

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance
and Accreditation in Africa



ACTS Pilot Phase

MODULE 0

**Regional and continental
integration and cooperation in
higher education in Africa.
The role of credit systems.**



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
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Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

MODULE 0

Regional and continental integration and cooperation in higher education in Africa. The role of credit systems.

Supporting written document

How to use this document

This document is designed as an introductory companion for Module 0 of the ACTS Pilot Phase online programme. Rather than providing technical training, this module aims to establish a shared conceptual and political understanding of why mobility, recognition and cooperation in higher education matter for African regional and continental integration. The module combines short written materials and recorded interventions from African and European higher education actors involved in the ACTS Pilot Phase. Participants are invited to engage with these resources before the live online session. This document proposes a series of questions for reflection and discussion that may support national teams, universities and regional partners in preparing for the collective work ahead.

Module 0 at a glance

Module 0 serves as the entry point to the ACTS Pilot Phase. It introduces the broader regional and continental context within which ACTS is being developed and implemented.

This module explores why academic mobility, recognition and cooperation in higher education should not be understood as isolated technical issues, but as part of broader processes of African regional and continental integration.

It examines how universities, ministries, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities and regional organisations can contribute collectively to building a more connected African higher education space, capable of supporting not only academic cooperation, but also the mobility of skills, graduates and professionals across the continent.

The module also introduces ACTS not as a harmonisation mechanism imposed on institutions or countries, but as a continental reference framework intended to support dialogue, transparency, comparability and cooperation between diverse systems and practices.

What this Module explores

- the relationship between higher education and African integration
- the role of academic mobility and recognition in building trust and cooperation across systems
- the place of credit systems within broader continental integration agendas
- the rationale of ACTS as a continental framework supporting voluntary cooperation and coordination among African higher education systems and institutions

Section 1. Regional and continental integration in higher education

Regional integration in higher education has progressively become a strategic priority for the African Union and for African regional organisations. This process is closely linked to broader continental agendas such as Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), the Addis Ababa Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

In this context, higher education institutions are increasingly expected to play a role not only as academic actors, but also as agents of regional integration, economic development and knowledge circulation.

The following materials introduce these broader dynamics and situate ACTS within ongoing African integration processes:

Recorded interventions

- Olusola Oyewole, Secretary General of the Association of African Universities (AAU) *Empowering universities as agents of economic development and regional and continental African economic integration*
Recorded intervention at the Webinar series “Economic and education inter-dependencies in the AU-EU partnership. Unpacking the AfCFTA – higher education link”, that took place on October 16th 2026

Written materials

- *Transversal introductory module* of the HAQAA Materials on African continental and regional integration in higher education
- Presentation to the HAQAA Materials by Olusola Oyewole *Barriers to African continental integration in higher education*
- HAQAA Policy Brief N° 5 *Giving greater effectiveness to African continental integration in and through higher education: Empowering Universities as development and integration agents*

These materials highlight the idea that higher education integration cannot be reduced to institutional cooperation alone. It is part of a broader political and economic process involving mobility, trust-building, circulation of knowledge and skills, and the strengthening of regional cooperation mechanisms.

Section 2. Why mobility and recognition matter

Academic mobility is often presented as a positive objective in itself. However, mobility only becomes meaningful and sustainable when institutions and systems are able to recognise periods of study, qualifications and prior learning in transparent and predictable ways.

Recognition, therefore, is not only an administrative procedure. It is a central condition for cooperation, trust and effective academic integration.

At continental level, these questions also acquire an economic and political dimension. Facilitating mobility and recognition contributes to the circulation of skills and graduates across borders, supporting broader African integration processes.

The following materials explore these issues from an African perspective:

Recorded interventions

- Wail Benjelloun, Senior Advisor Obreal, Former President of Mohammed V University, Morocco
Deconstructing recognition of academic degrees, study periods and professional qualifications as an essential AfCFTA building block
Recorded intervention at the Webinar series “Economic and education inter-dependencies in the AU-EU partnership. Unpacking the AfCFTA – higher education link”, that took place on October 2nd 2026

Written materials

- HAQAA Policy Brief N° 2
Misconceptions about harmonization...and one policy conclusion concerning higher education
- Wail Benjelloun
African free trade and higher education: a two-way street

These materials underline an important point: mobility and recognition do not necessarily require the harmonisation of all systems, curricula or regulations. In many contexts, cooperation functions through negotiated frameworks, institutional trust and practical arrangements between actors operating within diverse systems.

Section 3. Credit systems as instruments for cooperation

Credit systems are often perceived as technical instruments used to measure academic workload. However, within regional integration processes, they also function as tools that facilitate communication, comparability and cooperation between institutions and systems.

The ACTS proposal builds on this understanding. It does not seek to replace existing national or regional systems, but to provide a common continental reference point supporting mobility and recognition across diverse institutional contexts.

This perspective is closely connected to current debates taking place internationally regarding the evolution of credit systems and their role in mobility frameworks.

The following materials introduce these discussions:

Recorded intervention

- Ramon Torrent, President of Obreal
A new vision of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as a precedent
Recorded intervention at the ACTS Pilot onboarding online session for ACTS national focal points, that took place on April 24th 2026

Written material

- HAQAA Policy Brief N° 11
Lessons for the ACTS from the ECTS User's Guide revision

Section 4. Credit systems as instruments for cooperation

ACTS is conceived as a continental framework supporting voluntary collaboration among African higher education institutions, national authorities and regional organisations.

Its objective is not to impose a single model across the continent, but to create common reference points that make mobility and recognition easier, more transparent and more predictable.

The ACTS Pilot Phase under HAQAA3 represents an important step in this process. Through regional clusters, institutional participation and collective reflection, the Pilot aims to generate practical experience, identify challenges and develop inputs for the future ACTS User's Guide.

The Pilot also seeks to strengthen dialogue between:

- universities
- ministries and regulatory authorities
- quality assurance agencies
- qualifications authorities
- regional organisations
- students' representatives

In this sense, the Pilot deals with building cooperation structures and shared practices capable of supporting African integration through higher education, not only with academic credits as a technical tool.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Participants are invited to reflect individually and collectively on the following questions before the live session:

1. Why does academic mobility matter for African regional and continental integration?
2. What are the main barriers to intra-African mobility and recognition in your national and institutional context?
3. Why is it important for African universities, national authorities and regional bodies to collectively shape the instruments that will support mobility and recognition across the continent?
4. How can mobility and recognition contribute not only to academic integration, but also to economic integration and the circulation of skills in Africa?
5. What role could your institution or country play in this collective process?

Preparing for the live session on May 26th

Before the live session

Participants are encouraged to review the asynchronous materials before the live session and to use the reflection questions above as a basis for internal discussions within their institutional and national teams.

National focal points are also invited to use this module as an opportunity to begin consolidating national coordination dynamics among participating universities, ministries and other relevant stakeholders.

During the live session

The live session for Module 0 brings together all regional clusters and participating actors in a shared introductory meeting launching the ACTS Pilot Phase.

The session will:

- present the broader political and conceptual rationale of ACTS
- situate the Pilot within African regional and continental integration agendas
- introduce the regional clusters and working modalities
- present the structure of the online programme
- clarify the role of participating institutions and national focal points
- launch the collective work that will continue throughout the Pilot Phase

The session also includes breakout rooms organised by regional cluster, allowing participants to begin discussing:

- regional challenges
- working modalities
- coordination mechanisms
- expectations for the Pilot Phase

The session will also introduce Module 1 of the online programme (“Academic Credits and Curricula”), including the first individual reflection activity that participants will be invited to complete and submit following the live session.

After the live session

Following the live session, participants are invited to begin engaging with Module 1 materials and to complete the first individual reflection activity of Module 1 in preparation for the next stage of the programme.