

JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD



ADMISSION INTO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

Selection examination results can be used in diverse ways from one country to another depending on their historical peculiarities, the purposes for which the results are intended and the issues being addressed.

One of the many reasons for this differentiation, apart from educational assessment, are other issues such as gender inequality, scarce resources, underdevelopment and the quest for advancement in science and technology.

CENTRALISED ADMISSION SYSTEM

It was against this backdrop and the need to use a fair method of selection for admission to ensure an equitable distribution of the available spaces in tertiary institutions for all the different parts of the country, which made the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in 1978.

JAMB came into being as a central testing and placement agency in response to the problems of the individual universities regarding multiple applications by candidates as well as multiple admissions.

Hitherto, individual universities evolved their admissions processes, which relied essentially on their peculiar guidelines and standards. A situation that naturally led to multiple applications by candidates seeking admission into the various universities. The decentralized system also led to lack of standard, lack of uniformity in the admissions process and multiple admissions, whereby the same candidates received offers of admission

into two or more institutions. In the process, such candidates deprived other qualified candidates places in those universities whose offers had been declined.

The Federal Government in 1978 established JAMB with the primary objectives of ensuring a uniform standard for the conduct of matriculation examination and the placement of suitably qualified candidates into the Nation's universities taking into account:

- (i) the vacancies available in each institution
- (ii) the guidelines approved for each institutions by its proprietors and other competent authorities
- (iii) the preference expressed for certain tertiary institutions and courses and following certain stipulated guideline.

Before the establishment of JAMB, prospective candidates were about 30,000. Today the figure is well over one million. Private institutions were outside the ambit of the Board until the National Universities Commission (NUC) brought them under the harmonized guidelines for admissions.

The total enrolment of candidates is guided by the limits of the figures approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which conforms to the 70:30 Science/Arts ratio recommended by the Federal Government. JAMB is responsible for the enforcement of these guidelines.

Shortly after the establishment of JAMB, candidates seeking admission into Colleges of Education and Polytechnics increased dramatically and problems which were similar to those associated with admissions into the universities became noticeable, hence the JAMB enabling law was amended to include the conduct of the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Matriculation examination.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

General guidelines for admission into the Nation's tertiary institutions are contained in a brochure which provides detailed information on courses and entry requirements which include:

- (i) Five 'O' level credit passes in relevant subjects including English and Mathematics particularly for science and social sciences while mathematics may be required at an ordinary pass level for Arts students.
- (ii) Four credit 'O' level passes in relevant subjects for Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.
- (iii) The candidates must equally score the minimum cut-off marks for the desired course of study.

The cut-off marks for selection vary from one institution to another depending on the competitive nature of the desired course of study.

The Federal Government guidelines for admissions into its institutions are based on 45% Merit, 35% Catchment/Locality and 20% Educationally Less Developed States. It should be noted that western education is at different levels of development in the different component units of the federation. This is as a result of different contact time with the western world. Other proprietors of tertiary institutions also have guidelines for admissions into their tertiary institutions. There are state-owned and private-owned institutions. However, all candidates seeking admissions into courses and programmes leading to the award of first degree, National Diploma (ND) and Nigeria Certificate in Education must sit for the appropriate matriculation examination conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. These examinations are the Universities

Matriculation Examination and the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Matriculation Examination.

ADMISSIONS ON MERIT

Candidates with very high scores in each matriculation examination are given first consideration for their first choice of course and institution before other candidates.

CATCHMENT AREAS

To give equal opportunities to all applicants, the States of the Federation are grouped into catchment areas of each Tertiary Institution. It is also called Locality which in most cases is the geographical and/or socio-cultural areas contiguous to the institution candidate apply to. Consideration is given to students who fall within the catchment area of the Tertiary Institution. Some of these Institutions have all the states of the Federation as their catchment area while state-owned Institutions have all the local government areas of their states as their catchment area.

EDUCATIONALLY LESS DEVELOPED STATES (ELDS)

Certain states are considered educationally less developed. Candidates from these states are given special concession for admission. The Tertiary Institutions assign lower cut-off marks to this category of candidates so that they can be given opportunity to forestall a lopsided development of education in the country.

ADMISSION BY DIRECT ENTRY

Direct entry admissions are for certain categories of candidates who need not go through the selection examination. They are candidates who possess higher entry qualifications such as Advanced Level Certificates, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), First Degree, etc.

Nonetheless they must satisfy the normal general entry requirements as a pre-requisite for admission. Students in this category are admitted into the second year (200 level) in the universities.

CHALLENGES OF SELECTION EXAMINATION FOR ADMSSION INTO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

The use of selection examination for placement into institutions of higher learning as a method of ensuring a fair distribution of the available spaces for tertiary education and a means of reducing the imbalance in the educational development of the various parts of the country has to some extent ensured some measure for equitable representation in Nigeria.

Students seeking admission into tertiary institutions rose from a paltry 30,000 in 1978 to over one million while degree awarding institutions and universities in Nigeria has risen to 101. Of this figure, Federal Universities are 24, States Universities are 26 and Private Universities and other degree awarding institutions are 51.

Apart from this, the scope and content of course of study in our institutions of higher learning has increased dramatically.

Presently, Nigeria has bilateral agreements with some African Countries in education.

Nigeria admits and trains the citizens of these countries in its tertiary institutions.

One major challenge facing the use of selection examination for placement into tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the scourge of examination malpractice. It has to a large extent militated against the objectives for which the selection examinations were set to achieve viz; ensuring that suitable and qualified candidates are offered admission into institutions of higher learning.

Examination malpractice is a broad name for all forms of misconduct, which include, cheating, copying, spying, being in possession of unauthorized materials, use of GSM handsets, impersonation etc. A frightening dimension is the involvement of parents, guardians and examination officials in this unwholesome act.

The spate of misconduct during examination in Nigeria occasioned calls by some universities about two years ago for a Post Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) Screening which has generated a lot of debates.

Apart from subjecting prospective students to multiple expenses and stress, the Post UME Screening itself is not immune from the scourge of examination malpractice that is ravaging the country. Whether the Post UME Screening will stand the test, only time will tell.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD WITH TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

The enabling law of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board recognizes the importance of the Tertiary Institutions in the discharge of the Board's responsibilities. Tertiary Institutions at very high level of their Chief Executives are represented on the Governing Board.

The law is emphatic on the collaboration of the Board with tertiary institutions in the placement of suitably qualified. Many tertiary institutions staff serve the Board in the areas of syllabi development, item writing, item moderation, coordination and supervision of the matriculation examination.

CONCLUSION

Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board was established as an agency charged with the dual responsibility of testing and placement of suitably qualified candidates into the Nation's tertiary institutions viz; Universities, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education as a response to the problems of multiple applications, multiple admissions as well as the absence of standardization and lack of uniformity in admission guidelines which beset tertiary institutions before 1978.

The establishment of JAMB as a clearing house has eliminated the problems of multiple applications and multiple admissions, in spite of this; a lot of problems still subsist, even though the Board has taken series of measures in this direction.

Government must rise up to the challenge by instituting procedures for the effective prosecution of culprits guilty of examination malpractice. Government must also ensure a commensurate increase in the number of vacancies available in the tertiary institutions to cater for qualified applicants. This will reduce the problem of scarcity and remove the 'do or die' syndrome from the educational system.

Through the establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and the policies put in place to guide its operations, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been able to ensure a near even representation of the various parts of the country in the Nation's Tertiary Institutions. Despite its shortcomings, the Board has continued to play a positive role as a unifying the Nation.

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