

Distinguishing Arab Board Training Centers from the Arab Board Office in Somalia

A Framework for Postgraduate Health-Specialist Training and Governance

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Date: October 2026



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Abstract

Postgraduate specialist training requires a clear separation between the institution that delivers clinical education and the authority that governs, coordinates, assesses, and certifies the training process. In Somalia, this distinction is particularly important for the implementation of training programs under the Arab Board of Health Specializations. An Arab Board training center is an approved hospital or teaching institution where residents undertake supervised clinical training. By contrast, an Arab Board office or national coordinating authority is an administrative body responsible for registration, communication, accreditation coordination, examination arrangements, and liaison with the central Arab Board. Confusing these two functions may create uncertainty regarding institutional responsibilities, trainee supervision, accreditation, and certification. This article presents a practical framework for distinguishing the two entities in the Somali context and proposes a model for their cooperation.

Keywords: Arab Board; Somalia; postgraduate medical education; training center; accreditation; residency training; health-specialist education; governance.

Introduction

The development of competent medical and health specialists depends on a structured system that connects curriculum, clinical training, supervision, assessment, and certification. The Arab Board of Health Specializations provides specialist training frameworks and examination

pathways for health professionals in Arab countries. Its programs generally require trainees to register through the prescribed process and to complete training in centers accredited for the relevant specialty.

For Somalia, the distinction between a training center and an Arab Board office is essential. Hospitals and universities may provide clinical education, but they should not be described as Arab Board-accredited centers unless they have received formal approval for a specified specialty. Similarly, an administrative office may coordinate the Arab Board process, but it does not replace the hospital-based environment required for clinical learning.

This article explains the separate functions of these two structures and demonstrates how they should operate together within Somalia's postgraduate health-specialist system.

The Arab Board Training Center

Definition

An Arab Board training center is a hospital, teaching hospital, university hospital, or other health institution formally approved to provide postgraduate training in a particular specialty. Accreditation is specialty-specific. Therefore, approval to train residents in one discipline does not automatically authorize the institution to provide training in all other disciplines.

For example, a hospital may be approved for internal medicine but not for surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, or emergency medicine. The institution must satisfy the requirements of the relevant scientific council and the Arab Board's accreditation process for each program.

Core functions

- Providing supervised clinical care and practical training.
- Organizing rotations through appropriate departments.
- Assigning qualified specialists and trainers.
- Ensuring exposure to an adequate range and volume of patients.
- Providing access to essential diagnostic, therapeutic, emergency, and support services.
- Maintaining trainee logbooks and attendance records.
- Conducting workplace-based assessments.
- Organizing academic meetings, case discussions, journal clubs, audits, and teaching sessions.

- Reporting the trainee’s progress through the prescribed Arab Board procedures.
- Protecting patient safety, confidentiality, and professional standards.

The center’s relationship with the trainee

The training center has the closest relationship with the trainee. It is where the resident attends clinical duties, examines and manages patients under supervision, participates in procedures and operations, completes clinical rotations, receives feedback from supervisors, records clinical experiences in a logbook, and develops professional, communication, research, and leadership skills.

The center may recommend that a trainee progress, repeat a rotation, receive additional supervision, or be referred for remedial support. However, local recommendations do not by themselves constitute the final Arab Board certification decision.

The Arab Board Office

Definition

The Arab Board office is an administrative and coordinating body that supports the operation of the Arab Board system within a country or region. It should not be confused with a clinical training hospital.

Depending on the national arrangement, the office may be located within, or work in cooperation with, the Ministry of Health, a national medical council, a university, a professional association, or another authorized institution. Its precise legal status and powers should be defined by an official agreement with the central Arab Board and the relevant Somali authorities.

Core functions

- Receiving and reviewing trainee applications.
- Guiding applicants on registration requirements.
- Communicating official Arab Board policies and deadlines.
- Coordinating with approved training centers.
- Supporting the submission of accreditation applications.
- Maintaining national records of Arab Board trainees and programs.
- Coordinating examination applications and examination logistics.

- Liaising with the Ministry of Health, universities, hospitals, and professional regulatory bodies.
- Forwarding documentation to the central Arab Board.
- Communicating examination results and official decisions.
- Supporting annual registration, interruption, withdrawal, and certification procedures.

Limits of the office

- Present itself as a substitute for an accredited training hospital.
- Claim that a hospital is accredited without formal confirmation.
- Provide clinical supervision in place of consultants at the training center.
- Certify completion of specialty training independently of the Arab Board.
- Admit trainees to a specialty program without confirmation that the relevant training center and program are approved.
- Allow trainees to undertake unsupervised clinical practice outside Somali professional regulations.

The office may coordinate and facilitate accreditation, but formal approval must come from the competent Arab Board authority under its established procedures.

Application to Somalia

The training center in Somalia

In Somalia, an approved Arab Board training center would normally be a hospital or teaching institution with sufficient clinical capacity to support the relevant specialty. It may be located in Mogadishu or another Somali city, provided that it satisfies the accreditation requirements.

A Somali teaching hospital may already provide undergraduate education, internship training, or local postgraduate training. Those activities do not automatically make it an Arab Board-accredited center. Arab Board recognition requires a separate assessment and approval process for the specific specialty and training program.

For example, if a Somali hospital wishes to train residents in general surgery, it would need to demonstrate appropriate surgical services, qualified supervisors, operating-theatre capacity,

emergency coverage, intensive-care access, postoperative care, patient volume, academic teaching, assessment systems, and compliance with the Arab Board's requirements.

The office in Somalia

A Somali Arab Board office or national coordination unit would serve as the administrative link between Somali stakeholders and the central Arab Board. It could be established through an official arrangement involving the Ministry of Health, recognized professional bodies, universities, and approved hospitals.

The office would not necessarily own or manage the training hospitals. Instead, it would coordinate the system and ensure that information moves accurately between the trainee, the hospital, Somali authorities, and the central Arab Board.

Institutional distinction

Function	Arab Board training center	Arab Board office in Somalia
Institutional nature	Hospital or teaching institution	Administrative and coordinating body
Primary purpose	Clinical and educational training	Registration, coordination, communication, and administration
Main setting	Wards, clinics, theatres, laboratories, emergency units, and academic departments	Office, electronic platform, meetings, and official correspondence
Daily trainee supervision	Yes	No
Clinical patient care	Yes, under professional and institutional rules	No, except where office staff separately hold clinical roles
Clinical rotations	Organizes and delivers them	Monitors documentation and coordination
Trainers	Appoints or designates qualified clinical supervisors	Maintains coordination with trainers and programs
Logbooks and workplace assessment	Completes and verifies them	Receives, records, or forwards documentation
Program accreditation	Provides evidence and hosts assessment	Coordinates the application and communication
Examination process	Supports trainee preparation and verification	Coordinates registration and logistics
Specialist certificate	Does not issue the final Arab Board certificate	Does not independently issue the final certificate
Accountability	Patient care, supervision, facilities, and training quality	Administrative accuracy, coordination, communication, and compliance

A Proposed Somali Operating Model

1. National planning: Somali health authorities and relevant educational and professional institutions should identify priority specialties based on national health needs, disease burden, workforce shortages, hospital capacity, patient safety, and trainer availability.
2. Establishment of the coordinating office: An official national coordination mechanism should be designated, with a written mandate defining its host institution, relationships, authority, limitations, and accountability.
3. Accreditation of training centers: Hospitals seeking recognition should apply for accreditation for a defined specialty and provide evidence concerning governance, clinical services, supervisors, patient volume, facilities, teaching, assessment, and quality improvement.
4. Admission and registration: A physician should not be regarded as an Arab Board trainee merely because he or she is employed by a hospital. The trainee should be accepted by an approved center, satisfy educational and professional requirements, and complete the required registration process.
5. Training and monitoring: The hospital should provide clinical education, supervision, rotations, assessments, and academic activities. The Somali office should monitor administrative compliance and coordinate reports with the central Arab Board.
6. Examination and certification: The office may coordinate examination applications, dates, venues, and communication. The trainee must satisfy the central Arab Board's requirements and pass the prescribed examinations; the official certificate is issued through the competent Arab Board authority.

Risks of Confusing the Two Structures

- Misleading institutional claims: A hospital may advertise itself as an Arab Board center without formal approval.
- Unclear responsibility: If the office and hospital have overlapping roles, it may become unclear who is responsible for supervision, assessment, trainee welfare, and patient safety.
- Invalid training records: Training completed in a non-accredited center may not be accepted toward Arab Board certification.

- Weak accountability: A written division of responsibilities is necessary to prevent gaps between the office and hospital.
- Professional and legal concerns: Trainees must have the right to practice under Somali law and institutional regulations.

Recommendations

1. Publish a verified list of Arab Board-accredited training centers by specialty.
2. State clearly whether each institution is fully accredited, provisionally approved, under review, or not accredited.
3. Establish a formal mandate for the Somali Arab Board coordinating office.
4. Separate administrative registration from clinical supervision.
5. Require written agreements between the office, training centers, universities, and relevant authorities.
6. Provide trainees with written confirmation of their center's accreditation status before enrollment.
7. Use standardized logbooks, assessment forms, and reporting deadlines.
8. Conduct periodic site visits and quality reviews.
9. Create a transparent complaints and appeals mechanism.
10. Prohibit hospitals and offices from using the term "Arab Board-accredited" without documentary approval.
11. Align all clinical practice with Somali licensing and professional regulations.
12. Publish contact details for official verification of programs and certificates.

Conclusion

In Somalia, an Arab Board training center and an Arab Board office should be treated as two distinct but interdependent components of postgraduate specialist education. The training center is the clinical institution where residents learn, practice, rotate, and receive supervision. The office is the administrative and coordinating body that manages registration, communication, documentation, accreditation coordination, and examination arrangements.

The distinction may be expressed simply: the hospital trains the resident; the office coordinates the system; the Arab Board authority governs the standards, examinations, and certification. Clear institutional boundaries will protect trainees, strengthen accountability, improve patient safety, and support the development of credible specialist training programs in Somalia.

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