

Late-hour exam: WAEC drops 24-hour delivery policy as three officials die in auto crash

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West African Examinations Council

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has officially reverted to its traditional 48-hour distribution window for exam materials.

The decision comes after a newly introduced 24-hour delivery policy triggered nationwide logistical chaos, forcing thousands of candidates in the ongoing West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to write papers late into the night.

The policy shift, aimed at curbing exam leakages, coincided with a devastating highway tragedy as three WAEC officials lost their lives in a head-on collision in Gombe State while going to deliver exam papers under the compressed timeline.

The operational crisis sparked heavy backlash from parents, school administrators, and education stakeholders across the country.

For consecutive days, examination centres reported severe delays in the arrival of question papers.

In extreme cases, students were forced to sit for subjects such as Mathematics and Agricultural Science practical on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively, under poor lighting conditions late into the night.

This disrupted the psychological readiness of candidates and drew sharp comparisons to last year's session, where similar delays forced some students to take the English Language paper as late as midnight.

An investigation by the Nigerian Tribune revealed that the current delays were largely caused by a recent management directive. High-level sources outside the WAEC national head office in Lagos revealed that the council's standard operational policy was always to utilize a 48-hour (two-day) time circle.

This time-frame existed between the printing of question papers and their secure transfer to custodian centres nationwide.

The two-day window allowed dispatch teams to navigate Nigeria's unpredictable security landscape and fragile road networks safely and without being rushed.

However, determined to prevent a repeat of last year's security breach—where the English Language paper leaked ahead of time—the current WAEC management slashed the distribution window to 24 hours.

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The logic was to compress the time available for rogue actors to intercept and compromise the materials. Instead, the decision backfired.

Inside sources stated that a 24-hour window is "grossly inadequate" to move heavy exam materials across long interstate distances, especially given the dilapidated state of federal highways.

The shortened timeline placed immense pressure on field workers.

Many were reportedly forced to drive through the night without adequate rest, inevitably missing their delivery targets and leaving exam centres stranded.

Recognising the collapse of the strategy, WAEC management has quietly returned to the old 48-hour order.

Insiders confirmed that the reversal is intended to stabilize the administration of the remaining papers and guarantee a hitch-free conclusion to the annual school-leaving examination.

Sadly, in the midst of the logistical pressure was a tragedy that occurred last Wednesday around 9.00 a.m.

Three WAEC staff members—Eleshin Dennis Olayinka, Dan-Malam Add'ua Muhammed, and Yusuf Umar Gwamna—were killed instantly in an automobile accident in the Billiri local government area of Gombe State.

The officials were driving a pick-up van loaded with "exam codes" along the Gombe-Yola Road when an oncoming trailer reportedly veered out of its lane, colliding with their vehicle head-on.

None of the three occupants survived the heavy impact.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that this tragic incident demoralised the workers such that many of the dispatch teams felt reluctant to embark on delivery role the following days.

In an emotional internal condolence memo circulated to WAEC staff nationwide, the Head of National Office (HNO) for WAEC Nigeria, Dr Amos Dangut, expressed profound grief over the incident.

He noted that the tragedy starkly highlights the extreme, often unseen risks that council employees face on the job.

"Their sudden and painful departure has left a void that will be difficult to fill.

"I pray that God will comfort their families and grant us all the strength, courage and fortitude to bear this irreparable loss."

As WAEC returns to its 48-hour logistics policy, education advocates are calling for a deeper review of how the council balances exam security with the physical safety of its personnel and the mental well-being of its candidates.