



AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS VERIFICATION NETWORK (AQVN)

• 2021 WEBINAR SERIES

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Outline of presentation

- NAB to GTEC
- Recognition of foreign tertiary education institutions
- Verification of certificates
- Credential Evaluation System (CES)
- Effects of COVID-19 on recognition and verification of certificates
- Innovative strategies put up to mitigate the effects of COVID-19
- Challenges- Legal issues & other challenges
- Way forward



GTEC – A merger of NAB and NCTE

NAB

The **National Accreditation Board (NAB)** was established by an Act of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, NAB Act 2007, Act 744, to among other functions, accredit both public and private tertiary education institutions as regards the content and standards of their programmes as well as evaluate certificates /qualifications awarded by recognised institutions in Ghana and elsewhere.

NCTE

The **National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE)** was established in 1993 to, among others, recommend national norms and standards for tertiary education and advise the minister on the financial needs and development of tertiary education institutions in Ghana.

GTEC

NAB and NCTE were merged to form the **Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC)** under the new Education Regulatory Bodies Act 2020 (Act 1023).

Effects of the merger:

- Greater harmony & efficiency
- Streamlined activities
- Clear & expanded mandate on recognition etc



Recognition

- **Definition:** An official acknowledgement by a competent authority of foreign institutions/awarding bodies and their qualifications based on compliance with standards outlined by the host country.

- **Policies on recognition**

- i. **Academic Institutions**

The cardinal requirement for the recognition of institutions/awarding bodies is the accreditation/recognition by the competent body in the home country.

- ii. **Professional bodies**

The Commission recognises professional bodies which are recognised/approved by the competent body or a legislative instrument in the home country.



Recognition

iii. **Awarding bodies (mainly in UK)**

Awarding bodies must be recognised by the competent body in the home country, mainly:

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OFQUAL)
- Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
- Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA)
- Qualifications Wales

Awarding bodies with any of the following status are not recognised:

- o Surrendered recognition
- o Recognition for the awarding body but with unregulated/customised qualifications



Different cases of recognition

Recognition of foreign institutions/programmes can be a very knotty exercise, as institutions are located in different jurisdictions with different accreditation regimes/systems. Following are some of the different cases of recognition identified in the course of our work.

Institutions/programmes:

- i. from countries with competent accrediting bodies and effective QA system
- ii. from countries where the ministry in charge of education only registers/license institutions without going through the rigorous process of accreditation/recognition.
- iii. located in countries where there are competent accrediting bodies, but takes accreditation/recognition from a foreign (independent/private) accrediting body.
- iv. with unspecified home country having registration/license from the country of location
- v. belonging to a consortium of institutions in which only the parent institution has accreditation/recognition from the relevant competent body in the home country.



Verification

Verification is the process of confirming the authenticity of degrees, diplomas and other certificates.

Guiding principle:

As a quality assurance measure, the ultimate source of confirmation of authenticity of certificates must be the awarding body. However, some verifications are done through 3rd party bodies e.g. the Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD), UK and Students Clearing House, USA.

Verification Process

Verification is done via email, direct postal or courier service. Sometimes contact is made with foreign missions for assistance in the process, especially when we are unable to contact the awarding institution directly.



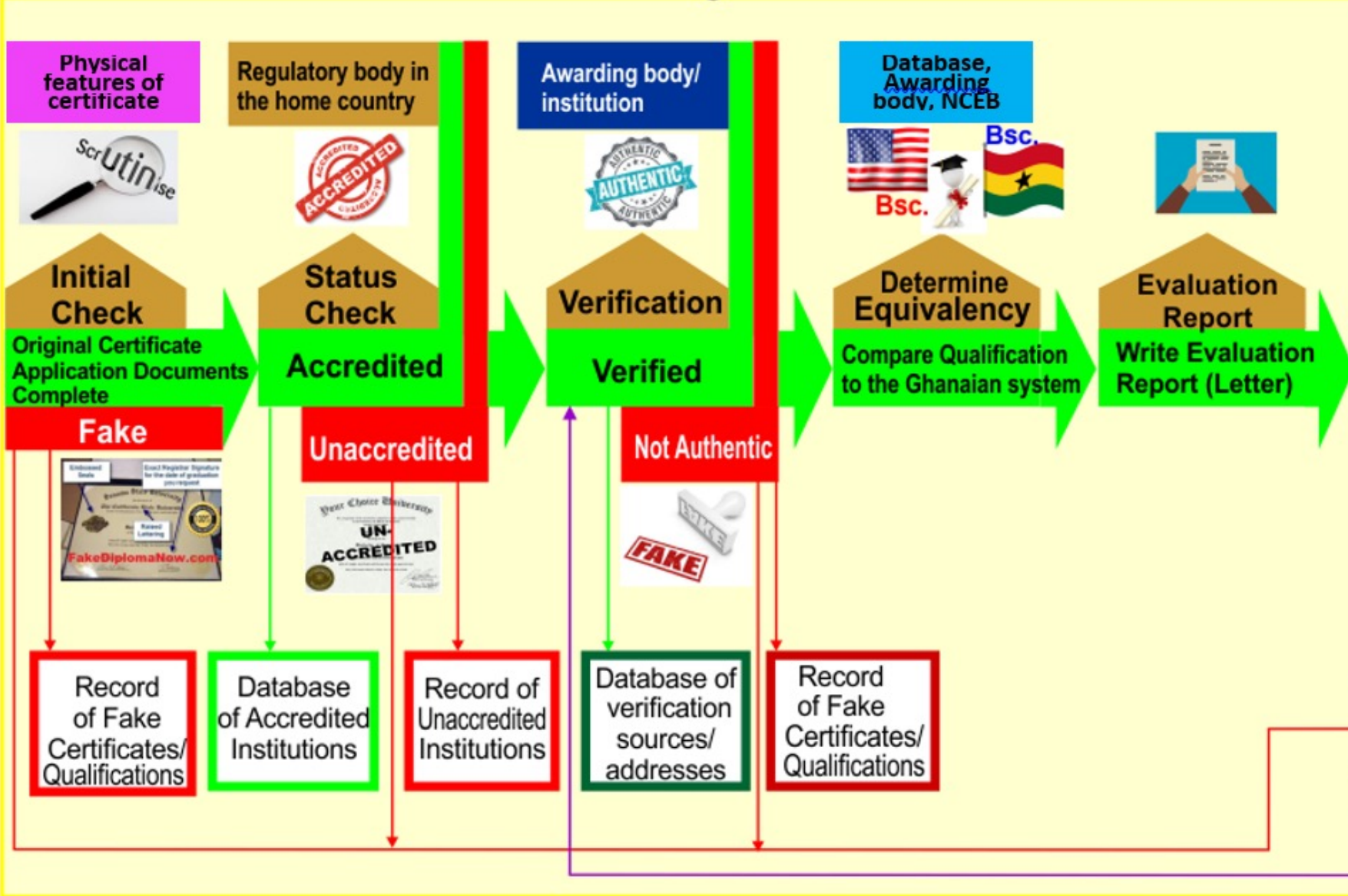
The Credential Evaluation System



Input (Application)

Application from clients

Processing



Output (Reports)

Individual Employers, Institutions, Others

Communicate Results (Reports)

Communicate Results (Reports)

Revisited if proved Legitimate/ Authentic/



COVID-19 disease outbreak in Ghana

- The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected tertiary education delivery globally. Ghana recorded its first case on March 12, 2020.
- As part of measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus, a lockdown of the main cities was imposed while tertiary education institutions were closed-down indefinitely. All tertiary education institutions were asked to move teaching and learning activities online.
- Rate of infection went down in the last quarter of 2020 paving the way for institutions to start reopening for students in batches as restrictions were gradually being lifted.
- A 2nd more deadly wave of the pandemic was experienced in February 2021, but lasted less than a month.
- Since June, a new strain of the virus (Delta) has been identified in Ghana and its spreading rapidly in communities. This appears to be the onset of a 3rd wave.



Active cases of COVID-19 in Ghana from Mar 13, 2020 – June 13, 2021

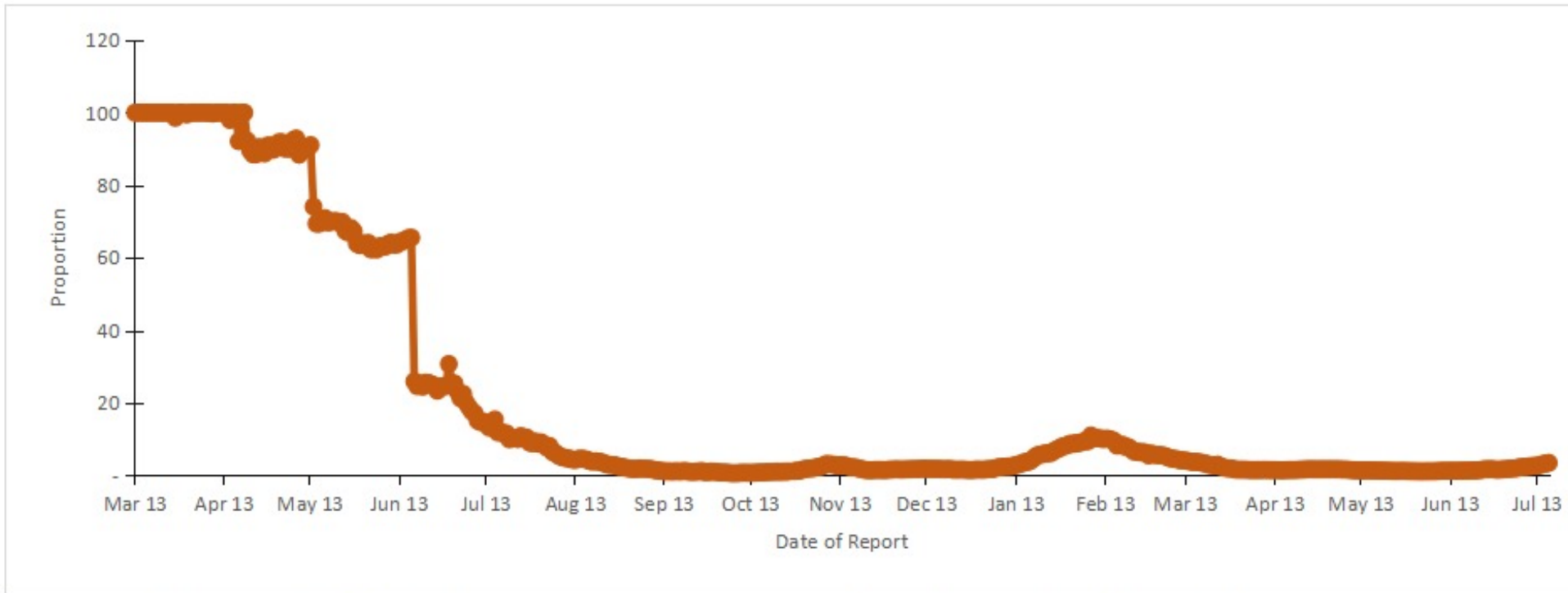


Figure 12: Active COVID-19 cases as a proportion of total cases in Ghana, Mar 2020- Jul 2021

Source: Ghana Health Service



CORONAVIRUS CASES

- Total Recorded Cases since 12th March 2020: **100,747**
- Recovered: **96,115**
- Deaths: **819**
- Active Cases as at 24th July 2021: **3,813**



Effect of Covid-19 on Recognition & Verification

- Huge backlog of applications due to the lockdown
- A significant drop in number of applications following the closure of borders. The closure affected the mobility of prospective applicants from neighbouring countries who form a significant part of our clientele.
- Applications received from walk-in clients dropped by 60%.
- Increased turnaround time for certificate verification as a result of lockdowns in other countries. Response rate to verification requests dropped by 40%



Innovative strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Recognition

- Development of the Credential Evaluation Management System (CEMS), which was rolled out in February, 2020.
- The use of PPEs (sanitizer, rubbing alcohol, face masks, and the “Veronica bucket” system, a mechanism for hand-washing originating in Ghana.
- Some Foreign missions in Ghana were involved in certificate verification process. This improved verification response rate.
- Awarding institutions were engaged to decide on the use of result statements/attestations as entry qualifications.



Challenges

- Law suits

GTEC is currently in court with the underlisted institutions over recognition issues.

- Atlantic International University - USA
- Charisma University – Turks and Caicos Islands
- Delays in the verification processes – francophone countries.
- Lack of harmonization in the recognition policies and processes on the continent.
- Increase in numbers and sophistication of diploma and accreditation mills.

- On-going recognition cases
 - Euclid University
 - UNICAF University
 - Texilla American University
 - Azteca University



Way forward

- Continue to follow the protocols and other measures to recover from the pandemic and use the experience to become better prepared for future crisis e.g. switching easily from office to work online through digitization.
- GTEC to develop a National Learners Records Database (NLRD) to facilitate local certificates and learners' verification.
- Subscription to internationally competent verification database e.g. NARIC.
- Use of digital certificates and block chain technologies for verification.
- Steps are being taken to ratify the Addis Convention.
- We suggest the AQVN sets up a database of recognised institutions on the continent for quick and seamless verification of institution's status.
- Africa should take a queue from the European Union and establish National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARICs).



THANK YOU