

African Academic Credit System (ACTS)

Report of the Policy Country Visit to MAURITIUS

(Mauritius, 5th August 2024)

Date: Tuesday 6th August 2024 – 15.00 – 18.00

Location: Higher Education Commission (HEC) La Reduit, Face MCA South Wing, Rose Hill, Moka, Mauritius

ACTS Experts who participated of the visit:

- Robert Ayine (Higher Education Expert of IUCEA)
- Ana Maria Nhampule (Higher Education Expert of Mozambique)
- Pablo Beneitone (Higher Education Expert of OBREAL)
- Apiyo Okwiri (Project manager OBREAL)

List of participants from National authorities: see Annex 1

1. Purpose of the site visit

- Validation and enrichment of the data provided by the countries through the responses to the Mapping Study Questionnaire, with a particular focus on data on Mauritius and SADC.

2. Objectives of the meeting:

- Presentation of ACTS initiative and its importance for international mobility and academic recognition.
- Discussion with participants for the identification of the main challenges for the implementation of ACTS at national level.

3. Brief Description of the main Higher Education Policy Development at National Level in different fields

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is a regulatory body for higher education in Mauritius under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. The national law for higher education is established by the Higher Education Act 2017. The Quality Assurance Authority is the central actor responsible for setting standards, accreditation and checking compliance to the policy and standards.

The development of the National Credit Value and Transfer System Framework (NCVTS) was led by HEC since 2022 and it is in its initial stage. The NCVTS is an instrument that supports the design, description, recognition and awarding of qualifications and their components. The use of the NCVTS in combination with the National Qualification Framework based on learning outcomes, makes qualifications and their components more transparent and easier to understand. It facilitates the recognition of foreign qualifications in Mauritius and Mauritian qualifications abroad, as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning (collectively known as recognition of prior learning).

4. Description of the visit

The visit focused presentation of the report from the survey on Credit System being implemented in Mauritius and also getting an understanding of how credit system is being implemented and the related challenges. This document records the main aspects to be retained from the interactions that

took place at the meeting and, at the end, presents the opinion of the members of the ACTS Expert Team on the possibilities and challenges of Mauritius's participation in the implementation phase of ACTS.

The official opening was done by Prof. Romeela Mohee, Higher Education Commissioner. She introduced the key elements of the Mauritian Higher Education system, and in particular she focused in two main aspects:

- a) Two recent official documents launched in relation to National Credit system: in July 2024, a National Credit Value and Transfer System Framework Document and Guidelines for the implementation of NCVTS have been developed by HEC in collaboration with the Mauritius Qualification Authority, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology and QAA. These documents provide basic elements for understanding the NCVTS Framework, learning outcomes and qualifications, and the role of key stakeholders to support effective implementation of the NCVTS credits. In particular, the guidelines have been developed to assist various users, learners, teaching and administrative staff in educational institutions, employers, national authorities, and other interested national, foreign and international parties.
- b) A draft document developing recommendations for a Mauritius micro-credentials framework covering both the TVET and higher education sectors. This initiative is the result of an action research project with the contributions of technical experts from UNESCO. Mauritius is investing in the future of its people and setting the stage for long-term economic growth, innovation, and social advancement by adopting micro-credentials and creating a thorough national framework.

5. Commitment of the policy authorities with ACTS implementation phase

HEC authorities expressed their's highest interest in participating in regional, African and global initiatives for the harmonization of higher education, as a way to strengthen internal processes with a view to improving the quality of national higher education.

Since the begining of meeting, it was stressed that Mauritius is interested in participating in the implementation of ACTS and thanked the initiative for including the country in the visit.

6. Systematisation and analysis of topic exchange during the visit

The discussions focused on issues surrounding Credit System. The following points were introduced by Prof. Romella:

- Educational institutions are encouraged to use standardised value of NCVTS credits for modules in a programme, to ensure a consistent amount of learning time per a module.
- Multiples of the standardised NCVTS credits per modules are acceptable, a double or triple value of NCVTS credit, but institutions should avoid wide variability in the numbers of NCVTS credits for each module within a single programme.
- It is recognised that some programmes, may involve a much greater expected annual notional learning time than the minimum 1200 notional learning hours, but not more than 1800 hours.
- Educational institutions must transparently present the NCVTS credits (and other credit systems if relevant to the institutions) in accordance with the NCVTS Framework in their programmes leading to NQF qualifications.
- One NCVTS credit (1 NCVTS) corresponds to the learner's workload of 10 hours of estimated notional learning time, which includes all learning activities under relevant and decided learning conditions for the specified learning outcomes.
- Once the estimated notional learning time for achieving the specified learning outcomes is defined, it applies equally to all forms of learning – face-to-face, project based, blended, online and distance learning. The same set of specified learning outcomes has equal volume of learning, i.e. the same number of NCVTS credits.

- The learning outcomes and associated notional learning time for a full-time year are equivalent to 120 NCVTS credits in the NCVTS Framework.
- NCVTS credits are expressed in whole numbers only.
- The minimum possible NCVTS credit for a unit and a micro-credential is 1 NCVTS credit.

Finally, ACTS Expert Team introduced the next steps to be followed in relation to the implementation phase. It was explained that between September and November 2024, HAQAA will be organizing three additional regional workshops with strategic partners in Africa, to share the findings of the state of the art study and compile recommendations for the next steps of ACTS endorsement and implementation in Africa. These regional workshops (In Nairobi, Egypt and Senegal, respectively), will be complemented by national policy visits, similar to the one that HEC is receiving, to explore in more depth the interests, concerns and priorities of national authorities. From this, the State of the Art report will be finalized and translated into four official African languages (French, English, Portuguese and Arabic). ACTS Expert Team will make a preliminary assessment/recommendation for 10 pilot countries for ACTS implementation. The authorities of those countries will be asked to submit a proposal for participation in the pilot phase, accompanied by a national work plan that aligns to specific policy interests. Once approved, a cohort of universities will be selected to for the pilot phase, to accompany the national authority. The pilot phase will entail work at the level of study programmes and learning outcome design, as well as intra-African mobility and recognition and a broader training on the credit systems and their usage with respect to regional integration, recognition, mobility, lifelong learning, etc.

7. Opinion of the ACTS Technical Team on Mauritius's participation in the implementation phase

In the opinion of the ACTS Expert Team, Mauritius offers wide possibilities for participation in the implementation phase of ACTS. There is a political commitment of the country to the operationalization of the African initiative, declared and demonstrated at the highest level, by the authorities of HEC who supervises higher education.

The possibilities of materializing political commitment are supported by:

- Enthusiasm shown by the national authorities, HEC in relation to the support that ACTS initiative can give to the development and implementation of the National Credit Value and Transfer System Framework (NCVTS). It is clear that ACTS implementation phase might be an opportunity for the instalment of the national credit system. The initiative is absolutely timely.
- The commitment of HEC can play a relevant role in the coordination and management of activities at the national level, with the engagement of the selected HEIs and with wide possibilities of extending the implementation of ACTS to other HEIs, as one of the impact results of the pilot implementation.
- The enthusiasm and interest shown by the HEIs represented at the meeting, recognizing that the implementation of ACTS can add value to internal processes.
- The clarity with which the participants pointed to the factors that determine the implementation of ACTS, suggesting actions and products that should be developed.