

Predictive relationship between admission academic abilities and undergraduates' academic achievement in Nigerian universities



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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to determine the predictive relationship between admission academic abilities and subsequent undergraduates' academic achievement in Nigeria. This research adopted an *ex post facto* descriptive design. The total population consisted of 282,834 students, while the target population comprised 72,062 undergraduates in the 200 level, and the sample size was 1,524 respondents through a multistage sampling procedure. At the point of admission, students whose scores ranged from 70% to 100% were 291 (22%), 60% to 69% were 484 (36%), 50% to 59% were 471 (35%), 45% to 49% were 69 (5%), and below 44% were 31 (2%). The same undergraduates, after admission, declined in academic achievement to 129 (10%) among the first class, 428 (32%) second class upper, 543 (41%) second class lower, 218 (16%) third class, and 17 (1%) pass category, while others were on probation. The analysis ($F_{(2, 1345)} = 0.934$) revealed that undergraduates' academic achievement was not significantly affected by admission academic abilities. The study recommended that undergraduates should work towards improving their academic achievement, as this will determine their future privileges. The government should encourage students to value education by improving employment opportunities for graduates, thereby fostering academic achievement in Nigeria.

Contribution/ Originality: The study focused on university undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria whose approval and operations by the National University Commission started before 2015 and have produced graduates for five academic sessions. The study contributed to the literature, as it revealed the level of the relationship between admission academic abilities and undergraduates' academic achievement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic achievement can be described as an outcome of an educational process, reflecting the pace at which students and education stakeholders achieve specific short- and long-term learning objectives. It serves as an indicator of students' skill levels, knowledge, and individual efforts. Also, academic achievement is widely acknowledged as a key indicator for assessing the cognitive abilities of students, ultimately contributing to the overall quality of life within society. Academic achievement is a way to assess students' understanding, abilities, and expertise, as well as their capacity to fulfill the learning goals established by universities.

Academic achievement refers to excellence across all intellectual domains, including within the learning environment and extracurricular activities. Academic success, which indicates how effectively students, curricula, and institutions achieve the set learning objectives, is the ultimate outcome of education. Examinations are frequently used to evaluate students' academic progress and determine the extent of their knowledge, skills, and facts (Bennett,

2003). It also assesses a person's attitude in specific circumstances, particularly in novel situations. This implies that conduct is often measured by achievement, which can be observed at a particular point in time.

Kpolovie (2014) explained that academic achievement serves as a yardstick for determining a student's competencies, which may include obvious, innate, or hidden skills. Furthermore, academic achievement encompasses the capacity to articulate knowledge acquired through both written and practical means, devoid of any form of examination misconduct. It necessitates the capacity to retain directives and apply them suitably in reaction to a particular requirement, independent of any potential informational sources. The capacity to retain and systematically arrange directives (Kpolovie, Joe, & Okoto, 2014). Universities lack significance in the absence of students. Students represent the most vital resource for any educational institution. It is clear that a country's social and economic development and its students' academic achievement are correlated (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

Valentine and DuBois (2005) and Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller, and Baumert (2005) have both studied the connection between secondary school students' academic achievement and their intellectual dignity. However, various attempts by researchers to provide a lasting solution to the low academic achievement of students have not yielded meaningful results, as the problem still persists. In this regard, the academic abilities of students at the point of admission, which is this study's independent variable, might be linked to other likely attributed variables that influence academic achievement.

The academic ability of university aspirants at the point of admission into various academic programs has been a major determinant in the academic achievement of undergraduates in the long run. It refers to the mental abilities, information, and dispositions that allow a person to flourish academically and prosper in a course of study. In this study, academic abilities explain the academic strength of each undergraduate at the point of admission into the university. It is the aggregate of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) results. Most students review their academic program depending on grades obtained in the SSCE and UTME scores. Senyamator, Abagbana, Nugba, Adu, and Asabere (2023) explained that students' academic abilities and previous academic performance influence their choice of academic programs, which is constrained by grades obtained in secondary education. Fiezer (2013) clarified that the choice of academic program affects students with lower academic abilities more than those with higher academic abilities measured by tests and examinations. According to the scholar, having excellent educational skills means possessing the fundamental knowledge and abilities needed to perform the desired activity.

Academic ability is the major factor that determines academic performance. It is the foundation of academic achievement (Nonis & Wright, 2003). It has also been shown that academic aptitude and success influence study plans (Ferry, 2006). Students face the challenge of reconciling their aspirations with their capabilities and academic achievements when selecting a course of study. During their educational journey, students progress through various institutions where they choose specific subjects and academic programs (Syeda & Anila, 2017). These decisions about study programs are sometimes made by the students themselves, but most often they are influenced by others. Such decisions have a high failure rate, which is why experts recommend a guided decision-making process. The majority of teenagers are unaware of how job success is predicted by the interaction of cognitive, psychological, and career interest characteristics.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement among undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria is a significant concern for students and their sponsors, stemming from inadequate academic accomplishment. Low academic achievement could perhaps hinder undergraduates from achieving educational goals. This possibly could be the reason for the continuous increase in dropout rates, coupled with some students graduating with grades below average, which are usually not attractive for well-paid employment in the labor market. Consequently, this creates more problems at subsequent levels and a decrease in the level of human capacity in various segments of the economy. However, the dropout rate in most

universities represents a tremendous loss of investment over a lifetime. Students would be adversely affected by this phenomenon, which could lead to an environment where the majority of impacted students indulge in social vices. Nevertheless, this study has traced the problem of academic achievement to admission academic abilities.

1.2. Objectives

- i. To determine the relevance of admission academic abilities and subsequent undergraduates' academic achievement after admission.
- ii. To examine the relationship between admission academic abilities and undergraduates' academic achievement after admission.

1.3. Research Question

What is the relevance of admission academic abilities and subsequent undergraduates' academic achievement after admission?

1.4. Hypothesis

H₀₁: Admission academic abilities do not have a significant relationship with undergraduates' academic achievement after admission.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWED

2.1. Academic Abilities

Academic ability can be described as the cognitive skills, knowledge, and attitude that enable an individual to succeed in the educational program and achieve excellence. In this study, it is part of the academic entry characteristics that describe the strength of each undergraduate at the point of entry into the university program. It would be the aggregate of SSCE and UTME scores. A strong academic ability indicates that the individual has successfully acquired the necessary abilities for the intended work. Also, developed ability can be explained as a situation in which an individual possesses basic abilities in areas of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Those who already possess the required skills may still need practical experience to strengthen their competence. High-ability students may believe they lack sufficient knowledge to pursue certain academic programs, even when they are qualified, while low-academic-ability students may feel that pursuing an academic program in a demanding career would be a major hindrance (Walsh & Savickas, 2005).

Nyamwange, Ondima, and Onderi (2013) submitted that school examinations are used in educational systems all over the globe to gauge how well students understand the material being taught and how well instructors are able to impart it at various school levels. Most students face the challenge of balancing their course selection with their skills and test results (Edwards, 2010). Test results are strongly related to course selection, and low-achieving students tend to consider themselves less worthy and inadequate compared to their higher-achieving classmates due to past failures. They choose less prominent courses of study, which might be interpreted as a sign of low self-esteem and poor self-evaluation (Carole, 2003).

Several students choose their professions according to their academic aptitude (Beggs, Bantham, & Taylor, 2008). Nonetheless, some individuals may lack the requisite abilities or work habits necessary to excel in academic programs that demand more study commitment than others. These students may be better served by academic programs with less challenging courses that require less effort. This influences the professional trajectories of these pupils. Other students may choose programs with a heavier workload and pursue academic programs that lead to jobs requiring more education. Some of these categories include veterinarians, doctors, and lawyers. To pursue a career like this, an individual will need more than just a degree. Conversely, some students exhibit motivation to engage in highly labor-intensive sectors yet lack the requisite intelligence to fulfill the demands of their chosen profession (Beggs et al.,

2008). These individuals frequently obtain assistance with examinations and assignments from private tutors, special education instructors, and dedicated support personnel. They are afforded numerous opportunities to succeed and pursue careers in their respective fields.

2.2. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement represents what is actually accomplished in a situation, including the process of accessing and utilizing knowledge, skills, emotional, and technological elements that influence the final outcome (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2005). In a classroom context, academic achievement is a measurable indicator of students' cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains. Kpolovie et al. (2014) state that academic success is determined by evaluating a person's ability to learn and is seen as essential in educational systems around the globe. Academic achievement is very important in all educational institutions. They refer to human intellectual activities that take place in a formal educational environment. Academic accomplishment, which generally measures a learner's capacity to assimilate, remember, and convey acquired knowledge, is often evaluated by teacher-created or standardized assessments (Kpolovie, 2014). It also reflects a student's ability to retain facts under examination conditions and communicate knowledge verbally or in writing (Kpolovie et al., 2014).

The nation's social and economic development largely depends on students' academic achievement, which helps identify future leaders and professionals (Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar, & Salamat, 2009). Students' capacity to grasp skills and subject matter is assessed via academic achievement (Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa, & Iderima, 2014). Furthermore, Olanipekun (2015) said that the academic achievement of students is the main factor used to assess the effectiveness and achievement of any institution of higher learning. Higher education is anticipated to be at its pinnacle with the aim of achieving greater understanding as a means of achieving a faster rate of industrial, socioeconomic, technological, and cultural evolution in any country (Aremu, 2000).

Effective formal and informal education depends on the evaluation of academic performance (Kpolovie, 2014). Academic accomplishment is the yardstick for success in educational institutions (Bell, 2013). This mainly refers to how students satisfy the requirements established by the educational institution (Bell, 2013) and how they complete the activities and learning tasks assigned to them (Sharm, 2012). Academic achievement is the best indicator of a person's likelihood of succeeding in life. It is demonstrated by a person's aptitudes and how they use perseverance, resolve, and concentration to attain academic success (Abiola, 2012). Academic achievement is often classified based on performance in classes, tests, and examinations. It reflects the demonstration of the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom (Busari, 2000).

Academic achievement, according to Alkhutaba (2013), is defined in a school setting as the display of knowledge and abilities acquired in academic courses. A thorough and ongoing evaluation of the student is necessary to determine their academic success (Federal Ministry of Education, 2006). A student's academic performance is evaluated at colleges using a variety of metrics, including test results, grade point average (GPA), and cumulative grade point average (CGPA). A student's success on examinations and quizzes given during the semester is measured by universities, and the majority of researchers use the grade point average (GPA). The term cumulative grade point average (CGPA) refers to a number of metrics in different contexts (Broh, 2002; Darling, 2005; Galiher, 2006). Some researchers measure a student's performance based on a particular subject or the previous year's performance. A student's academic success is evaluated based on a number of factors, including participation, scores, examinations, and extracurricular activities (Sharm, 2012). As a result, students are always divided into high, average, and low achievement levels.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Walberg's (1981) theory, which was established in 1981, anchored the study as it focused on educational production and has been scientifically validated as one of the few hypotheses concerning academic achievement. The

approach placed a strong focus on academic achievement and proposed that individual student mental traits and their immediate psychological environments impact educational outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal) (Reynolds & Walberg, 1992). The scholar explained that enhancing academic accomplishment requires the identification of adjustable components within the educational productivity model. His model's underlying assumption is that cognitive activities, primarily determined by individual aptitude but also heavily influenced by instructional and contextual factors, are what lead to academic achievement.

2.4. Methods

This research adopted an *ex post facto* descriptive design. The total population consisted of 282,834 students, while the target population comprised 72,062 undergraduates in 200 level at 6 Federal, 6 State, and 13 Private Universities in Southwestern Nigeria. This study's sample size, which was determined by a multistage sampling technique, was 1,524 respondents.

Two of the six Southwestern states (Oyo and Osun states) were chosen at the first stage using a straightforward random selection procedure. Due to limited data availability, the study's generalization was restricted to these two states.

In the second stage, a purposive sampling technique was used to select federal, state, and private universities from the two sampled states established before 2015 with common academic programs (six universities). Eight faculties, comprising four each of sciences and arts/humanities, were sampled and classified according to the rate of patronage in admission.

In the third step, 200-level students from the selected faculties were chosen using the purposive sampling approach. This study considered undergraduates admitted through post-UTME only. This is because they are relatively new students, and the 200 level is considered a volatile stage in which either the university or individual students can decide to withdraw from the academic program. Also, at the 200 level, the institution would have tested the academic abilities of students admitted through JAMB, through various examinations at the departmental, faculty, and university levels to generate a grade point average (GPA), which determines continuity in the program.

In the fourth stage, two departments in each of the sampled faculties (16 departments) were randomly selected. This results in a total of 5,404 undergraduates.

In the fifth step, 25% of the students in each studied department were chosen using the proportionate-to-size sampling approach, yielding a total of 1,524 respondents.

Table 1. Sample procedure of 200-level students in Osun state.

Universities	Departments	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.		Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State		Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.	
Faculties/ Colleges		Population	Sample size (25%)	Population	Sample size (25%)	Population	Sample size
Basic medical sciences	Medicine	167	42	102	26	133	33
	Biochemistry	234	59	157	39	8	8
Sciences	Microbiology	246	62	188	47	12	12
	Physics	21	21	43	25	1	1
Social sciences	Economics	140	35	117	29	45	25
	Political sciences	124	31	159	40	13	13
Education	Arts and social sciences	92	23	99	25	N/A	N/A
	Science and technology	73	18	74	19	N/A	N/A
Engineering	Electrical Electronics engineering	100	25	113	28	32	25
	Agricultural engineering	38	25	26	25	N/A	N/A
Law	Law	238	60	81	20	50	25
Arts	Communication and language Arts/Mass communication	66	17	197	49	76	19
	Islamic/Religious studies	76	19	21	21	N/A	N/A
Agriculture	Agricultural economics	75	19	39	25	N/A	N/A
	Forestry	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	1,690	456	1,416	418	370	136

Note: N/A= Faculty not available.**Source:** Academic Planning Unit of the Universities (2023).

Table 1 presents 1,008 respondents in the sampled departments, faculties, and universities in Osun State. Obafemi Awolowo University (federal) has 456 respondents, Osun State University (state) has 418 respondents, and Bowen University (private) has 136 respondents.

Table 2. Sample procedure of 200-level students in Oyo State.

Universities/ Faculties/ Colleges	Departments	University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria		Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria		Atiba University, Oyo-Township, Oyo State, Nigeria	
		Population	Sample size (25%)	Population	Sample size (25%)	Population	Sample size
Basic medical sciences	Medicine	139	35	69	17	N/A	N/A
	Biochemistry	76	19	125	31	7	7
Sciences	Microbiology	60	15	N/A	N/A	6	6
	Physics	100	23	135	34	3	3
Social sciences	Economics	76	19	67	17	2	2
	Political sciences	71	18	N/A	N/A	14	14
Education	Arts and social sciences	140	35	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Science and technology	55	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Engineering	Electrical Electronics engineering	57	14	70	18	N/A	N/A
	Agricultural engineering	53	13	32	8	N/A	N/A
Law	Law	135	39	N/A	N/A	48	24
Arts	Communication and language arts/Mass communication	56	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Islamic/Religious studies	30	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Agriculture	Agricultural economics	36	9	217	54	N/A	N/A
	Forestry	49	12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	1,133	287	715	179	80	50

Note: N/A= Faculty not available.**Source:** Academic Planning Unit of the Universities (2023).

Table 2 presents 516 respondents in the sampled departments, faculties, and universities in Oyo State. The University of Ibadan (federal) consists of 287 respondents, Ladoke Akintola University (state) consists of 179 respondents, and Atiba University (private) consists of 50 respondents.

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and simple percentages, were used for demographic information and research questions. The hypothesis was tested using analysis of variance at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3. Demographic indices of the respondents.

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	16-19	568	42.2
	20-23	667	49.6
	24-27	76	5.6
	27- 30	31	2.3
	Above 31	4	0.3
Total		1346	100%
Gender	Male	666	49.5
	Female	680	50.5
Total		1346	100%

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the age distribution of respondents. In the table, 42.2% (568) were between the ages of 16-19 years, 49.6% (667) were between 20-23 years, 5.6% (76) were between 24-27 years, 2.3% (31) were between 27-30 years, and 0.3% (4) were above 31 years. The table also indicates that 49.5% (666) were male, while 50.5% (680) were female. These data imply that the majority of undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria were female.

Research Question: What is the relevance of admission academic abilities and subsequent undergraduates' academic achievement after admission?

Table 4. Admission academic ability and subsequent undergraduates 'academic achievement after admission in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Academic ability entry requirements			Academic achievement		
O' level and Jamb aggregate score	Frequency	Percentage	CGPA	Frequency	Percentage
(70 % - 100 %) – 5	291	22	(First class) – 5	129	10
(69 % - 60 %) – 4	484	36	(Second class upper) – 4	428	32
(59 % - 50 %) – 3	471	35	(Second class lower) - 3	543	41
(49 % - 45 %) -2	69	5	(Third class) – 2	218	16
(Below 44%) – 1	31	2	(Pass) – 1	17	1
			Probation	12	0
Total	1346	100	Total	1346	100

Table 4 shows aggregate scores at the point of admission in WAEC, NECO, and JAMB, as well as university undergraduates' academic achievement through their CGPA. At the point of admission, students whose scores ranged from 70% to 100% numbered 291 (22%), but their academic achievement later declined to 129 (10%) in the first-class category. Students within the range of 69% to 60%, numbered 484 (36%) at admission, declined in academic achievement to 428 (32%) in the second-class upper category. Students whose scores ranged from 50% to 59% numbered 471 (35%) at admission, and increased in academic achievement to 543 (41%) in the second class, lower division. Students whose scores ranged from 45% to 49% numbered 69 (5%) at admission, increased to 218 (16%) in the third-class category. Students whose aggregate scores were below 44% numbered 31 (2%) at admission, but their academic achievement later declined to 17 (1%) in the pass category, while others were on probation. This reveals a downward trend in their admission academic ability relative to their academic achievement at the undergraduate level.

The research question showed that academic ability was moderate. This could be because most undergraduates have already been screened and sometimes want to attest to being qualified. It also indicates that the admission

academic abilities correspond with the undergraduates' academic achievement when placed in an academic program in the university. This is supported by Onoyase and Onoyase (2009), who explained that academic programs vary in terms of entry requirements, subject combinations, aptitudes, skills, and personality traits that need to be considered and evaluated before qualifying for a particular profession. Fiezer (2013) clarified that academic program decisions affect students with lower academic abilities more than those with higher academic abilities, as measured by tests and examinations. High academic ability, according to the scholar, is the capacity to acquire the necessary skills for the intended activity and to possess fundamental knowledge. Walsh and Savickas (2005) explained that students with high academic ability sometimes are unaware of their potential and, thus, feel they possess little knowledge that would prevent them from pursuing an academic program, while students with low academic ability sometimes feel that pursuing an academic program in a demanding career would be a major hindrance.

H₀: Admission academic abilities do not have a significant relationship with undergraduates' academic achievement after admission.

Table 5. Admission academic abilities on undergraduates' academic achievement in Southwestern, Nigeria.

ANOVA					
GPA					
	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	167.878	2	0.857	0.934	0.723
Within groups	1053.617	1343	0.917		
Total	1221.495	1345			

Table 5 shows a significant relationship between admission academic abilities and undergraduates' academic achievement in Southwestern Nigeria. The analysis ($F_{(2, 1345)} = 0.934$) revealed that undergraduates' academic achievement was not significantly affected by admission academic ability at the time of admission. The null hypothesis, according to which undergraduate academic achievement in Southwestern Nigeria would not be related significantly to admission academic abilities, is therefore accepted. This implies that admission academic abilities do not have a significant relationship with undergraduates' academic achievement in Southwestern Nigeria.

In the hypothesis, it was revealed that admission academic abilities do not have a significant relationship with undergraduates' academic achievement in Southwestern Nigeria. This is because undergraduates can be influenced by peers and circumstances to improve and succeed. Geiser and Santelices (2007) and Acato (2006) also stated that academic achievement is influenced by factors such as admission academic abilities. Kpolovie et al. (2014) described academic ability as the ability to retain facts under examination conditions and communicate knowledge verbally or in writing. Abiola (2012) posited that academic achievement serves as the most reliable indicator of an individual's potential to thrive in life. The scholar described it as academic abilities, which are evident in an individual's capabilities and how they achieve academic excellence through persistence, determination, and focus. These are often classified based on performance in classes, tests, and examinations. Fiezer (2013) expatriated further that the majority of applicants to university programs lack the intellectual skills required for certain electives. The scholar also explained that most candidates do not want to be involved in fields that require a lot of effort and, therefore, want to make their lives easier by avoiding enrollment in such specialized programs.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that admission academic abilities have a significant relationship with undergraduates' academic achievement. This is because most students who are academically deficient would have been denied admission. Also, most students in the process of admission have been classified on the level of cognitive reasoning, and as a result, placed in various academic programs with specific grade points and curricula based on the level of intelligence.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommended that undergraduates should strive to improve their academic achievement, as this will determine their future opportunities. They should understand that their level of education will enhance their exposure to their rights and privileges in society, which can improve their standard of living, especially in Nigeria. It was similarly recommended that the government should fund public universities, as this would increase their capacity to admit students. Also, the government should encourage students to value education by improving employment opportunities for graduates, thereby fostering academic achievement in Nigeria.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, has granted approval for this study on 28 November 2023 (Ref. No. UI/SSHREC/2023/0139).

Transparency: The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1

Appendix 1 presents the instruments used for data collection, which are the Academic Achievement Scale and the Academic Ability Checklist. It is subdivided into three sections. Section A contains the personal data of the respondents. Section B requires the respondents to fill in the appropriate Cumulative Grade Point Average. Section C requires the respondents to fill in the grades obtained at the point of admission in WAEC/NECO, JAMB, and Post-JAMB.

University of Ibadan

Department of Educational Management

Part II

Dear Respondent,

The questionnaires below are designed for research purposes. The instruments are specifically designed to assess the socio-economic status of undergraduates. You are kindly requested to provide honest responses to each item as applicable to you.

No personal name is required, as all information provided will be treated confidentially.

Thank You.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

1. **Institution** _____
2. **Faculty** _____
3. **Department** _____
4. **Degree in view (e.g Bsc Mathematics)** _____
5. **Age** _____
6. **Gender** Male (☐) Female (☐)

SECTION B**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SCALE**

Instruction: Kindly fill in your grade in the column below

Grade Point Average (e.g 1.5 of 5.0): _____

SECTION C**ACADEMIC ABILITY CHECKLIST**

Kindly fill in O-level subjects, scores, and tick (✓) required entry grades of results at the point of admission

	Academic entry characteristics	A1	B2	B3	C4	C5	C6
	WAEC/ NECO RESULT						
1	English language						
2	Mathematics						
3							
4							
5							
	JAMB	SCORES					
1	JAMB						
2	POST-UTME						

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