

Makerere ordered to stop admitting dental students

BY CAROL NATUKUNDA

STUDENTS at the Makerere University dental school are in suspense following a recommendation by regional medical councils that the facility be closed with immediate effect.

The decision was arrived at after two successive inspections which revealed that the dental school was running without the necessary staff and equipment.

A July 1, 2019 report signed by the chairpersons of the East African Community (EAC) medical and dental practitioners councils stated that Makerere's dental school does not meet the minimum requirements for training students suitable for recognition and registration as stipulated in the guidelines by partner states.

"The EAC joint inspection has recommended that the university stops new admissions in the dental programme until the issues are complied with. The National Council for Higher Education and the education ministry should redistribute the newly enrolled students of September 2019 to other approved dental

schools. They should also prepare a mechanism of training the existing students in order to meet the minimum requirements," the report stated.

The inspection of the dental school is a follow-up of earlier recommendations by the EAC.

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The report, showed that many of the equipment were not working, casting doubt on the quality of dental surgeons churned out from Uganda's oldest institution of learning.

"The dental clinic lacks adequate facilities for storage of sterilised equipment, a dental compressor and a proper waste management plan.

The report noted that during the 2015 inspection, the university was asked to set up units specialising in surgery of the face, mouth and jaws, restorative, community and pediatric dentistry. However, four years since the last inspection, there has been little effort to set up the facilities.

"There was no evidence of substantive heads of units or staff complement. The university must comply with

the establishment of specialised units that are inadequately staffed," the report said.

It stated that although the university was in the process of upgrading the school, there was no evidence on the roadmap to support the claim. The university was also asked to comply with the establishment of academic staff to a student ratio of 1:4, in clinical subjects.

The dean of the school of health sciences, Prof. Charles Rwenyonyi Mugisha is quoted to have said the school recruited three members of the teaching staff. However, he was unable to provide evidence.

■ MAKERERE'S POSITION

Prof. Umaru Kakumba, the deputy vice-chancellor of academic affairs, assured the inspectors that the university was committed to quality improvement.

Prof. Joel Okullo, the chairperson of the Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Council, said inspections would go a long way in strengthening the human resources capacity in the region.