Revitalisation of the African Credit Transfer System (ACTS) and Way Forward

Report of activities and Road Map based on the outcomes of HAQAA2

This document has been produced under a contract with the European Union (HAQAA2).

The opinions expressed are those of the contractor only and do not represent the contracting authority's official position.

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Background

The vision of the African Union, to build an integrated continent, requires harmonised education systems, where intra-Africa mobility and skills portability are key elements in its realisation. HAQAA1/2 have made substantial contributions the realisation of the 'Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework' (PAQAF), which instrumentalises African higher education for the African vision of integration. PAQAF provides common frameworks and tools for a common language in quality assurance in Africa and the mutual recognition of academic qualifications. HAQAA2, in addition to further advancing a common language for Quality Assurance (QA) across the continent, has responded to the fact that one important tool of the PAQAF – The African Credit Transfer System (ACTS) – is pending political endorsement and implementation. This instrument will ultimately enable higher education systems to be more readable, supplementing efforts for common QA standards and the development of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). It can also be a powerful tool to help systems and higher education institutions (HEI) re-think how learning is structured, orienting it towards a learning outcomes-based approach and a concept of student workload that encompasses contact hours and non-classroom hours.

A political definition of an African Credit Transfer System (ACTS) was elaborated in 2018[1] by a group of national and regional bodies[2] lead by the EC and AUC in the framework of the Tuning Africa project. The process followed three stages: Firstly, information about the state of the art of credits in 35 African countries was collected. Secondly, scientific research was conducted, based on a large survey[3] focused on the estimation of African Student Workload, from the perspective of academics and students. Finally, a general report was elaborated, with strong recommendations:

i. There is a compelling need to have a common agreement on the definition and value of a credit in African higher education systems in order to promote transferability and comparability—key to harmonising the African higher education space and promote mobility.

ii. There is a need for consensus on the workload of a credit unit. The general trend is that 60 credits are equivalent to the workload of full-time student during one academic year. We thus recommend to adopt this widespread international trend of 60 credits for Africa.

iii. There is a need for consensus on the number of credit units for each year and for the different programmes, i.e. Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate.

iv. There is a need for a consensus on the student workload over a period of a year which straddles between 1,350 and 1,800 hours. We thus recommend to adopt between 1,350 and 1,800 hours of workload for Africa which sits well within the international norms.

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1. Annex I: Short version of African Credit Transfer System proposal 2018.
2. Conseil African et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Superieur (CAMES), National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (NAQAAE), Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA), All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA), African Council For Distance Education (ACDE), Pan African University (PAU), Association of Arab Universities (AARU), National Council for Assessment and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CNAQ), The African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), Association of West Africa Universities (AWAU), ECOWAS Commission Abuja, National Authority for Quality Assurance (NAQA-Sud), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), Fórum da Gestao do Ensino Superior nos Países e Regioes de Língua Portuguesa (FORGES), and African Association of Universities (AAU).
3. 5266 students and 571 academics from 123 African Universities were surveyed.

v. There is a need for a harmonised continental credit system that balances the different systems that span the continent: Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries.

Although the proposal was intensively discussed and approved within the framework of Tuning Africa II project, it was not finally validated and made visible in the natural spheres of African Higher Education (associations, ministries, universities, etc.). Since 2018, no concrete follow-up activities were identified in relation to African Credit Transfer System.

Revitalization ad relaunch strategy

In the framework of **HAQAA2**, a strategy for the **relaunch of the ACTS** was proposed, with two objectives:

a. promote regional dialogue on the importance of ACTS for international mobility, academic recognition and re-conceptualising teaching and learning, with clear identification of the main challenges for its implementation and also proposals for its advancement;

b. define the main steps to be followed at national, regional and continental level for validating ACTS, eventually adopting it and further promoting its application.

To achieve these objectives, an **African Credit Transfer System Task Force (ACTS-TF)** was set-up and led by OBREAL Global, in partnership with the AAU and DAAD (members of the HAQAA2 Implementing Team).

The ACTS-TF was composed by 6 members:

- Olusola Oyewole (Secretary General of the AAU)
- Damtew Teferra (Director of Research and Programmes of AAU)
- Christoph Hansert (Head of Department of DAAD)
- Hortense Atta Diallo (Vice Rector of Nangui Abrogoua University – Ivory Coast)
- Ana Maria Nhampule (Vice Rector of Universidade Joaquim Chissano - Mozambique)
- Pablo Beneitone (Higher Education Expert from OBREAL Global)

The starting point of the **relaunch strategy** was the need to recall the decisions made and consensus generated under Tuning Africa in 2018 with regards to how ACTS was to be defined and understood. In order to promote regional dialogue to this effect and receive stakeholder feedback, various activities were developed. It should be noted that albeit the fact that these activities were not foreseen in the original Tender Specifications for HAQAA2, the HAQAA2 Implementing Team, with the consensus and support of the EC and AUC, nonetheless introduced them, in the interest of rendering HAQAA a more comprehensive initiative to support HE harmonisation and integration.

The relaunch strategy included activities at different levels, with different target groups/audiences and formats.

- -Regional level: firstly, associations involved in ACTS-TF, and secondly, with other regional bodies not formally included but which were reached by OBREAL and AAU.
- National level: ministries of (higher) education, accreditation agencies, associations of universities, etc.
- University level: universities in some countries which represent a key actor for national higher education systems.

HAQAA2
Harmonisation, Accreditation
and Quality Assurance in
African Higher Education

OBREAL
Global

DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

enqa.

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In relation to the target groups:

- Authorities, decision makers, policy advisors, technical counsellors, at the 3 different levels explained above.
- Academics who will implement ACTS in the future.
- Students who should be the potential "users" of ACTS, through student associations like the African - Student Alumni Forum and the All-Africa Students Union.

Activities were delivered in different ways (virtual, hybrid, physical), taking advantage of HAQAA activities, such as the Advisory Board meetings, final conference and events of major stakeholder organisation like EAQAN and AfriQAN. Generally, the following format was adopted :

- ACTS Informative Synchronous Sessions (face to face or virtual), half day or a complete day, with interactive workshops, so as to collect feedback from participants about their current credit systems, recognition procedures and how this would relate to ACTS.

During 2022, the following activities were developed:

- **4 National Recognition and ACTS Workshops[4]**:
  - Abidjan, 8 – 9 June 2022 (held in English and French)
  - Addis Ababa, 5 October 2022 (held in English)
  - Maputo, 27 October 2022 (held in Portuguese)
  - Accra, 6 December 2022 (held in English and French)

These events had different scopes and target audiences (regional bodies, ministries of (higher) education, accreditation agencies, associations of universities, etc) and involved different stakeholders (authorities, decision makers, policy advisors, technical counsellors, academics). **Over 100 participants** attended and contributed to the discussion on the future implementation of ACTS in different contexts.

- **ACTS Informative sessions/panels in different international conferences/seminars/regional and national events**: 11th annual East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Forum, September 2022 - Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania; African Quality Assurance Network Conference, October 2022 - Maputo, Mozambique; HAQAA2 General meetings; etc. **Over 250 participants** attended and gave feedback about their current credit systems, recognition procedures and how this would relate to ACTS.
- **Consultation of the HAQAA2 Advisory Board**, representing the major QA networks and university associations of the continent.

As a result of these meetings, a number of aspects were identified that highlight the importance of the ACTS for the African context, and the areas that should be focused on going forward:

- Facilitate recognition and student mobility within countries and across universities, domestically but also internationally

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4. Annex II: Minutes and Agenda of Recognition Workshops

- Promote flexible leaning pathways through credit systems, and course design based on learning outcomes
- Introduce, in different contexts, the language of Learning Outcomes and Student Workload and ensure they are understood by academics, university leadership and policy makers
- Connect the ACTS discussions with those of Qualification Frameworks (NQF, regional frameworks and the ACQF)
- Facilitate implementation of competence-based curriculum in design and practice, and encourage and connect university networks that work on these issues
- Enhance the transparency and comparability of study programmes, study periods and qualifications by linking ACTS to policy discussions on the Addis Convention and to major intra-African mobility programmes and initiatives.

A second outcome of the workshops and consultations was related to the main barriers identified for a future implementation of ACTS in the African context:
- Lack of awareness of the ACTS (and the importance of a credit system) and of how related processes are connected (QA, governance strategy, lack of information sharing).
- Lack of capacity for developing curriculum design in the framework of student-centred approaches (learning outcomes)
- Difficulty in changing behaviors at institutional level, from teacher and student perspectives
- Different regulatory mechanisms at national level and rigidly of accreditation processes
- Non-alignment with major regional initiatives: STISA 24, Vision 2063, Addis Ababa Convention (not ratified by many African Union member states), Global Convention and possible confusion regarding existing regional credit systems that have been endorsed (CATS, in SADC).

Faced with these difficulties, the groups discussed what actions could be implemented to move forward with the adoption of ACTS in the African context. The following proposals were identified:
- Seek synergies between the various existing initiatives, including those at regional level and work closely with regional stakeholders where needed
- Ratification of the Addis Ababa and global conventions, which is still in progress in many African countries
- Conduct information campaigns at sub-regional, national and institutional levels on the benefits of ACTS and its different implications
- Take forward a university pilot in a sample of African countries and encourage the creation of a project team at institutional level to work collectively on this issue.
- Strengthen the role of regional bodies in promoting the ACTS
- Organise inter-regional workshops to ensure understanding across regions and share practice
- Facilitate inter-regional dialogue on ACTS, with Europe/the EHEA and systems like ASEAN, which has an ASEAN credit system.
- Conduct awareness campaigns to change mind sets with key actors (students and professors).
- Involve national regulatory agencies and universities in the discussion, together.

It was concluded in all the workshops that the work surrounding ACTS could be a good opportunity to have a clear policy and directive on credits across countries and regions. Also, it could help to reemphasize the purpose and benefits of a credit system based on learning outcomes and student workload.

The information gathered was very relevant for the elaboration of a future strategy for the implementation of ACTS on a continental scale and it is the basis of the following road map proposal.

Defining a road map for the future

The main purpose of this road map is to guide the implementation of ACTS in Africa going forward.

This proposed road map includes the reflections collected at the previously mentioned events on:
- the feasibility of ACTS further implementation and potential barriers at national level.
- how to approach in the future the adoption of ACTS at the national, regional and continental level

The ACTS Task Force systematised the information and defined two main objectives:

1. increase **participation** in the debate on ACTS and **awareness** of its importance for mobility, recognition, and teaching and learning reform
2. go beyond to a **full adoption** and **implementation**

To this purpose, it was considered relevant to **integrate the work initiated by the two Tuning Africa** projects on the African Credit Transfer System (ACTS), as well as **the work done in HAQAA2**, particularly regarding the actions to revitalize the discussion on academic credits. In addition, the importance of continental scope is stressed. In addition to political senstisation and lobbying, ACTS should be developed and piloted in Higher Education Institutions **across the five African regions**.

Given the complexity and relevance of this, it is suggested that the next phases of ACTS promotion and implementation take place in a **coordinated manner, driven by an ACTS Expert Team.** This team should ideally be composed of experts who have been involved in the revitalisation activities of HAQAA2 and are familiar with the ACTS proposal. It is also critical that the experts include representation from all 4 languages (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic) and a gender balance. AAU, in cooperation with partner OBREAL Global, expressed willingness to continue to lead the ACTS Expert Team in the future and closely articulate with major regional stakeholders and organisations.

In order to achieve the two objectives, **a set of activities are proposed, organised in 6 phases**:
- Phase 1: Updating the State of the Art in Africa on academic credits
- Phase 2: Continued lobbying for ACTS at regional and national level
- Phase 3: Piloting the ACTS (1): HEI from different African countries revise a degree programme
- Phase 4: Developing ACTS Training Programme for HEI
- Phase 5: Piloting the ACTS (2): Assigning credits to degree programmes
- Phase 6: Further upscaling and implementing

Phase 1: Updating the State of the Art in Africa on academic credits

This phase would be essential for providing an updated state-of-pay regarding credit systems at national and regional level, a study which has been done under Tuning in 2017/18 but requires updating. This would help to broaden the debate on a continental scale and to gather information on current developments and dynamics, as well as on the diversity of approaches to recognition and credit in the different systems in Africa. This could be done by an online survey, conducted with country authorities, with the support of regional stakeholders. The survey should collect data on two dimensions:

Countries that already have a credit system at national level should be surveyed on the following issues:

- *Degree of optionality/electivity/choice/flexibility in curricula*
- *Are Learning Outcomes introduced in the definition of the degree programmes?*
- *Do curricula distinguish between specific competences and transversal abilities/skills?*
- *Since when was the credit system in place?*
- *Workload: How is the credit measured? (contact hours? contact hours and independent work? others?); How many credits per year does a degree programme have? How are the credits allocated to a degree programme?*

Countries that do not have a credit system, should be surveyed on:

- *Degree of optionality/electivity/choice/flexibility in curricula*
- *Are Learning Outcomes introduced in the definition of the degree programmes?*
- *Do curricula distinguish between specific competences and transversal abilities/skills?*
- *Are any plans for developing a Credit System? how are the partial periods of study recognized both between universities in your country and between these universities and others in other countries?*

The research should also take on board existing proposals from credit systems at regional level (e.g. IUCEA and SADC) and also interview the authorities involved.

Phase 2: Continued lobbying for ACTS at regional and national level

National buy-in is critical, as ACTS may imply important legislative changes. Past experience under Tuning has shown that it is important to conduct physical visits and meetings to maximize contact with officials and public authorities in specific countries, build trust and better assess the national context and political dynamics. This Phase would be a validation of the state-of-the-art and also be a means to receive qualitative feedback from countries and regions and lobby in a very personalized, country-specific manner for the ACTS up-take and implementation. Regional workshops, as well as national countries visits/interviews of public authorities and stakeholders should be conducted.

Questions to be explored might be:

- *How would ACTS relate to existing credit systems (regional or national)?*
- *What would be necessary to implement ACTS at national system (political decisions, new regulations, training, etc.)?*
- *Identification of key actions for further implementation.*
- *How would alignment to ACTS potentially impact quality assurance procedures at institutional or national level?*

With this information, recommendations can be made on possible implementation scenarios for ACTS at country level and regional level, as well as an assessment of risks and opportunities.

Phase 3: Piloting the ACTS: HEI from different African countries revise a degree programme

Given that the ACTS must be transformative at the level of universities in addition to inspiring legislative change in countries, it is proposed to conduct an ACTS pilot on a selection of universities from five African regions. The universities should have different missions and represent the diversity of the sector. They should come from countries with different traditions and in 4 languages (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic).

Selected universities for the pilot should nominate **a working team (ACTS Institutional Team**), bring together faculty, administrative staff members and students in order to promote institutional collaboration on credits and create/reinforce the culture of collaborative work on recognition.

As a starting point, each institution would select a **degree programme for ACTS implementation,** which would be revised and aligned to ACTS. This process should:
- Include different institutional actors in the revision of degree programmes based on the analysis of data collected through different tools to measure total student workload.
- Engage faculty and students in collect data on total student workload; identify tools and models for obtaining and analysing this data - tools and modalities that work best in particular contexts; discuss, contrast and analyse data on total student workload.
- Involve institutional authorities in reflecting together on the results and on how the learning can be used to improve curriculum design and planning.

If these processes are already in place at the university, the ACTS Institutional Team would need to:
- focus on improving the current mechanisms for measuring total student workload;
- reviewing institutional practices to ensure that data collected on actual student workload is used to improve the quality and recognition of degree programmes; and
- share lessons learned with other ACTS Institutional Teams at country level on how best to install the culture of measuring total student workload as an integral part of curriculum design.

At the level of each university, this could contribute to a university-wide debate to promote the use of total student workload as a basis for a system of recognition and quality improvement as well as academic credit allocation. It can also stimulate a general discussion on learning outcomes and how learning is conceptualised.

Phase 4: Developing ACTS Training Programme for HEI

As a means to accompany the pilot process and help the selected universities to better understand the structural and cultural changes implied with introducing a learning-outcomes based credit system, a virtual training programme could be prepared and launched once the ACTS Institutional Teams are in place. This should ideally address:
   a. The student-centred approach
   b. Curriculum design
   c. Rationale behind credits

   d. Analyzing student workload

   e. Leaning outcomes: Definition and assessment

The Training programme can offer important resources and cases studies on the above issues, and be used beyond the pilot, wider afield in Africa. It can create a learning and practice community related to ACTS. Major regional organisations and stakeholders should be engaged in its development, and it should seek expertise from other regions with experience in credit systems, such as Europe and ASEAN.

Phase 5: Piloting the ACTS: Assigning credits to the degree programmes

A further stage of the pilot will focus on the assignment of credits to the degree programme that has been selected. Each ACTS Institutional Team must be asked to apply a student workload estimation tool to the curriculum they have selected (Desk Estimation). This estimation of the total student workload made by the ACTS Institutional Team is the first approximation and source of information on the real student workload. It is necessary to have this theoretical data as a starting point to later contrast and verify with the perceptions of different actors what really happens in the subjects and the degree programme as a whole.

 The Desk estimation:

- provides a first approximation from an ACTS Institutional Team of the total student workload expected for a degree programme - what students are expected to spend on their learning in total;

- provides a holistic estimate: so many hours in total per degree programme component; one tries to think about the different types of activities students do in each subject/course, but one does not indicate how many hours students should spend on each type of activity, but arrive at one figure for all of them;

- and finally, this is a starting point, student workload estimation is crucial when you want to install the culture of measuring students' total workload as an integral part of curriculum design, because this estimation invites to consider how much time students spend learning, also beyond contact hours and not only when they are physically in class (or synchronously with faculty).

Overall, it is also suggested that the pilot provide the means for

- universities to network at national level and with public authorities, as well as at regional and continental level (results sharing, informing public policy through experience)

- provide a space for universities to reflect on how to replicate the pilot at the level of other degree programmes

- encourage university – ministry -national QA agency dialogue, to drive the process of legislative change related to credits.

Phase 6: Further upscaling and implementing

The sustainability of the lessons learned in the pilot implementation should be based on two pillars:

   a. the identification of ACTS Ambassadors and

   b. the elaboration of ACTS User's Guide

Members of ACTS Institutional Teams who have gone through this process will be invited to become *ACTS Ambassadors*. The possibility to become an ACTS Ambassador should give every individual the confidence

to continue spearheading the ACTS at continental level. They can be linked to or integrated into the HAQAA Ambassador Network.

An ACTS Ambassador should be able to:

- Explain the general dynamics of higher education integration, the PAQAF for Africa and the role of credit systems
- Explain to other faculty and students why the measurement of students' total workload is important in order to:

  - facilitate the recognition of entire programmes and study periods at inter-institutional and international level and,

  - improve the quality of degree programmes through greater consistency between the estimation of theoretical time and the actual time students need to complete the degree programme.

- Understand the different tools and approaches to estimate the full workload of students.
- Analyse the results of student workload estimations in order to:

  - identify possible inconsistencies between the actual student workload and that foreseen in the subject and curriculum design phase and,

  - make data-driven decisions to carry out inter-institutional and international recognition of entire degree programmes and/or periods of study.

- Involve other institutional actors in the review of degree programmes based on the analysis of data collected through different tools to measure total student workload.
- Contribute to the debate at institutional level to promote the use of total student workload as a basis for the design and implementation of more realistic curricula in terms of actual duration, and in line with global academic recognition schemes.
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The ACTS User's Guide should bring together the good practices learned in the implementation of ACTS in different institutional contexts.

This road map encompasses what could be a contained project, however sustained efforts are need at all levels for ACTS to take root in African policies and institutional practices. Engaging major stakeholder organisation for HE in the process in hence critical for buy-in and longer term investment.

Annex I

AFRICAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM (ACTS[5]) PROPOSAL

1. Introduction

The vision of African Union, to build an integrated continent, requires a harmonised education system, where intra-Africa mobility and skills portability are key elements in its realization. Harmonized education and training systems are essential for effective implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and Agenda 2063. Harmonisation is an instrument for enabling African higher education to contribute to and be aligned with the African vision of integration. The African Union Commission therefore developed a framework for harmonisation of higher education in Africa to facilitate the mutual recognition of academic qualifications.

There are increasing efforts "in Africa toward "harmonisation of higher education" since the diverse systems of higher education have resulted in the lack of recognition of university degrees constraining academic integration and the mobility of students across the continent. The implementation of the Harmonisation Strategy involves, among others, the drafting of a Proposal for a Credit System for Africa to further advance student mobility and contribute to harmonization process.

It is imperative to develop a common measure of student workload in terms of credit hours so that it is possible to harmonize the range of credits and compare programmes in different countries. A vital instrument to facilitate comparability of qualifications is the development of an agreed credit transfer system. Study programmes and periods of learning will be more comparable and compatible by making use of credit transfer system. A common credit transfer system that can be recognized and transferred at national, regional, and continental levels is paramount in advancing the harmonization of the higher education systems in Africa.

2. Credit System: The Concept

The concept of credit system appeared in the United States at the end of the 19th century. In 1872, Harvard University replaced the system of the classical fixed curriculum with an increasingly wide choice of courses for students. Starting with electives only for senior students by 1884, the university offered almost complete freedom of choice to all students and shifted in the 1890s to measuring progress towards a degree on the basis of the accumulation of individual courses rather than completing a total course of study. Other universities and colleges quickly followed the Harvard model. The credit system thus emerged as a result of electives.

Towards the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, it became increasingly common for colleges and universities to list the number of credits offered for each course in their catalogues; the number being determined by the hours of classroom and laboratory work devoted to the course per week. Degree requirements were stated in terms of numbers of required credits as well as in course distribution. Also in the early 1900s, the credit system extended beyond undergraduate study to include postgraduate programmes.

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5. Elaborated on behalf of the African Union Commission and European Commission within the Framework of Tuning Africa-II Project (2015-2018). The document was elaborated with data collected till 2018.

The system in the United States remains to be based on a fixed number of teaching hours per unit which, in principle, doesn't cover thesis or work placements, among others. It is based on a teacher-driven concept used to organize the loads of a teacher. College students generally receive credit hours based on the number of "contact hours" per week in class, for one term. Credit system was not designed for covering contemporary educational discourses and pedagogical approaches such as experiential learning, problem-based learning, and so on. Though critiqued for being rigid, this system continues to be used in North America and also in large parts of Asia.

Nowadays, the definition of credits in higher education systems may be based on different parameters, such as contact hours, student workload and learning outcomes.

3. Workload: The Concept and the Trend

The workload based system was initiated in Northern part of Europe in the second half of the 1970s. It further became popular with the emergence of theories such as student-centered learning, active learning, participatory learning, and experiential learning, on the accounts of theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, and Lev Vygotsky. This system takes into account hours of not simply classroom activities, laboratories, workshops, and internships, among others, but also time spent for independent and group studies associated with these activities.

At the end of the 1980s, and at the birth of the Erasmus programme, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) initiative was introduced to facilitate the mobility of students and recognition of their credentials. It is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study. A workload is a key element of the learning-outcomes based educational system.

ECTS was taken on board by the Bologna Process in 1999 (and included in the Bologna declaration) and it became the cornerstone of the student centred/ active learning approach. It is now the formal system of 48 signatory countries of the Bologna Process, including the European Union and Russia. Recently, it was introduced to the Central Asian Countries. In Latin America the same approach was introduced to improve quality on the design and delivery of degree programmes. The Latin American Reference Credit (CLAR) system is a result of internal discussions and decisions of the region's 18 Ministries of Higher Education which have adapted the system to their needs.

Thus, this approach seems to be part of an emerging global trend. In Asian region, a comparative initiative has been taken for mobility and credit transfer purposes. China has also expressed interest to develop a workload based/learning based system.

In ACTS, Credit was defined as a measure of workload required for a typical learner to achieve the objectives of a programme, specified in terms of the predetermined learning outcomes and competences that is expected to be acquired. A credit thus measures student workload required to achieve expected learning outcomes.

In ACTS, Workload is an estimated account of the learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical activities, work placements, individual studies all measured in time, which a learner typically needs to achieve the defined learning outcomes.

These two definitions might be the pillars of an African Credit Transfer System.

4. The Rationale for a Credit System

The importance of a common credit system for internationalization of higher education was understood early in the 1990s, as for example reflected in the UNESCO World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action (October 1998). A common credit system is key for harmonizing different higher education systems—characteristic of the African continent—and central to the African Union's Agenda 2063 which explicitly states the critical need for harmonization of education standards and mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications in the continent. This was further pronounced in CESA 2016-25 which affirms that "Harmonized education and training systems are essential for the realization of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation".

A credit system is a key instrument for the accumulation and transfer of knowledge, skills and (wider) competences expressed and measured in terms of student workload and learning outcomes. The objectives and importance of a credit system in the higher education sector are intended to

- Promote student mobility
- Improve the comparability and compatibility of study programmes
- Render more transparency to study programmes
- Provide more flexibility and diversity of pathways
- Facilitate easier development of well-balanced programmes
- Promote feasibility of programmes
- Enhance quality of programmes
- Advance recognition of (periods of) studies taken elsewhere successfully
- Facilitate different types of learning such as informal, non-formal, formal, part-time, among others.
- Facilitate more substantive collaboration among different higher learning and research institutions towards a common higher education space.

For continents and sub-continents with a desire to harmonize their higher education systems and those with interest in articulating and building a common area of higher education, developing a common credit transfer system continues to be of utmost importance.

5. African Higher Education System

5.1. Introduction

One of the challenges facing African higher education system is the difficulty in transferring part or whole of a study from one region to another or from one institution to another. This is due to lack of reliable tools for measuring student achievements in a transparent way as well as the absence of defined systems which allow adequate recognition of degrees and other credentials among institutions and between countries.

The concept of "credit" refers to the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification (SAQA, 2014). In the Bologna system, credits reflect the total workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme—objectives which are specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences to be acquired—and not just through lecture hours. It makes study programmes easy to read and compare for all

students, local and foreign, and therefore facilitates mobility and academic recognition (Khelfaoui, 2009). Little information is available on how a period of study is recognized—both among universities and between countries in Africa.

In Africa, there is no common and reliable means of measuring and transferring acquired knowledge. In some countries, the concept of credit has limited understanding and a variety of meanings and different applications. There is thus a compelling need to understand and recognize the different types of credits systems that are being used in different parts of Africa and hence this endeavor to establish one.

A study was carried out to investigate the different types of credit systems that exist in African countries. It is anticipated that this endeavor will contribute to the realization of transferability of studies in the continent possible by promoting comparability of degrees, diplomas and certificates. The contribution of a streamlined continental credit system—for the development of the African higher education space in particular the integration of the continent in general—is paramount.

5.2. Methodology

This study was carried out through a questionnaire survey distributed to country participants in the Tuning Africa Phase II project (2015-2018). Country participants with an average of four institutional membership in each country were requested to complete questionnaires. Responses were received from 35 African countries, as indicated in Table 1.

After the surveys were completed, they were subjected to verification by respective regulatory agencies or ministry officials in their countries (where the former does not exist). The analysis of the various country reports constitutes the focus of this section.

5.3. Results

5.3.1 Status of Regulatory Agencies in African Countries

Among the 35 countries covered in this survey, 25 of them have national regulatory agencies. Three of the five countries in North Africa in this study have national regulatory agencies. All the countries in North Africa under this study are committed to the Licentiate-Masters-Doctorate (LMD) reforms.

Table 1: Status of National Regulatory Agencies in the Countries under Study

Region	Countries covered by the study	Countries with established quality assurance regulatory agencies
Northern	Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia	Egypt, Libya, Tunisia
Southern	Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe	Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe
East	Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Madagascar, Mauritius, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda	Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
West	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal	Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) for Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal. Regulatory agencies in Cape Verde, Mali, Nigeria
Central	Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Cameroon
Total		

In Southern Africa, there are well established quality assurance regulatory agencies in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The ministries of education currently carry out regulatory functions for higher education in Angola, Madagascar, Malawi and Mauritius. All the Southern African countries under this study, except Angola, have credit systems.

In East Africa, Djibouti and Somalia have no national quality assurance regulatory agencies, while Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have well established national quality assurance agencies.

In West Africa, the Ministry of Education and Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) provide regulatory functions for higher education institutions in the French speaking countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote-d'Ivoire Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Although Guinea Bissau is a Portuguese speaking country, it has also subjected itself to the regulatory activities of CAMES. As expected in existing regional protocols such as CAMES and the ECOWAS Convention on the recognition and Equivalences of Education, some Member States (Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone) have established national regulatory agencies.

Only three countries were covered in Central Africa under this study. Higher education regulations in Cameroon is under the CAMES system, while that of the Democratic Republic of Congo is under the control of the Ministry of Education. The number of countries with national higher education regulatory agencies has increased since the report produced by Materu (2006) on the same subject.

5.3.2 The Prevalence of a Credit System

In North Africa, all the countries in this study are committed to the LMD system; and credit systems operate in their higher education institutions. However, not all the universities in the five countries employ a credit system. Some universities are still using the old British system.

In Southern Africa, only Angola lacks a credit system. All the other eight countries have one form of credit system or another. All universities in Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa maintain a credit system. As in the case of the North African countries, not all universities in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Swaziland currently operate a credit system. In Zimbabwe, 15 universities have committed to change from Course Unit System to Credit System.

In East Africa, a credit system started with Kenya in 1968; and in 2012, Burundi became the latest country to adopt the system. It is only in Somalia that a credit system does not exist in east Africa. Some of the countries, such as Djibouti, have not been able to apply a credit system to their medical programmes.

In West Africa, a credit system started in Nigeria in 1968 and developed widely between 2008 and 2010 in other countries. Some programmes in medicine are exempted from the credit system.

In Central Africa, a credit system started in Cameroon in 2007 and most universities there operate the LMD. Not all universities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) operate a credit system though LMD is at a pilot phase at the University of Lubumbashi.

There are various publications in the different regions on their operations of a credit system. Countries where these publications have been produced include Algeria, Cameroon, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, and other countries under the purview of CAMES protocol.

5.3.3 Measuring Credit

Generally, the process of accreditation includes peer reviews, site visits and a report to establish quality, capacity, outcomes and need for improvement.

In North Africa, credit is measured in terms of the teacher contact hours with the learners. In some cases, both the staff contact hours and the time taken for the students to carry out independent studies are taken into consideration. Tunisia is an exception.

In Southern Africa, most of the countries use notional hours including contact time, structured learning, workplace learning, assessment and self-study. (One credit amounts to 10 notional hours.) However, in Mauritius, a credit is based on staff contact hours where one credit unit is equivalent to one hour lecture or three hours of practical or one hour of tutorial that spans over 15 weeks.

In many countries in East Africa, contact hours and independent work of students are employed in determining credit. However, in Ethiopia and Djibouti, contact hours are employed for measuring credit.

In West Africa, credit is measured using the staff contact hours only. In Nigeria, one credit unit means a course work of one hour lecture or three hours of practical or one hour of tutorial, over a 15-week semester term.

Similarly, contact hours are used to measure credit in Central Africa. There are few universities which are using both contact hours and students learning hours in the calculation of credits.

5.4 Value of Credits in Different Levels

A credit does not have the same value in the countries and regions studied, as shown in Table 2. One credit load is made up of 20 to 25 hours of teaching and learning hours. In some other cases, it is one hour of teaching over a period of 15 to16 hours, or practical classes of two to three hours over a semester made up of 15 to 16 weeks.

Table 2: Values of One Unit in Different Regions

Credit system	Value of one credit unit course	Region where applicable
Contact hours teacher's workload	1 hour of lecture over 15 weeks	Northern Africa, Western Africa
	2 hours of practical over 15 weeks	Northern Africa
	20-25 teaching and learning hours	Northern Africa
	3 hours of practical for 15 weeks	Western Africa
	1 hour of tutorials for 15 weeks	Western Africa, Northern Africa
Learners' centred	10 hours of notional hours made up of contact time, structured learning, workplace learning, assessment, and self-study Southern Africa, Eastern Africa	
	15-18 hours of notional hours made up of contact time, structured learning, workplace learning, assessment, and self-study	Eastern Africa
	15 hours of lectures and 10 hours of independent work	Eastern Africa

In Eastern and Central Africa, contact hours and independent work of students are employed in determining the value of credits. Accordingly, one unit is equivalent to 10 notional hours; one credit is equivalent to 15 to 18 contact hours or students workload; and one unit is equivalent to 15 hours of lectures and 10 hours of independent work.

In many countries in West Africa, contact hours are used in determining credits. Accordingly, one credit is equivalent to one contact hour or three hours of practical or one hour of tutorial per week for 15 weeks. The credit load per year varies from institution to institution and from country to country, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Credit Load per Year

Region	Credit Points Per Year
North	30 – 60 units
South	18 – 60 units
East	36 – 60 units
West	30 units, 48 units, 60 units
Central	36 – 60 units

The credit load for various programmes is different among the regions as shown in Table 4. However, a common credit point per year across the continent appears to be 60 units.

Table 4: Credit Loads for Different Programmes

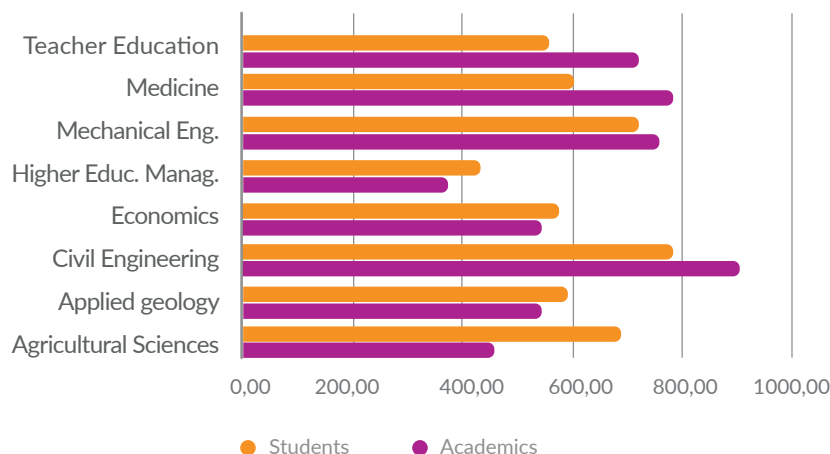| Region	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate
Northern	120–180	36 units or 130–136 units	No information provided
Southern	60, 100, 120 credits	60, 120, 180	120, 360, 480
East	In Burundi, 180 (But 420 for Medicine and 240 for Engineering) 60, 135, 120, 180 units for others	120–136, 360	
West	180–360	36–180	120
Central	108–180	120	300

6. Workload in Africa: Highlights of a Study

A study was undertaken to establish the scope and prevalence of workload in African higher education systems based on a survey which involved 571 academics and 5,266 students in 107 institutions which are participating in the Tuning Africa II Project (2015-2018). The study explored the extent of workload to learn a unit/course/module in a semester on the basis of contact hours and independent work.

The study examined workload by field/discipline which included seven undergraduate disciplines: Agricultural sciences, Economics, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Applied Geology, Medicine, Teacher Education, and one post-graduate programme: Higher Education Management. Except Teacher Education, a striking similarity of opinion between students and academics, as regards to contact hours vs independent work, is recorded. In a similar trend academics and students from all the five African regions—North, South, Central, East, West—have exhibited considerable congruity on the number of contact hours vs independent work to learn a unit/course/module in a semester.

Figure 1 presents the number of hours that students and academics thought it would be required to complete all the requirements of a unit/course/module in a semester, per fields/discipline, taking into account both contact hours and independent work. Civil Engineering stood highest, followed by Medicine and Teacher Education, for academics. Civil Engineering stood again the highest, followed by Teacher Education and Applied Geology, for students.

Figure 1: Hours Needed to Complete All the Requirements of a Unit/Course/Module in a Semester per Disciplines/Field

According to the study, the student workload over a period of a year spans from 1,350 to 1,800 hours, which Tuning Africa II project endorsed after further deliberation. This compares relatively well with Europe standing at 1,500 to 1,800 hours and Latin America at 1,440 to 1,980 hours for both contact hours and independent work.

7. Conclusion

African higher education has an array of schemes in credit systems, credits, and workloads without whose harmony the key mission of the continental higher education space in particular and the African Union's vision—of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent—in general may remain elusive. Hence, the need for a systematic and rigorous description and analysis of establishing common and basic, but key and critical, frameworks and pillars of the harmonization process.

Through extensive research undertakings and intensive dialogue of the Tuning Africa II project, the definition of a credit system and workload have now been established. The project also agreed to the total number of hours of a workload per year.

From the study, the following findings can be deduced about the state of the art of credit in African higher education system.

i. Credit system has been functional in the African Higher Education systems for many years.

ii. African universities consider credit as a tool for measuring the load of the teacher rather than as an expression of the volume of learning based on defined learning outcomes and associated workload.

iii. In many African institutions, credit is measured based on the contact time with the teacher.

iv. Credit does not have the same value in all the countries and regions. (Anglophone and Francophone credit systems differ.)

v. There is currently no credit transfer system among institutions in Africa.

vi. The load of credit is not comparable among institutions in Africa.

8. Recommendation

1. There is a compelling need to have a common agreement on the definition and value of a credit in the African higher education systems in order to promote transferability and comparability—key to harmonizing the African higher education space and promote mobility.

2. There is a need for consensus on the workload of a credit unit. The general trend is that 60 credits are equivalent to the workload of full-time student during one academic year. We thus recommend to adopt this widespread international trend of 60 credits for Africa.

3. There is a need for consensus on the number of credit units for each year and for the different programmes, i.e. Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate.

4. There is a need for a consensus on the student workload over a period of a year which straddles between 1,350 and 1,800 hours. We thus recommend to adopt between 1,350 and 1,800 hours of workload for Africa which sits well within the international norms.

5. There is a need for a harmonized continental credit system that balances the different systems that span the continent: Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries.

9. References

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South African Qualification Framework (2014) Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualification Framework, pp. 4. Pretoria, South Africa: SAQA.

UNESCO (1998). World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action and Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education. Paris, UNESCO.http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm#world%20declaration

Annex II

Minutes of ACTS Launch Workshops for HAQAA2

Abidjan, 8 – 9 June 2022

Summary and outcomes of the first re-launch workshop

Held back-to-back with the HAQAA2 Advisory Board meeting, a one-day workshop was organized on Abidjan on 8-9 June, where major African regional associations and networks for higher education and quality assurance, as well as the Task Force members and several invited experts, revised the work done on the ACTS in 2018 and discussed how the proposal could be taken forward, disseminated and implemented in their regions and systems.

The first two sessions (1. A Credit System from a global perspective and 2. ACTS: A credit system proposal for Africa) gave important context regarding credit systems and also re-visited the purpose behind the work that had been done on ACTS in 2017-18. The session entailed intense debate by the participants

The European experience with ECTS was very meaningful for the discussion, particularly because of the similarities between the current situation in Africa and the time ECTS was first launched in Europe in the 1980s. At this time, the procedures for recognition of foreign studies were rather rigid and based on a detailed comparison of curricula. Furthermore, it was quite common that higher education systems were based on the use of contact hours. However, these lacked a good account of the work a student was expected to do during his/her studies. The work that students were expected to do autonomously through independent studies, project work, or periods of practical training were not accounted for. This situation also appeared clearly in the contribution made from Latin America.

In addition, and again with similarities to Africa, the were and are a wide diversity of higher education structures, approaches and traditions across continents (Europe, Asia, Latin America). Higher education institutions in the different contexts combine different learning activities to develop programmes, but the proportion of classroom teaching, practical work, autonomous work, project work, and so on, varies greatly. Only Europe has a common credit system (ECTS), which has gained political and institutional acceptance and implementation over time. In Southeast Asia, four systems coexist (ACTS, UMAP, UCTS, AACs), involving in some cases different countries or attached to different organisations and projects. And in Latin America, no credit system has been formally implemented, but there are national systems in several countries that adopted the 'CLAR' as a reference. What has been learned from the experiences of other regions is that a credit system based on contact hours would not give a sufficient account of the equivalence between courses, even though the expected learning outcomes were equivalent.

The majority of the systems discussed in Session 1 have undertaken research on the number of hours that are necessary to achieve learning outcomes. Different types of interrelated elements that influence "productivity"—i.e. the time to obtain the required level of learning by a student—could be identified. These include: diversity of traditions; curriculum design and context; coherence of curriculum; teaching and learning and assessment methods.

The extensive discussions forced a modification of the third session scheduled for 8 June. As a result, both group work sessions were held consecutively on 9th June. The three groups formed had a regional composition in order to be able to address the guidelines for Session 6 (See Annex with Groups composition).

After two and a half hours of group sessions, the following **conclusions** were presented in plenary:
Firstly, a number of aspects were identified that highlight the importance of the ACTS for the African context:

- Facilitate recognition and comparability.
- Promote flexible leaning pathways.
- Connect with and reinforce Qualification Frameworks (linked to the prior)
- Support the role of universities in SDG4.
- Introduce in many contexts the language of Learning Outcomes and Student Workload.

Beyond these benefits, there is a compelling need to have a common agreement on the definition and value of a credit in the African higher education systems in order to promote transferability and comparability—key to harmonizing the African higher education space and to promoting mobility.

A second aspect shared in the discussion was related to the main barriers identified by the groups for a future implementation of ACTS in the African context:

- Lack of awareness of the ACTS (and the importance of a credit system) and how it can and must relate to other institutional processes (QA, governance strategy, information sharing).
- Lack of awareness of its added value as part of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework and how it complements continental integration processes
- Difficulty in changing behaviors at institutional level, from a teacher and student perspective.
- Different regulatory mechanisms at national level.
- Lack of continental support
- Non-alignment with major regional initiatives: STISA 24, Vision 2063, Addis Ababa Convention (not ratified in all African Member States), UNESCO Global Recognition Convention.

Faced with these difficulties, the groups discussed what actions could be implemented to move forward with the adoption of ACTS in the African context. The following proposals were identified:

- Seek synergies between the various existing initiatives, including those of regional communities which has already explored the possibilities of a common credit system and/or are committed politically to this (East Africa, SADC)
- Wider ratification of the Addis Ababa and Global conventions.
- Conduct information campaigns at sub-regional, state and institutional levels the benefits of ACTS and how it's introduction could shape African higher education
- Encourage the creation of a project team at the African Union, but also at sub-regional and state/country levels with focal points. Promote dynamic involvement and leadership of the AU and AUC in this process.
- Strengthen the role of regions and trans-regional bodies: CAMES, AAU, REESIRAC, REESAO that would be important stakeholders in the promotion of the ACTS, in conjunction with focal points as mentioned before

- Organise inter-regional workshops/ facilitate inter-regional dialogue, to ensure discussion on ACTS cross-linguistic and regional lines
- Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to change mind sets with key actors (students and professors).
- Consult national regulatory agencies and universities on how ACTS can be translated into their respective systems and legislative frameworks and compatibility with existing credit systems

The workshop endorsed the next activities that would be undertaken with the support of the HAQAA initiative, notably regionally focused workshops which would serve to further disseminate and debate the concept as well as the practical implementation of ACTS.

A new name for ACTS?

At the end of the plenary, there was a discussion on the acronym to be used for African Credit. In the first session of the workshop on "Credits from Global perspective", the speaker from Asia (ASEAN University Network) showed the four existing credit systems in that region, one of which had the same acronym as the African credit (ACTS). It was therefore decided that a new acronym was needed and some options were put forward (PANACTS; AfriACTS; AfrACTS) Since no agreement was reached, it was decided to leave the responsibility to the African Credit Transfer System Task Force (ACTS-TF) to come up with a new acronym shortly.

Agenda

Wednesday 8 June 2022		
TIME	**TOPIC**	**PRESENTER**
14:00 – 14:10	Official welcome and introductions • Elizabeth Colucci (OBREAL Global) • Olusola Oyewole (AAU) • Christoph Hansert /Stefan Bienefeld (DAAD)	OBREAL Global / HAQAA2 Implementing Team
14:10 – 14:30	Welcome Address: The Minister Professor Adama DIAWARA, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research	
14:30 – 15:30	**Session 1**: A Credit System from a global perspective *Round Table (1 hour) – 4 panelists* **(virtually)** • Recognition and credit mobility. Main characteristics. (European Expert – Howard Davies, Senior Advisor, EUA/HAQAA2 Expert) • What do we mean by 'student workload' and why does this matter is related to credits and recognition? Brief explanation of ECTS. (Michael Gaebel, Head of Higher Education Policy Unit, EUA/BFUG representative) • National experiences in Latin America moving forward a regional credit system (Marina Larrea – Director of International Cooperation – Ministry of Education in Argentine) • Asia and its development in credit system (Choltis Dhirathiti - Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network (AUN))	Chair: Olusola Oyewole (AAU)
	Questions and Answers	
15:30 – 16:30	**Session 2**: ACTS: a credit system proposal for Africa *Round Table (1 hour) – 3 panelists* • Introduction of the importance of an African Credit system. State of the art of National and Regional Credit initiatives. Connection of ACTS with other Recognition mechanisms in Africa (Olusola Oyewole - Secretary General of the AAU) • Student Workload measurement as a basis of ACTS. Some findings in different regions. (Pablo Beneitone - OBREAL Global) • Key elements of ACTS proposal. (Hortense Atta Diallo - Vice Rector of Nangui Abrogoua University – Ivory Coast)	Chair: Stefan Bienefeld (DAAD)
	Questions and Answers	

16:30 – 17:30	Session 3: Group Discussion 1 (1 hour) Brief Introduction to Work Discussion 1. Group composition (5 or 6 groups). Presentation of Questions to be discussed and answer in each group • Are any other Key elements which should be included in ACTS proposal? Which ones? • What would be the main barriers for the uptake of ACTS in your country/region? • How could these obstacles be overcome? • *Resource persons* : Matete *Madiba, Charles Onana, Ahmed Elgohary, Goski Alabi*	
	Summary and preparation of a short report to be presented at plenary next morning	
	Questions and answers	
<td colspan="2">**Thursday 9 June 2022**</td>	
09.00 – 10.00	<u>Session 4:</u> (1 hour) • Reporting from groups about internal discussion and main findings/agreements on the three questions proposed on Session 3. Open discussion. • Brief Introduction to Group Discussion 2. Group composition (5 or 6 groups). Presentation of the topics to be discussed and answer in each group	<u>Chair:</u> Ana Maria Nhampule (Vice Rector of Universidade Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique)
10.00 – 11.30	<u>Session 5:</u> **Group Discussion** (1. 30 hour) • **Topic 1:** In order to install ACTS discussion in your region/ country, which strategies do you propose? Identify 5 main steps/strategies to be implemented • **Topic 2:** In order to inform the academic community in your country/region about ACTS and its importance/ relevance, draft a Seminar/Workshop proposal to de develop in your country/region, identifying: • Target groups to be invited • Number of participants • Format (virtual, face to face, hybrid) • Structure of the encounter (one day, half day; workshop or seminar) • Sessions to be developed (main aspects to be discussed) • Main results expected of the encounter *Resource persons* : Matete *Madiba, Charles Onana, Ahmed Elgohary, Goski Alabi*	
11.30 – 12.30	<u>Session 6:</u> (1 hour) Closing Plenary. Reporting from groups about internal discussion and main findings / agreements in relation to Topic 1 and 2.	Chair: Olusola Oyewole - Secretary General of the AAU
12.30 – 12.40	Closing remarks	

List of Participants

Name	Organization	Country
Kibrome Mekonnen	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
Juma Mukhwana	Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA)	Kenya
Ben Ruhinda Gakwaya	IUCEA Rwanda	Rwanda
Michael Mawa	IUCEA Uganda	Uganda
Maria Luisa Lopes Chicote	CNAQ Mozambique	Mozambique
Jeffy Mukora	CNAQ Mozambique	Mozambique
Tafadzwa Rusive	SARUA Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Ana Maria Nhampule	Mozambique	Mozambique
Ntemela Rachel Madiba	University of Pretoria South Africa	South Africa
Nodumo Dhlamini	AAU Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Stephen Simukanga	SAQAN Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Michael Gaebel	EUA Belgium	Belgium
Amr Ezzat Salama	AArU Egypt	Egypt
Ahmed Elgohary	Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology	Egypt
Youhansen Eid	NAQAAE Egypt	Egypt
Stefan Bienefeld	DAAD Germany	Germany
Michaela Martin	UNESCO France	France
Goski Alabi	ANIE Ghana	Ghana
Olusola Oyewole	AAU Nigeria	Nigeria
Caseley Olabode Stephens	AUC Nigeria	Nigeria
Peter Kwasi Kodjie	AASU Ghana	Ghana
Abdoulaye Salifou	UNESCO Nigeria	Nigeria
Juru Eglantine	AAU Rwanda	Rwanda
Abdallah Baguma	EAQAN Rwanda	Rwanda
Zakari Lire	CAMES Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso
Jackson Jioleo Lontchi	ASAF Cameroun	Cameroun
Aissatou Sy-Wonyu	AUF Cameroun	Cameroun
Charles Awono Onana	Université des Montagnes Cameroun	Cameroun
Sarah Lange	DAAD Germany	Germany
Wail Benjalloun	UNIMED Morocco	Morocco
Lamine Gueye	ANAQ-Sup Senegal	Senegal
Abdou Cissé	ANAQ Sup Senegal	Senegal
Bernard Zuppinger	AUF France	France
Pr. DIALLO- ATTA Taky Hortense	UNA, Abobo-Adjamé Cote d´voire	Cote d´voire
Adama DIAWARA	Cote d´voire	Cote d´voire

ANNEX III

Minutes of ACTS National Workshop: Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, 5 October 2022

Participants: Olusola Oyewole (Secretary General of the AAU), Damtew Teferra (AAU), Ana Maria Nhampule (Universidade Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique), Stephan Bienefeld (DAAD), Sarah Lang (DAAD), Elizabeth Colucci (OBREAL), Nicolás Patrici (OBREAL), Apiyo Okwiri (OBREAL) Pablo Beneitone (OBREAL)

The original Workshop agenda was restructured and it was decided to focus on the Ethiopian credit experience. Prof. Abebaw Yirga Adamu from Addis Ababa University made a comprehensive presentation of the credit system in Ethiopia and its connection with ACTS.

He emphasised that for many decades credit in Ethiopia was centred on teacher time, inspired by the American credit of 1 credit = 16 contact hours. Since 10 years ago a new credit was introduced, inspired by the European ECTS and student-centred learning, where the value of 1 credit was set at 27 hours of total student workload. This introduction implied a shift from a teacher-centred to a student-centred learning. For this purpose, a group of experts elaborated a *Guideline for the Implementation of EtCTS* (Ethiopian Credit Transfer System), which would involve:

- Facilitate implementation of Competence-Based Curriculum
- Enhance the transparency and comparability of study programs, study periods and qualifications, and
- Facilitate student mobility within and across universities

In Ethiopia there is no official regulation on credits, only this Guideline. Given the autonomy of universities, the incorporation of this new credit system has had a poor and inconsistent implementation, which it is reflected in:

- Not been achieved at national level (e.g., private HEIs are using credit based on contact hours).
- Not well-understood among the Higher Education community the relation between Comptence-Based Curriculum, learning outcomes and student workload.
- Parallel implementation of both systems (EtCTS and Credit based on contact hours).
- Allocation of credits is mainly based on contact hours.
- Some allocate haphazardly and is less than a semester workload.

Afterwards, the discussion focused on different reasons that would explain the difficulties in implementing student workload-based academic credit in Ethiopia:

- Lack of clear national policy/directives on the purpose and use of the credit system.
- Universities did not properly communicate the assumptions, purposes, and benefits of the learning outcomes and student workload-based credit.

- Teachers and students associate the new credit system (EtCTS) with its grading system rather than its features relating to student workload and learning outcomes.
- Ethiopia attracts few degree-seeking international students; it thus has less incentive to facilitate student mobility and recognition of study periods and qualifications
- Universities do not respect their academic calendar year in and year out.

It was concluded that the incorporation of ACTS could be a good opportunity to have a clear policy and directive on credit across the country irrespective of ownership and types of university. Also, it will help to reemphasize the purpose and benefits of a credit system based on learning outcomes and student workload.

Difficulties in both Ethiopian and European contexts regarding the allocation of credits to doctoral programmes were also shared.

Based on the reflections of the presentation made by Prof. Abebaw Yirga Adamu, the participants proposed different actions in the short and medium term.

For the short term (from now till the end of HAQAA2) and regarding the process of revitalisation of the ACTS, it was decided to replicate this focused exercise conducted in Ethiopia (Discussion Group) in the next meeting African Quality Assurance Network Conference (AfriQAN) which will be held in Mozambique (25-27 October) and in the Final HAQAA2 Event which will be held in Ghana (6-9 December). For this purpose, it will be relevant to convene local/national experts in each of these areas to describe the national credit situation and analyse the link with the ACTS.

For the Mozambique meeting, Ana Maria Nhampule will be the person in charge of organising and leading the Discussion Group, with the participation of other ACTS Task Force members in person and virtually. For the Accra meeting, the AAU will be responsible. A similar virtual meeting with a CAMES member is also expected to take place before the end of the year, incorporating the perspective of francophone countries. From OBREAL will contact CAMES in order to organise this Discussion Group.

A format for the Discussion Groups was proposed, which should include 5 elements to be considered:
1. Teacher Centred Learning
2. Student Centred Learning
3. Learning Outcomes
4. Student workload
5. Conversion on credits and Credit Allocation.

The information gathered in these Discussion groups will be very relevant for the elaboration of a future strategy for the implementation of ACTS on a continental scale.

In the medium term, and in a future project, it was suggested to take into account National Regulation Agencies and Regional Bodies perspectives as key actors in the process of implementation of ACTS.

Finally, it was also proposed to resume the discussion in Ghana next December on a new acronym for ACTS (AfriACTS; AfrACTS, other).

ANNEX IV

Agenda of ACTS National Workshop: Mozambique

Maputo, 27 October 2022

Objetivo: Promover o diálogo regional sobre a importância do Sistema Africano de Acumulação e Transferência de Créditos (ACTS) para a mobilidade internacional e o reconhecimento académico, identificando claramente os principais desafios para a sua implementação e também propostas para o seu avanço.

Participantes: 30 representantes de instituições de ensino superior moçambicanas

Quinta-feira, 27 Outubro de 2022		
HORÁRIO	**TÓPICO**	**Oradores**
13:30 – 13:45	Abertura Oficial e Notas Introdutórias	OBREAL Global / HAQAA2 Implementing Team
13:45 – 14:30	**Sessão 1**: ACTS: Uma Proposta do Sistema de Créditos para África *Mesa Redonda (45 min) – 2 painelistas* - Importância de um sistema africano de créditos. Estado da arte das iniciativas nacionais e regionais de Créditos. Ligação entre ACTS e outros mecanismos de reconhecimento em África - Elementos-chave da proposta de ACTS	Moderadora: Sarah Lang, DAAD Olusola Oyewole, Secretary General of the AAU Ana Nhampule, Vice Rector of Universidade Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique)
	Perguntas e Respostas	
14.30 – 15.15	**Sessão 2**: Créditos, Volume de Trabalho dos Estudantes e Resultados de Aprendizagem *Mesa Redonda (45 min) – 2 painelistas* - A importância do volume de trabalho dos alunos e dos resultados da aprendizagem para o desenho do currículo - Medição da carga de trabalho do aluno como base do ACTS. Algumas constatações em diferentes regiões.	Moderador: Olusola Oyewole - SG of the AAU Stephan Bienefeld, DAAD Pablo Beneitone, OBREAL Global
	Perguntas e Respostas	
15:15 – 15:30	Intervalo	
15.30 – 16.15	**Sessão 3**: Contexto nacional *Mesa redonda (45 min) – 3 painelistas* - Estado da arte das iniciativas de crédito ao nível nacional e na regional da África Austral - Potencial ligação entre o ACTS e os mecanismos de reconhecimento em Moçambique	Chair: Sara Lang, DAAD Jefy Mukora, CNAQ Alexandra Rodrigues, ISCISA Boaventura Cuamba, UEM
	Perguntas e Respostas	

| 16:15 – 17:15 | Sessão 4:
Discussão Plenária (1 hora)
Perguntas para o Debate:
• Já existem experiências no trabalho com sistemas de crédito nas IES representadas no Workshop? Se sim, como são tais experiências?
• Quais seriam os benefícios do ACTS?
• Quais seriam os desafios?
• Quais seriam as principais barreiras para a adopção do ACTS na sua instituição?
• Sente que a comunidade académica tem uma boa compreensão sobre a mudança da abordagem focada ao ensino para a abordagem focada na aprendizagem e do conceito de resultados de aprendizagem, volume de trabalho dos alunos e outros conceitos ligados aos ACTS?
• O que seria necessário para implementar o ACTS nas universidades moçambicanas (decisões políticas, novos regulamentos, capacitação, etc.)? Por favor, defina três ações-chave para possível implementação.
• Onde vê a ligação entre a ACTS e a garantia de qualidade interna e externa? Como é que isso pode funcionar no contexto moçambicano? | Moderadora: Ana Nhampule, Vice Reitora, UJC |
| 17.15 – 17.30 | Encerramento | Olusola Oyewole, SG of the AAU
OBREAL Global / HAQAA2 Implementing Team |

Minutes of ACTS National Workshop: Ghana

Accra, 6 December 2022

Objective: Promote regional dialogue on the importance of ACTS for international mobility and academic recognition, with clear identification of the main challenges for its implementation and also proposals for its advancement.

Participants: 25 persons. Representatives from Ghanaian higher education institutions and government stakeholders

AGENDA

Tuesday 6 December 2022		
TIME	**TOPIC**	**CHAIR**
9:00 – 9:10	Official welcome and introductions (OBREAL Global / HAQAA2 Implementing Team)	
9:10 – 10.15	**Session 1**: ACTS: a credit system proposal for Africa *Round Table – 4 panelists* • Introduction of the importance of an African Credit system. State of the art of National and Regional Credit initiatives. Connection of ACTS with other Recognition mechanisms in Africa (Olusola Oyewole - Secretary General of the AAU) • Student Workload measurement as a basis of ACTS. Some findings in different regions. (Pablo Beneitone OBREAL Global) • Key elements of ACTS proposal (Damtew Teferra - AAU)	
	Questions and Answers	
10.15 – 10.30	Coffee break	
10:30 – 11:30	**Session 2:** Group Discussion (1 hour) Brief Introduction to Work Discussion. Group composition (4 groups). Presentation of Questions to be discussed and answer in each group • Are there already experiences in working with credit systems in your institutions? If so, how are these experiences? • What would be the benefits of the ACTS system? What would be challenges? • What would be necessary to implement ACTS in Ghanian universities (political decisions, new regulations, training, etc.)? Please define three key actions for further implementation.	
	Summary and preparation of a short report to be presented at plenary	
11.30 – 12.00	Session 3: Plenary session • Reporting from groups about internal discussion and main findings/ agreements on the questions proposed on Session 2. Open discussion. • Closing remarks	

The outcome of the ACTS workshop breakout groups on 6th December 2022 in Ghana:

Question One [1]

- **Are there already experiences in working with credit systems in your institutions? If so, how are these experiences?**
  - All the 3 groups recognised the existence of credit systems operating in Ghanaian universities. The experience though is that it is institutional-specific. Each institution determines the procedure to adopt in the process with varied grading systems. There is no national policy to guide that.
  - The assessment of the workload and outcomes differs from one institution to the other.

Question Two [2]

- **What would be the benefits of the ACTS system? What would be the challenges?**
  Benefits
  - It would lead to student and staff mobility. Especially in the sub-region where there is political instability, will enable the affected students to easily move from one African country to the other to continue their education without hindrance. Also, qualifications for employment will be readily accepted.
  - Tool for comparing programmes, curricula
  - Promote intuitional linkages and collaboration
  - Ease of assessment of qualifications
  - Recognition of courses/programmes and qualifications offered in different institutions
  - Comparability with foreign degrees/qualifications
  - Job mobility

  Challenges
  - Structures in Ghanaian universities are not harmonised. There is no common ground to reduce the gap in the grading system in Ghanaian universities (different grading systems).
  - There is no National Qualification Framework to serve as a benchmark
  - Lack of expertise to help resolve some of the issues raised with ACTS.
  - Lack of support for private tertiary institutions by the government which may hinder their cooperation
  - Lack of capacity of developing instructional design (Development of expected learning outcomes)
  - Different academic calendars
  - Non-existence of uniform credit
  - Resistance to change

Question Three [3]

- **What would be necessary to implement ACTS in Ghanaian universities (political decisions, new regulations, training, etc.)? Please define three key actions for further implementation.**
    - The ACTS working document should be published and discussed with key stakeholders to get the needed support.
    - To avoid resistance in the various institutions the benefits of ACTS should be shared widely.
    - There should be a revised national regulatory framework regarding the grading system of universities. This will lead to a national harmonised grading system for universities.
    - There should be general education and awareness creation.
    - Programmatic benchmarks
    - Working definition of Key terms (workload, notional hours, credit,…)
    - Need to have a National Qualifications Framework in place
    - Guidelines for implementing the harmonized ACTS
    - Inter-disciplinary groups to develop the body of knowledge
    - Academic calendar alignment
    - Alignment with Addis and Global Convention on Recognition of qualifications
    - Stakeholder engagement on the ACTS (Government, Educational Institutions, Learners)
    - Advocacy and awareness