

Executive Summary

Credit Systems and Recognition in Africa

(April 2025)

- The African Credit Transfer System (ACTS) is intended to serve as a key instrument in the construction of a coherent and interoperable African Higher Education Area. As one of the tools of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), ACTS is designed to facilitate the comparability and conversion of academic credits across diverse national systems. It responds to the growing need for greater articulation among African higher education institutions and aims to reinforce the conditions for academic mobility across the continent. In doing so, it is anticipated that ACTS will contribute to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), by enabling the circulation of talent and supporting the recognition of learning as a driver of regional integration and development.
- Conceived as a translator between diverse credit systems, ACTS seeks to provide a common reference point that fosters trust and transparency, while respecting existing regional frameworks, national practices and current legislation. Its proposed structure is compatible with continental tools such as the ACQF, and builds on regional experiences, including SADC-CATS and the LMD system. The recommended credit value reflects the diversity of academic calendars and student workloads across Africa and aims to offer a realistic and implementable model for institutions. ACTS represents a strategic step forward in advancing harmonization and strengthening the African higher education space in line with the aspirations of Agenda 2063.
- The study conducted by the ACTS Expert Team in early 2024 collected data from **47 African countries** through **surveys and literature reviews**. It identified the presence or absence of national credit systems, and compared credit values, student workloads, and recognition mechanisms.

- The report is structured by **regional context**, presenting key developments in each area before detailing the status of academic credit systems within the **countries of those regions**:
 - Southern Africa: The SADC-QF and SADC-CATS frameworks are relatively developed (1 credit = 10 hours; 120 credits/year), but implementation remains at a pilot stage.
 - Western Africa: Francophone countries operate under the LMD system (1 credit = 20–25 hours), supported by CAMES and REESAO, while Anglophone systems are less standardised.
 - Eastern Africa: A mix of systems exists, with some progress toward harmonisation via IUCEA and the East African Community, though implementation remains fragmented.
 - Central Africa: CEMAC countries are advancing the CCTAS system, which is still under development.
 - Northern Africa: Most countries have credit systems, many aligned with ECTS, though some remain in earlier stages.
- **Across the continent, credit systems exhibit considerable diversity in value** (ranging from 10 to 45 hours per credit), curricular architecture, and mechanisms for recognition. Learning outcomes are inconsistently used to define credits, and formal recognition and portability tools are generally weak or absent. No continental consensus currently exists on standard credit definitions or benchmarks for student workload.
- A key outcome of the study is the **revised proposal for the ACTS credit value**. While **maintaining 60 credits per academic year**—reflecting existing national practices—the proposal **redefines each ACTS credit as equivalent to 20–25 hours of total student workload, resulting in 1,200 to 1,500 hours annually**. This structure aligns more closely with actual implementation, supports modular programme design, and is compatible with global systems such as ECTS.
- The updated proposal of credit value also aims to strengthen alignment between national systems and ACTS standards through realistic workload models, expanded institutional capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement. It ensures **interoperability with regional mechanisms** such as SADC-CATS and continental frameworks like ACQF and PAQAF. While ACTS has clear strategic value, its success depends on validation through institutional pilots and political and technical support at regional and national levels. The study concludes that ACTS is critical to advancing a coherent, transparent, and comparable African higher education space.