust in scientific evidence 2. Demographic burdens and opportunities 3. Intergenerational misunderstandings | <p>Technological</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rapid advances in ICT and machine learning 2. Increasing influence of social media |
| <p>Environmental</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change adaptation 2. Transdisciplinary approaches to pandemic preparedness and response 3. Global and national focus on sustainability | <p>Legal</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Litigious approaches to solving conflicts 2. Statutory company compliance and administration requirements |

McKinsey 7-S Framework as Applied to UNAS

This framework evaluates the hard (i.e., structure, systems, strategy, skills) and the soft (style, staff, shared values) aspects of a company to identify areas of potential growth.



Structure: The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the Academy's ultimate decision-making body. It comprises Fellows of the Academy. The AGM appoints the Council, which serves as the Academy's Board of Directors. The Council, in turn, appoints the Secretariat, which executes the Academy's day-to-day operations.

Skills: UNAS' Fellowship comprises skills in almost every field of scholarly endeavor. The Council has extensive experience in administrative, business, and academic excellence.

Systems: UNAS has robust risk, financial, and human resource management systems supported both by written policies and manuals and in its workplace culture.

Strategy: The Academy formulates and refreshes its strategy every five years. It implements the strategy in yearly operational plans.

Staff: The UNAS Secretariat has extensive experience facilitating diverse, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary work. The staff are drawn from various fields.

Style: The Academy operates collaboratively, and decisions are made by consensus. This approach supports the professional development of all organizational actors.

Shared Values: Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion anchor the Academy's strategies, policies, and operations.

Based on its understanding of the Academy through these analyses, the Committee, in consultation with the Academy's stakeholders, crafted the following vision, mission, core values, and practices. It then articulated the academy's added value.

Vision

To be the premier national academy of sciences in Africa, facilitating societal transformation.

Mission

To apply integrated knowledge of the sciences, arts, and humanities to foster systemic shifts in mindsets and practices crucial to our sustained national development.

What We Do

We bridge the research-policy-implementation gap through transdisciplinary programs. The Academy designs experiences that lead to transformative moments of insight.¹ These experiences expand the possibilities of human endeavor and provide the courage necessary to take ownership of development. We design mindset-shifting and behavioral-changing experiences. We facilitate shared visioning for improved learning and collaboration across generational, disciplinary, sectoral, and cultural boundaries. We provide a neutral knowledge-sharing platform that enables confident and credible action and interaction.

Our Core Beliefs and Practices

Scientific Inquiry: Intellectual vigor, rigor, and independence of thought form the foundations of the Academy.

Human-Centered Design: Our work and products serve to uplift the communities we serve in contextually relevant ways. We focus on doing the most good for the greatest number of people in our society.

Sustained Learning: We foster learning in all our programs. We can only transform if we allow ourselves to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

Humility: We have the courage to welcome open communication between the Academy and a wide range of stakeholders, regardless of their status in society.

Transparency: Our processes are appropriately communicated to our stakeholders. We adhere to high ethical, environmental, social, and governance standards. We also admit when we are wrong and believe in mutual accountability.

Relationships Matter: We invest in our organizational relationships based on equitable practices. We respect our stakeholders' time, energy, and money.

¹ The Ancient Greek word *metanoia* (μετάνοια) described a moment of shedding preconceptions to allow profound and more accurate understanding.

The Academy's Value Proposition

Independence of thought: The Academy is unaffiliated with universities or the government. It is a non-profit organization, so profit does not motivate its activities. It is governed by its beliefs, grounded in critical and evidence-informed thought and action, and a commitment to giving back to society.

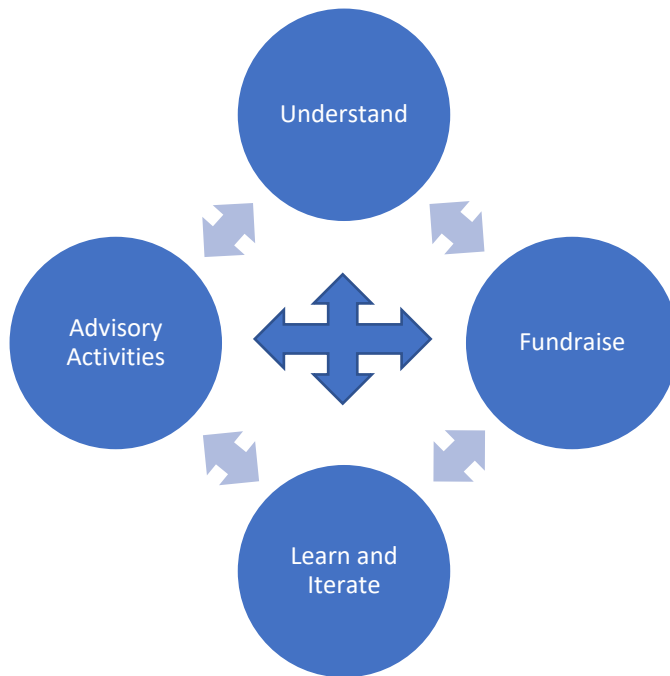
A plurality of thinking: The Academy is uniquely positioned to use its convening power to integrate knowledge streams through intentional dialogue on complex societal issues. It can bring together perspectives from all walks of life that provoke reflection and examination of forms of thinking and practice.

A distinguished history of transdisciplinary practice: Transdisciplinary practice means that all forms of knowledge and thinking have value in understanding and making better decisions in our world. The Academy has been practicing this ethos since its creation, convening stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil society, and beyond to respond to complex challenges.

Operating Model

To deliver against our stated mission, the Academy operates as a non-profit entity. The Fellows of the Academy provide their services *pro bono*. The Academy will do the following to add value to our society.

1. **Understanding First:** We will seek to understand our stakeholders and their unique operating contexts to provide the appropriate evidence-informed advice.
2. **Fundraising:** Together with our stakeholders, we will mobilize the required finances to provide the required services.
3. **Advisory Processes:** Our consensus and convening activities will depend on credible scientific evidence and provide a neutral platform for candid dialogue.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** We will learn through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, and iteration will underpin our work.



Growth Pathways

- 1) **Societal Transformation:** UNAS will focus on understanding and advising communities of practice at a system and network level. This pathway ensures that the Academy responds to societal needs and aspirations, not the whims of individuals or institutions.
- 2) **Cost and Value:** UNAS's pro bono advisory work provides a unique cost proposition. It will articulate that value proposition to disrupt transaction-driven behaviors and encourage stakeholders to interact candidly with each other.
- 3) **Deliberate Developmental Organization (DDO)²:** UNAS' values will drive its culture and human development approach. Our system will encourage, select, and retain staff who actively contribute to personal, professional, and institutional growth.
- 4) **Forward Thinking:** UNAS will practice principles of design thinking to enable it to always be ahead of the curve in how it presents and creates systemic and societal level transformation.

Enabling Capabilities

- 1) **Agility:** As an entity that is not focused on a specific institution but uses detailed institutional analyses in conjunction with other analyses, UNAS will develop quick and robust abilities to extract, analyze, and then compare data to create community-level insights.

² A deliberately developmental organization (DDO) as defined in *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization* (2016) by Kegan, Lahey, Miller, Fleming, and Helsing in which everyone's growth is prioritized in institutional culture and practice.

- 2) **Leverage Technology:** Utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and creating bespoke Information Technology (IT) systems that allow UNAS to consolidate multiple databases, identify linkages, and automate updates can ensure that UNAS remains lean and cost-effective while maintaining its ability to produce community-level insights.
- 3) **Fundraising:** The Academy's stakeholder base is to be expanded in line with the increasing programmatic footprint. This work requires a substantial increase in financial resources.
- 4) **Management Systems:** The Academy to continuously strengthen its existing governance, risk, accountability, financial management, procurement, and administrative processes. Regular reviews and updates will keep these systems current.