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Your Ref:

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PRESS STATEMENT

CLARIFICATION OF THE RESPECTIVE MANDATES OF NCHE AND PSU CONCERNING THE BACHELOR OF PHARMACY PROGRAMME AT MUST

The Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda (PSU) has noted recent public remarks, including remarks made by public officials, concerning its decision communicated on 19 October 2026 to withdraw professional recognition of the Bachelor of Pharmacy programme at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST). In particular, Council is aware of a media clip of remarks attributed to the Deputy Speaker of Parliament on the floor of Parliament suggesting that, because the programme is accredited by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), PSU's decision amounts to interference with NCHE's mandate. Council has also noted NCHE's press release issued today.

PSU respects Parliament, the Office of the Deputy Speaker, NCHE and MUST. It nevertheless considers it necessary to correct an important misunderstanding of the law: accreditation of a university programme and professional eligibility to enter a regulated health profession are distinct questions. The two statutory mandates are complementary, not mutually exclusive.

1. NCHE accredits programmes; PSU safeguards entry into the profession

Under Section 5 of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, Cap. 262, NCHE exercises statutory functions relating to accreditation, higher-education standards, monitoring of institutions, and academic qualifications. PSU neither claims nor purports to exercise the power to cancel NCHE accreditation, close a university, stop teaching, or invalidate a degree awarded by MUST.

Separately, under sections 8(1)(a)&(b) and 22(1)&(2)(a), (c)&(d) of the Pharmacy and Drugs Act, Cap. 309, PSU Council has responsibilities concerning approval of qualifications or institutions for PSU membership pathways, qualifying examinations, pharmacy-student training, and the classes of persons entitled to train pharmacy students. Registration as a

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pharmacist is a further statutory process administered by the Pharmacy Board under section 13. An academic award is therefore not, by itself, a licence to practise pharmacy.

To put it simply: NCHE determines whether MUST may offer an accredited Bachelor of Pharmacy programme. PSU must independently consider whether the training and qualifications presented satisfy the requirements applicable to entry into the pharmacy profession. MUST may continue teaching under its NCHE accreditation; PSU cannot be compelled to disregard material professional-training deficiencies merely because that accreditation remains valid.

2. Accreditation does not eliminate the duty of continuing professional oversight

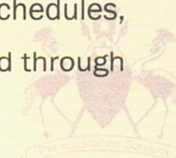
An accreditation decision is based on an assessment made at a particular time and remains subject to NCHE's own monitoring powers. Staffing, leadership, supervision, and teaching conditions can change after accreditation. A programme may retain a valid accreditation while material questions subsequently arise about compliance with professional training standards. PSU's responsibility is therefore continuing, not exhausted by its participation in an earlier accreditation process. Its involvement in consultation with NCHE does not constitute an irrevocable undertaking to recognise all future training regardless of subsequent developments.

PSU's concerns are not an attempt to invent competing academic standards. They concern compliance with applicable professional-training and higher-education requirements, including relevant NCHE minimum standards for pharmacy education. The applicable text of those standards and the current facts must be assessed together, fairly and transparently.

3. The MUST decision and subsequent developments

PSU's public notice of 19 October 2026 followed concerns recorded by Council regarding leadership and staffing in MUST's Department of Pharmacy, a show-cause process, and the response available to Council at the time. The notice addresses PSU recognition for specified professional purposes; it does not purport to withdraw NCHE accreditation.

Council has now seen MUST's Vice Chancellor's letter of 20 October 2026 to NCHE, reporting that Dr. Jonans Tusiimire, a pharmacist, was appointed Acting Head of the Department with effect from 19 October 2026, and that recruitment and other remedial measures are being pursued. PSU welcomes steps directed at restoring and sustaining compliance. Those representations, together with the underlying appointment documents, staffing schedules, teaching arrangements and relevant minimum standards, should be promptly verified through an orderly engagement involving MUST, NCHE and PSU.



4. Students deserve clarity, fairness and protection

PSU recognises the anxiety that the announcement has caused students, parents and graduates. Students must not be made casualties of institutional disagreement. Council will address the position of affected cohorts and periods of study on the basis of verified facts, applicable law, procedural fairness and proportionate transitional measures. No student should understand the PSU notice as cancellation of a degree or NCHE accreditation. Equally, completion of an academic degree does not dispense with the separate statutory requirements for PSU membership, professional qualifying processes and Pharmacy Board registration before lawful independent pharmacy practice.

5. A practical way forward

Council invites urgent technical engagement with NCHE and MUST to verify compliance, identify any outstanding deficiency in staffing in the department of pharmacy which directly affects the quality of pharmacy graduates produced by the university, agree measurable corrective action and determine the appropriate professional-recognition position, including the treatment of students already in training. PSU remains ready to review its decision promptly when sufficient evidence establishes that the applicable requirements are met. This is not a contest for institutional supremacy; it is a shared duty to safeguard pharmacy education, students and the Ugandan public.

PSU reiterates that it does not challenge NCHE's accreditation of the MUST Bachelor of Pharmacy programme. It asserts only the distinct responsibilities Parliament has entrusted to the professional regulator and its Council. Both institutions can and should discharge their duties without one displacing the other.

Per medicatum servium
(With medicines, We serve)



Dr. Stephen Lutoti

Secretary, Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda

