

AMCOA

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA



RESPONSIVE REGULATION
FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES
TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

28TH
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

ACCRA, GHANA

23 – 27 AUGUST 2026

DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AND ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IN AFRICA

From National Regulation to Regional Trust

The EAC Experience in Harmonising Medical and Dental Regulation

Prof. Afrika Gasana

Chair, East African Community (EAC) Block

28th AMCOA Annual Scientific Conference • Accra, Ghana • 24 August 2026



EAC REGULATORY REFORM EXPERIENCE

AMCOA

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA



ACCRA, GHANA

23 – 27 AUGUST 2026



Why Regional Harmonisation Matters

- Health professionals increasingly train, move and practise across national borders.
- Different regulatory standards create uncertainty for regulators, practitioners, training institutions and the public.
- The EAC response is to build common regulatory expectations while retaining national regulatory authority.
- The goal is comparable standards, credible quality assurance and confidence in one another's regulatory decisions.
- Patient protection is the purpose; safe professional mobility is the outcome.

The EAC Harmonisation Architecture

- **Common standards & QA**

- Regional standards for medical/dental education, internship, specialist training and teaching hospitals.
- Multinational expert teams undertake joint inspections and agree findings.
- Peer review reduces variation in interpretation of standards.

- **Recognition & governance**

- Institutions meeting agreed requirements progress through regional recognition.
- Corrective actions, follow-up and re-inspection maintain accountability.
- Technical consensus among Councils/Boards feeds EAC Secretariat and Sectoral Council processes.

Practical Experience: Joint Regional Inspection

- Regulators from different Partner States participate in common assessment processes rather than relying only on national review.
- Teams assess institutions against regionally agreed standards, document compliance and gaps, and harmonise findings collectively.
- Institutions with deficiencies receive recommendations and defined follow-up expectations.
- Recent EAC work included recommendations for institutions in Uganda and Tanzania to implement corrective actions and invite re-inspection within six months.
- Peer inspection converts harmonisation from a policy statement into observable regulatory practice.

Leadership Makes Joint Inspection Work

- **What the Rwanda experience showed**

- RMDC and HEC joint inspections depend on clear leadership, coordination and fair evidence-based judgment.
- Recurring deficiencies included governance, staffing, laboratories, documentation, trainee welfare and M&E.
- Inspection quality also varied with leadership preparation, communication, and harmonization of findings.

- **Low-cost leadership intervention**

- Pre-inspection orientation and inspector Code of Conduct.
- Clear roles for leaders, experts and rapporteurs.
- Daily coordination/debriefs during site visits.
- Post-inspection harmonisation to validate evidence, scoring and reporting.

Evidence from the Joint Inspection Leadership Model

- **Results**

- • 100% reported that roles were clear or very clear.
- • 100% reported that objectives were mostly or fully achieved.
- • UR-CMHS audit recorded 75% overall compliance (partial compliance).
- • All inspectors signed the Code of Conduct before deployment.

- **What it means for EAC**

- • Technical standards alone are not enough; team leadership affects inspection reliability.
- • Debriefs and harmonisation strengthen credibility and comparability of findings.
- • A trained pool of inspectors and shared routines can support EAC scale-up.
- • Accreditation should become a platform for continuous quality improvement, not compliance only.

Practical Experience: Regional Recognition

- Regional recognition provides a structured signal that a training institution has been assessed against agreed EAC requirements.
- The EAC Secretariat has been directed to issue five-year Certificates of Recognition following the agreed quality-assurance process.
- Recognition strengthens confidence between Partner States and supports professional mobility.
- Recognition must remain linked to continued compliance, follow-up and re-assessment.
- Lesson: mutual recognition is sustainable only when it rests on credible and transparent quality assurance.

Harmonising the Training-to-Practice Continuum

- **Education & internship**

- Medical and dental schools: common expectations for educational quality and institutional capacity.
- Internship: finalise common regional guidelines and checklist for supervised transition to practice.

- **Postgraduate & clinical training**

- Specialist training: regional standards to strengthen comparability of postgraduate education.
- Teaching hospitals: agreed expectations for safe, competency-based clinical training environments.

A Current Priority: EAC Internship Harmonisation

- The EAC Medical and Dental Boards and Councils are working to finalise regional internship guidelines and a common checklist.
- The Sectoral Council directed the EAC Secretariat to support finalization and reporting of progress.
- Variation in supervision, case exposure, assessment and completion requirements can undermine mutual confidence.
- A common framework can define minimum expectations while allowing implementation within national systems.
- Priority: move from draft guidance to implementation, monitoring and evidence of equivalence.

Key Achievements of the EAC Approach

- **Regional gains**

- Regulators increasingly develop positions collectively and build consensus.
- Regional standards provide a common quality language.
- Joint inspections and re-inspections create peer accountability.

- **System gains**

- Recognition mechanisms bridge harmonised standards and mobility.
- Cross-border teams accelerate institutional learning.
- Shared inspection practice strengthens trust between regulatory authorities.

Challenges: Where Harmonisation Becomes Difficult

- Different national laws and regulatory mandates can slow implementation of regional decisions.
- Partner States differ in resources, institutional capacity and maturity of regulatory systems.
- Agreement on a standard does not automatically produce consistent implementation.
- Regional inspections and follow-up require sustainable financing, coordination and trained inspectors.
- Data systems are not yet fully interoperable for real-time practitioner verification and regulatory information exchange.
- Mobility raises practical questions around licence status, disciplinary information, scope of practice and CPD.

Lessons Learned from the EAC Experience

- Harmonisation must be regulator-led but politically supported.
- Consensus takes time, but creates ownership and durability.
- Common standards require common interpretation; joint assessment and harmonization help achieve this.
- Leadership, role clarity, ethics and structured reflection improve inspection reliability.
- Recognition must be evidence-based and accompanied by follow-up mechanisms.
- Regional policy must connect to national law, procedures and budgets.
- Trust grows through repeated collaboration, transparency and reciprocal peer review.

What Can Africa Learn from the EAC Experience?

- Build harmonisation around minimum standards and measurable outcomes, not institutional uniformity.
- Create structured peer-inspection and peer-review mechanisms among regulatory authorities.
- Link mutual recognition to demonstrated quality assurance — never to mobility alone.
- Invest in inspector leadership, ethics, role clarity and harmonised evidence-based judgement.
- Develop common minimum regulatory datasets and secure cross-border practitioner verification.
- Use AMCOA to connect regional blocks and progressively build an African regulatory trust framework.

A Practical Roadmap: From Harmonisation to Trust

- 1. AGREE — Define minimum regional standards and competencies.
- 2. PREPARE — Build inspector leadership, ethics, role clarity and shared tools.
- 3. ASSESS — Use joint inspections, debriefs and transparent evidence.
- 4. RECOGNISE — Link recognition to demonstrated compliance and follow-up.
- 5. CONNECT — Exchange trusted regulatory and practitioner data.
- 6. SUSTAIN — Monitor, re-assess, learn and continuously improve.
- Result: safer mobility, stronger accountability and greater confidence between regulatory systems.

Regional Trust Is the Real Infrastructure of Mobility

Harmonization is not about making every regulator identical. It is about building enough common standards, evidence and confidence to trust one another's decisions.

Thank you

AMCOA

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA

