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# 6 arrested over O-Level exam leak

**Culpable.** Authorities say investigators have also started combing social media accounts to track down and arrest any users sharing leaked exams.

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**KAMPALA.** Six people have been taken into custody and a head teacher is on the run after a massive leak of the ongoing O-Level examinations triggered a police crackdown on masterminds.

"I can confirm to you that arrests have been made and investigations are going on," Mr Richard Ssenyondo, a police officer attached to Uganda National Examination Board (Uneb) security committee, said, referring additional inquiries to staff of the exam body.

There were fresh reports that more papers that candidates are yet to take had leaked alongside marking guides.

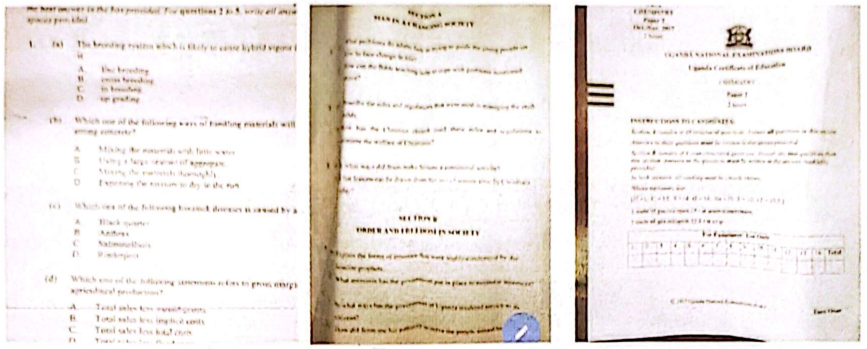
This newspaper established that the questions in Agriculture paper administered to Senior Four students yesterday were the same ones in a leaked version circulated on social media a day earlier.

Uneb and police deferred comments on the emerging irregularities, but announced nine hotlines for anyone with information on malpractices to alert detectives.

They also said investigators had started combing social media accounts, including WhatsApp platforms, to track down and arrest any users sharing leaked exams.

Among the six so far detained are a student and Uneb scout that investigators said suppressed information about examination malpractice after being compromised.

Detectives are following leads that a 17-year-old student last week reported to the examination room with a copy of answered Biology Practical paper that their teacher discussed with them hours earlier, and the scout caught him.



**Malpractice.** Some of the leaked examination papers that were shared on social media platforms. FILE PHOTO

The school in Nakaseke District, according to police, bought the scout's silence.

News of the incident, however, spread quickly, leading to the student's arrest and the head teacher's escape.

The national examinations body yesterday confirmed receiving reports a possible leak of some papers of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams and said it was treating the matter "seriously".

Mr Hamis Kaheru, the Uneb spokesperson, said security agencies are working to establish the authenticity of the leaked papers.

He noted Uneb has "received reports of alleged leakage of ongoing UCE examination".

"The reports indicate that a few papers may have been seen by some candidates before the official time for opening question paper envelopes at sitting centres," Mr Kaheru said in the statement.

"The board takes these reports seriously and is working with security agencies to establish the authenticity of the alleged examination papers that reportedly circulated on social media and the source of those papers. The security agencies have made some arrests and investigations are continuing," he added.

The anomalies notwithstanding, the examinations will proceed as scheduled, according to Mr Kaheru.

Top officials of the exams body yesterday held three back-to-back meetings at their Kampala head office, one of them to receive updates from police detectives. Details of their deliberations were unavailable by press time.

The police inquiries are being led by Deputy Commissioner of Police Venus Tumuhimbise and Assistant Commissioner of Police Godfrey Maate. Both declined to discuss their preliminary findings.

"I can confirm we have made arrests. These arrests have been led by social media. We are warning whoever is using social media to post exams to stop. We are monitoring social media and ready to act," Mr Maate said.

*Daily Monitor* broke news of the exams leak yesterday. The exposé, based on accounts offered by some teachers and students who preferred not to be named due to sensitivity of the matter, showed that some schools on Wednesday obtained copies of Chemistry and Christian Religious Education papers hours before the scheduled examination time. Some of the papers were shared on social media, mostly by WhatsApp, and sources said each leaked paper cost as much as Shs500,000 on the black market.

The revelations sparked nationwide anxiety and animated conversation on social media on the credibility of the exams, whose results determine one's progress to high school or tertiary institution.

"[A] conspiracy theorist near me says these are Uneb officials trying to fail the new (executive) secretary as he was too strict and getting in the way of people making money while doing nothing," journalist Dicta Asiimwe said in a Facebook comment about the malpractice.

Mr Daniel Nokrach Odongo, the current executive secretary, took office from long-serving predecessor Matthew Bukenya in April, last year.

The first national examinations he presided over at the end of 2016 went without any reported incident of leaks, raising questions about how his team dropped the guard this year.

One social media commentator, however, attributed the spreading examinations malpractice to inadequate hands-on experience and said it showed change is not always good since Mr Bukenya was a "tried and tested" hand.

Mr Kaheru said they were awaiting and their next course of action will depend on outcomes of the ongoing investigations.

"We are leaving police to do its work of investigations and issue a report after," Mr Kaheru said.

Police spokesperson Asan Kasingye said the student they arrested informed interrogators that his head teacher at the school in Nakaseke shared with them the leaked paper last Thursday.

The national examination papers are printed by Uneb and transported under guard for overnight storage at police stations from where individual schools, in the presence of scouts deployed by the national exam body, collect them.

At Uneb offices in Ntinda, a Kampala suburb, senior officials absolved their staff and instead blamed police officers in-charge of storing and guarding the papers.

**Additional reporting by Joseph Kato**

## SECURING NATIONAL PAPERS

**Storage:** Our visits to police stations in Kampala found that the exam papers are delivered in green metallic boxes and kept in a container locked with two different padlocks. A police guard keeps the key to one of the padlocks and a lead Uneb scout keeps the other.

The boxes are opened 30 minutes to the scheduled start of exams to enable city school head teachers pick the papers and race back on time. Police sources said some of their stations have no secure storage facilities, meaning anything could happen. "It is not easy to establish how these papers have leaked; it could be from Uneb or even police stations because some of them don't have facilities to secure them properly and you can't blame them," one officer said, asking not to be named.

**Hotlines:** For reporting malpractices call: Landlines 0414-289 397, 0414-286636 and mobile numbers 0772-471766 and 0772-625154. Investigating police officers can be reached on 0772-510120, 0711-374160, 0771-465442, 0772-401396 and 0714-385356.

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