

African Academic Credit System (ACTS)

Report of the Policy Country Visit to UGANDA

(Kampala, 20th March 2025)

Date: Thursday 20th March 2025 - 14.00 – 17.00

Location: National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) - Uganda Offices Plot M834, Kigobe Road, Kyambogo, Kampala, Uganda

ACTS Experts who participated of the visit:

- Dr. Robert Ayine (IUCEA)

List of participants from National Authorities: See Annex 1

1. Purpose of the site visit

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

2. Meetings held and attendants:

- *Courtesy meeting* with the Executive Director, National Council for Higher Education, Prof. Mary Okwakol, discussion with technical officers of National Council for Higher Education.
- *Consultation Meeting on ACTS*, with 5 key stakeholders/participants: the importance of the initiative; validation of the Mapping study; challenges for implementation of ACTS; identification of institutions for ACTS implementation phase. The meeting was attended by the following:
 - Ms. Frances Atima – Director Education Standard Agency, Representative of Ministry of Education and Sports
 - Prof. Mary Maurice Mukokome – Kyambogo University - Representatives of Public University
 - Prof. Augustine Ifelebuegu – Victoria University - Representative of Private University
 - Mr. Baguma Filbert Bates – Representative of Teachers Union/Association/Professional body
 - Prof. Mary Okwakol – Executive Director, National Council for Higher Education, Representatives of the Regulator of Higher Education in Uganda.

3. Objectives of the meetings:

- 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.
- Identification of potential institutions for ACTS implementation phase.
- Validation of the National Report on Credit System with focus on Uganda

4. Main aspects to be retained

This document records the main aspects to be retained from the interactions that took place at the meeting, and, at the end, it also presents the opinions, views of the participants of the ACT Team

member on the possibilities and challenges of Mozambique's participation in the implementation phase of ACTS.

4.1. Courtesy Meeting

The courtesy meeting was held with the Executive Director of the National Council for Higher education. The discussions focused on the initiative of the Africa Credit Transfer System and how it will help facilitate mobility.

The Executive Director welcomed the initiative and said it fits well towards the vision of integration and mobility of students across borders. That a Continental Credits System will also help in harmonization of programmes and comparability of skills.

At the end of the meeting, he said that Uganda is already implementing its own Higher Education Credit System and will be willing to participant in a continental one as long as it does not contradict the National policy on Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

4.2. Consultation Meeting

A consultative meeting was held with key stakeholders. The meeting focused on the country chapter observations and report and the proposal of an African Credit Transfer System. The ACTS Technical Team member presented on the proposal of ACTS, the benefits and how it supports students mobility. The country report for Uganda was also presented to the meeting. It focused on the mapping survey that was conducted, and it helped assess what was done in Uganda.

After the two presentations, the meeting discussed and highlighted the following aspects:

i. About the preliminary data presented in the Mapping Report

The data on Uganda was factual about the credit transfer situation in Uganda.

However, the participants raised some questions and attempts to answer about the ACTS, as presented below:

- The concept of student's workload needs to be worked out especially on notional hours. What should be the standard. Currently, Uganda still uses credits derived from each module or course as opposed to taking into consideration entire learning activities of the learners. The credit system focuses on teacher-learner interaction as depicted in form of lectures, practical and Tutorial hours to form the contact hours.
- Whether credit system can also be used on all forms of learning, and at all levels so that there is connectivity from one level to another and to allow for seamless transition of learners.
- Harmonization of credits systems from one country to another. How do we ensure they are similar and comparable for ease of learners transferring and how do we ensure that they are recognizable?

ii. About the challenges of implementing Credit System in Uganda

The Uganda Higher Education Qualifications Framework provides for a credit system. The credit system recognizes the need for volume of learning of students to be assessed in form of credits. The credit system is in full implementation. It borrows a lot from the East African Community Credit Transfer System. However, there are challenges in its implementation as indicted.

- There is a weak mechanism of monitoring credits transfer cases. Institutions are supposed to present a report on credit transfer which is not the case. As a result, there is no accurate data on transfer cases of the years.
- Despite the existence of a national framework on credit transfers, Higher Education Institutions have been arbitrarily implementing it. In addition, in some institutions, there is no clearly defined credit system, yet they are implementing credits transfer cases.

- Gross abuse of credit system. Cases of students who don't qualify to transfer being admitted, cases of institutions denying students opportunity to transfer, cases of students forging their partial results among others.
- The difference in curriculum has affected the effective implementation of credit transfer. Some courses are not comparable and the same yet are in the same discipline area.

The participants recommended the following: -

- Sensitization of HEIs on the guidelines for Credit Accumulation and Transfer system. By far, most institutions were not fully aware and had technical challenges.
- Need to step up monitoring of the implementation of Credit System in the universities in Uganda. NCHE needs to boost its capacity in that area.
- Transformation and implementation of contact hours to Notional hours and clear computation of students' workload to help under credits

iii. **About the relevance of the implementation of ACTS in Uganda**

- The participants consider the implementation of ACTS in Uganda as of benefit. They agreed that it will provide confidence to employers and also improve the implementation of the National Credit systems framework
- ACTS will help in harmonization of curriculum, improve on the comparability of competencies and thus mobility of students
- The ACTS will allow of increase in access of students from other countries into the higher education in system in Uganda since it will provide a frame for ease of implementation.
- The following factors can facilitate the operationalization of ACTS:
 - The existence of a framework for academic credit transfer.
 - The wide dissemination of ACTS, promoting greater ownership by countries and regions in Africa.
- The campaign for increase in access and the need for mobility of students across the continent.

iv. **Proposal of the profile of Uganda HEIs to be selected for the implementation of ACTS**

The focus in Uganda is pilot implementation first with few institutions, say 2 public and 2 private and a report is validated on their performance. A reporting mechanism should be put in place and ensure that that it is implemented without compromising national standards and quality.

4.3. Opinion of the ACTS Technical Team on Uganda's participation in the implementation phase

There exists gaps in the implementation of credit system in Uganda. The proposal ACTS will therefore help strength credits system in Uganda. The idea is welcome, and they have opted for a model of piloting the idea before fully rolling it out to all HEIs.

There is need for the following to be done:

- Strengthen the capacity of National Council for Higher Education to effectively supervise the implementation of credit system in the country.
- The African credits system should help support the national system and it should be a framework rather than a prescriptive one.
- There is need to undertake lots of sensitization for Institutions to understand their role and mechanisms of implementation.
- Involvement of other stakeholders is important. For example, TVET institutions should be involved.

- There is need for clarity on the implementation mechanism of ACTS, and the supportive frameworks that can facilitate recognition of qualifications from credit transfers.