ACQF

ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Concept note and roadmap towards National Credit Value and Transfer System (NCVTS)

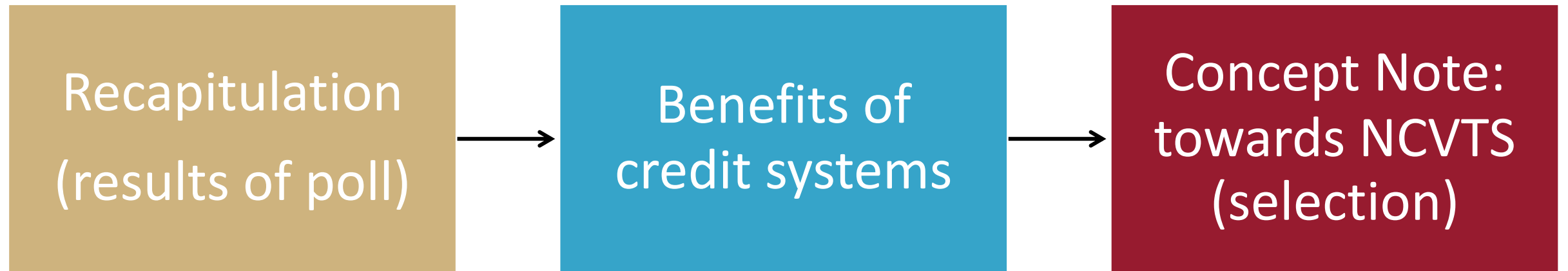**Webinars 1 and 2 (7 and 14/11/2022)**

Credit accumulation and transfer contributes to lifelong learning, flexibility of pathways, progression, mobility.

Speaker: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Agenda of the webinar (14 November 2022)

	WEBINAR 2	
	PROGRAMME	**PRESENTOR**
1	Session 1: Opening and recap of webinar 1 (10 min)	Prof Mohee, Commissioner, HEC
2	Session 2: Status of Mauritian Credit Value System (20 min)	Dr Phoolchund, Director, MQA
3	Session 3: Presentation of Concept Note (30 min)	Eduarda Castel Branco, Senior Human Capital Development Expert, European Training Foundation
4	Session 4: Development and implementation of Mauritian NCTVS (20 min)	Prof Mohee, Commissioner, HEC
5	Session 5: Discussions (30 min)	Open
6	Session 6: Vote of thanks and closing (10 mins)	Prof Mohee, Commissioner, HEC

Main themes
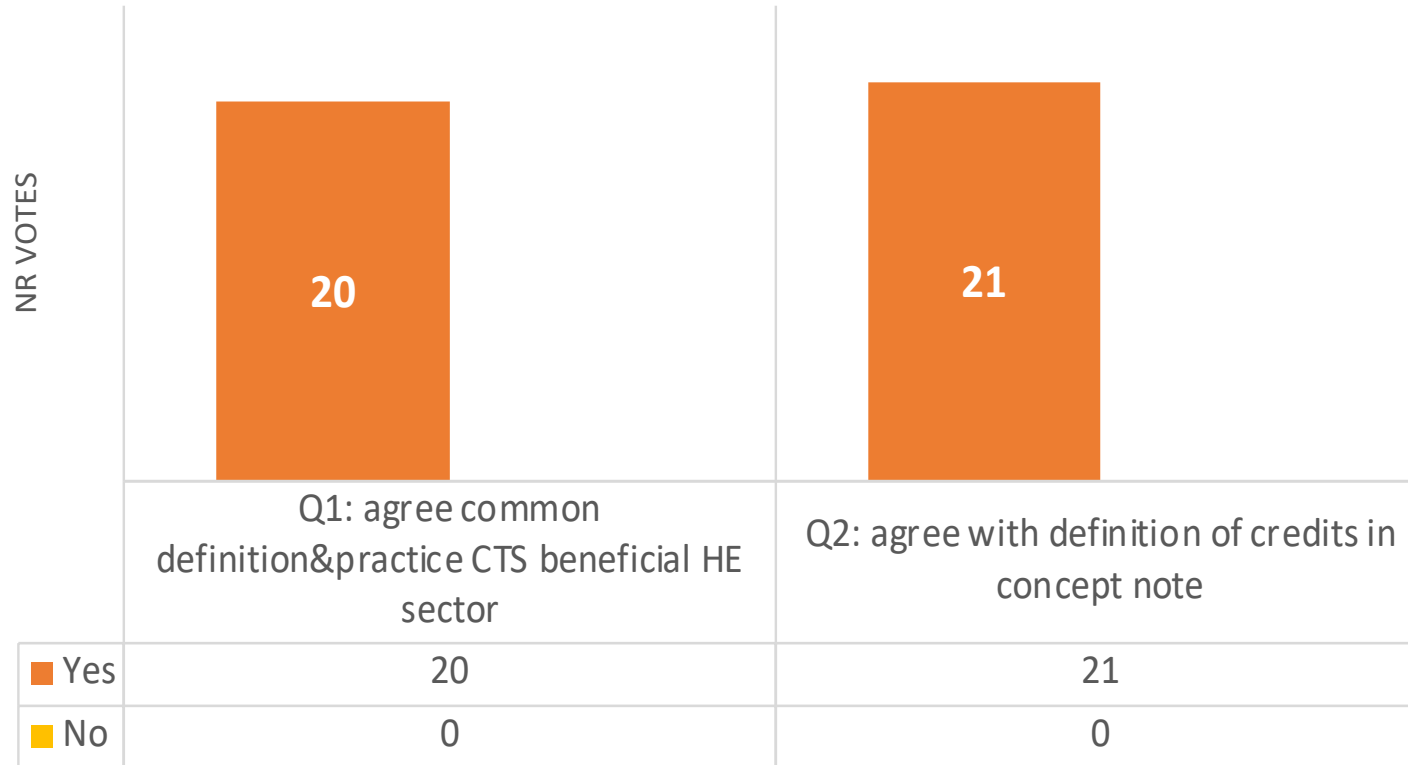
Recapitulation (results of poll) → Benefits of credit systems → Concept Note: towards NCVTS (selection)

01

Recapitulation: results of the Poll of 7/Nov 2022

Questions 1 and 2

NCVTS: POLL 7/NOV

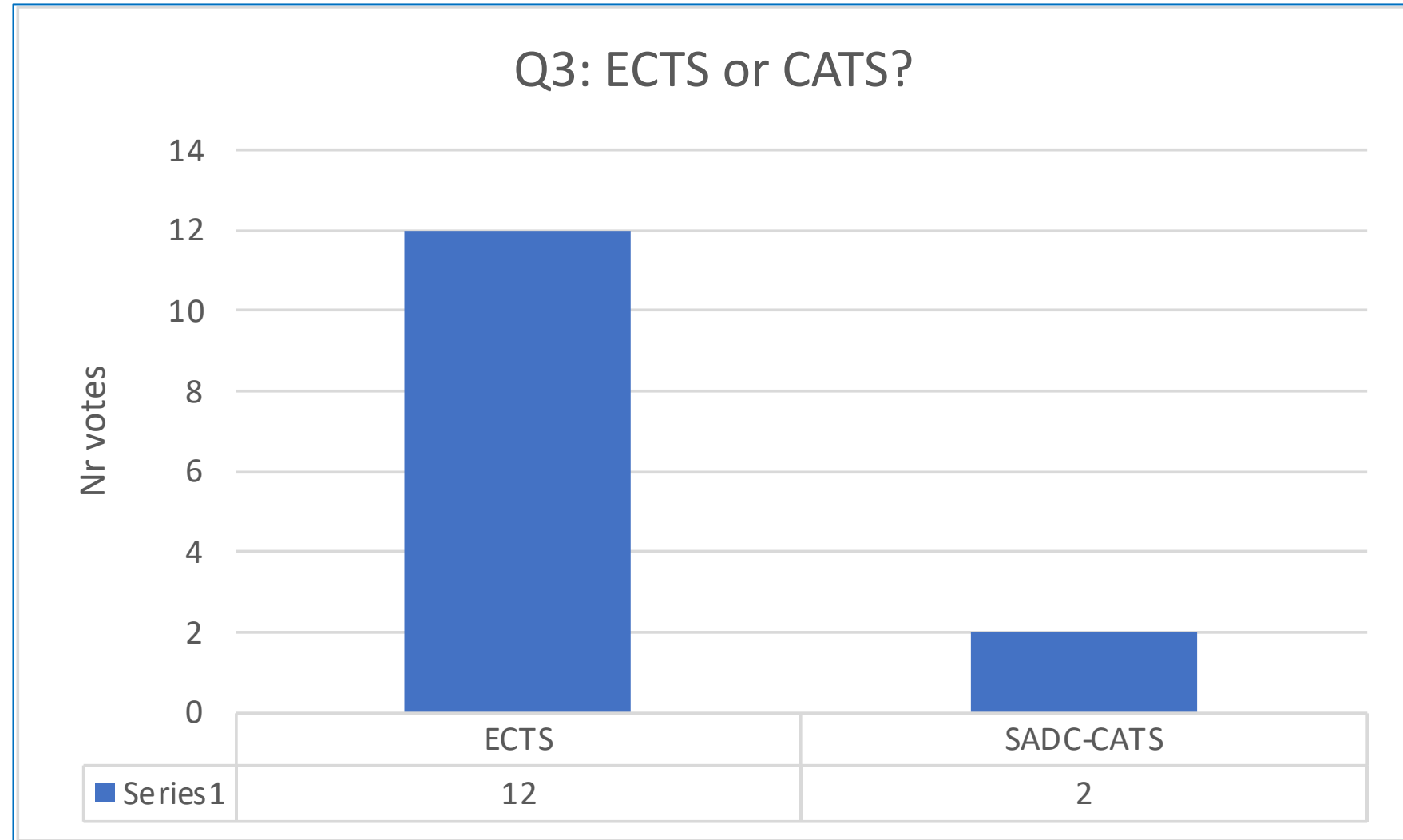|	Q1: agree common definition&practice CTS beneficial HE sector	Q2: agree with definition of credits in concept note
■ Yes	20	21
■ No	0	0

- Question 1: the definition of credit transfer presents challenges due to nuances in different HEIs. Is a common definition and practice beneficial for the HE sector?

- Question 2: are you agreeable to the definition of credits as per the draft concept note?

Question 3

- Of the proposed ECTS and CATS systems of credit accumulation and transfer which is more appropriate for Mauritius and why?

Summary of responses and comments

| Nr responses	20	21	14
	Q1: agree common definition&practice CTS beneficial HE sector	Q2: agree with definition of credits in concept note	Q3: ECTS or CATS
Yes	20	21	12 (ECTS)
No	2 (CATS) 0	0	2 (CATS)
Comments	Yes, especially for LLL	Yes, it is quite comprehensive	Already using ECTS
	Yes, in principle but challenges to implement	Yes, it is a standard definition	ECTS-learner centred
	Yes, but mind that most HEIs use ECTS	Yes, it is aligned with international credit standards	ECTS and CATS can be converted, fundamentals are similar. But ECTS is more appropriate
	It is important to have a clear and coherent CTS	Yes, but need to be specific and contextualised	Hybrid system for Mauritius, with specific areas of study
	Yes, more so because CTS are different	Yes, agreeable definition	SADC-CATS is closer to M NQF
	Yes, to ensure mobility		ECTS because of the knowledge hub and many private HEIs use ECTS
	Yes, should take into context the entry level of students and allow HEIs to adjust		ECTS is more appropriate. We use LCCS, which is based on ECTS
	Yes, to allow harmonisation and transfer		ECTS because of the benchmark
	Yes, to bring about a shared understanding of CT		

02

Benefits and challenges of credit transfer systems

Benefits of credit systems

- Intended benefits of CTS: are they materialising in reality?

- Data / statistics, research and evaluations on the effectiveness, challenges of credit systems in respect to their intended objectives / goals - are necessary.

- Research, analysis consulted for this presentation
  - UK: Department of Education, 2017. Credit Transfer in HE – a review of the literature. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595633/Credit_transfer_in_Higher_Education.pdf

  - EHEA: Bologna Process Implementation Report (2020). https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c90aaf32-4fce-11eb-b59f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-183354043

  - EU: Progress report of EC on the *Recommendation Promoting Automatic Mutual Recognition of HE and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning perdiod abroad* (2022) – draft for presentation to Council

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Benefits of credit systems
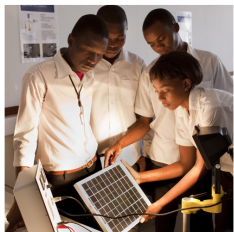
Benefits for learners

- Student mobility
- Lower drop-out rates
- Accessibility of HE
  - For those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Accessibility to those in the labour market
- Choice and flexibility
- Links with LLL
- Influence on learners' career management
- Progress tracking

Benefits for institutions

- Curriculum development
- Market responsiveness
- Resource efficiency
- Partnership working
- Retention
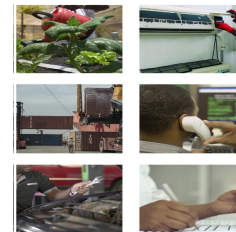
Benefits for employers

- Flexibility
- Smaller size programmes / qualifications
- Improved links HEI – employers
- Transparency on the volume of learning achieved of (potential) employees – for: screening, recruitment, company training programmes, integration of academic qualifications and professionally accredited courses.

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Potential benefits

QQA and the Learning and Skills Council provide a useful summary table of the benefits to different groups of stakeholders from using credit.

"When a credit system for England is fully established, it will provide flexibility and choice for learners and employers and support the government's skills strategy. A credit system will make it simpler for people to plan their learning and represent their achievement to employers and others"

Principles for a Credit Framework in England

Who Benefits?	Credit will help to
Learners	- recognise achievement wherever, whenever and however it is gained - enable accumulation and transfer of credits towards a qualification or other goal - allow flexible accumulation and transfer to meet individual's needs - explain the relative value of an individual's achievement - transfer an individual's knowledge and skills between routes to achievement throughout the UK and potentially internationally - allow adults in particular to plan their learning to meet their own goals
Employers	- encourage more people in England to develop the skills needed to meet employers' requirements through targeted, credit-based learning - offer opportunities to employees to develop skills to gain credit without necessarily needing a full qualification - make clear the amount and level of learning already achieved by potential employees, especially those without standard full qualifications - help employers compare the achievements and plan future training for potential and existing employees
Key players, such as providers of education and training, including HEIs	- promote progression and transfer - create relevant and tailor-made learning opportunities - respond to change swiftly and incrementally

Indicators for measuring Credit Transfer Related Benefits

Assessing the benefits of the credit transfer system in British Columbia.

J. Munro, 2005

Type of benefit	Likely importance	Suggested measurement approach
Local access	Major	Participation rates by locality
Easier transition	Major	Comparison of drop-out rates for new high school admits in colleges and universities in B.C.
Student screening	Major	Comparisons of academic preparation of college and university students
Comprehensive colleges	Major	Advantages/disadvantages of broad mandates for colleges
Higher participation	Major	University degrees/capita in BC compared to Ontario
Higher retention	Major	University drop-out rates in BC compared to Ontario
Exploration of options	Minor	Frequency of mixed academic/technical programme choice
Lower teaching cost	Minor	Analysis of teaching cost models
Course transfer experience	Minor	Incidence of articulation failures
Faculty collegiality	Minor	Stated perceptions of faculty

Source: Adapted from Munro, J. (2005). *Assessing the Benefits of the Transfer Credit System in British Columbia: A Feasibility Study*, British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer,
http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505072.pdf

Challenges of CTS

- The prevalence and impact of challenges (as well as credit-related benefits) may vary according to the qualification system and the role of credit within it.

- '*A credit system on its own is weaker than the 'institutional logics' of the system in which it is embedded, such as institutional practices and the broader processes of educational and occupational selection which may inhibit the demand for credit transfer or the recognition of credit in practice. Credit recognition is voluntary and education providers vary in their willingness to recognise and transfer credit*'.

- **In general, credit-related challenges, barriers and drawbacks identified in the relevant research and evaluation literature range from**:
  - Fear of possible fragmentation of learning associated with modularisation or unitisation together with fragmentation and commodification of knowledge;
  - institutional protectionism together with low inter-institutional trust; cultural rigidity;
  - challenges in admission policies;
  - some reticence to use learning outcomes in programme design HEIs; lack of consistent practice - differences in application / practices;
  - greater burden of assessment along with associated increased costs and bureaucracy; funding disincentives;
  - low demand due to lack of information and guidance for learners;
  - and, even, a loss of confidence and trust in qualifications/learning and their assessment undertaken elsewhere.

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Examples from research

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Benefits

- **Accessibility for those from disadvantaged backgrounds:** through credit accumulation allowing students to achieve small amounts of measurable and accredited learning encourages part-time study, embark upon a HE course which can be completed in stages, confidence is build over time, lower financial burden.

- **Accessibility for those in the labour market** – CAT can apply to learning undertaken outside formal education settings (community and workplace); use of credit to enable learners to combine academic study with WBL; allow learners to accrue credit from WBL / other setting which can be counted (APEL).

- **Resource efficiency**: module sharing across courses within 1 institution (common credit structure); effective modular systems seek to transfer resources from the development process to the learning process by making use of existing modules in the development of new programmes or shared between programmes (QAA, UK);

- **Partnership working**: a) CTS encouraged collegial relationships between college and HEI helping creation of shared vision for undergraduate education (British Columbia); CTS supported joint design of programmes that can be offered by a range of colleges and universities (UK).

Challenges: credit in admission to HE

- **Admission policies**: significant variations across HEIs in the volume of credit than can be claimed on admission to a programme (shelf time and time limits of credits). Admission tutors - high discretion to decide.

- **Lack of parity of esteem btw academic and vocational and vocational programmes**: Poor understanding of other (non-academic) types of programmes (vocational, apprenticeships, WBL) admission tutors may not be receptive for credit transfer purposes to students from these programmes. Fear of failure of students from other institutions.

Example: benefits

Feedback from one institution was that credit transfer opens doors for learners, providing new pathways and partnerships for students as well as the University. They felt that students who may not have entered higher education are offered a realistic opportunity to do so with credit accumulation and transfer systems – particularly as they do not have to waste time undertaking modules and learning they have already covered in their professional lives. By offering new opportunities to people with differing situations, the university becomes more inclusive and broadens its recruitment base. Their flexible credit framework was intentionally developed to provide improved access to HE for those in work, and offers flexibility and responsiveness to serve the personal and professional development needs of individuals and the workforce development needs of businesses. It allows for a number of awards to be made but allows for accreditation of smaller amounts of learning. Another institution noted how the most common type of student attracted to credit transfer is generally an employee coming to undertake some learning for professional development – for example an employee with several years' work experience but without a degree and feeling unqualified for promotion, and so wanting to transfer experience into credit.

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Benefits of ECTS

Erasmus+ mobility data show a slight increase in the share of students who received full recognition in 2020 (84,4%), compared to 2017 (82,3%), with significant differences among EU Member States.

Full recognition of Erasmus+ learning periods abroad, 2020
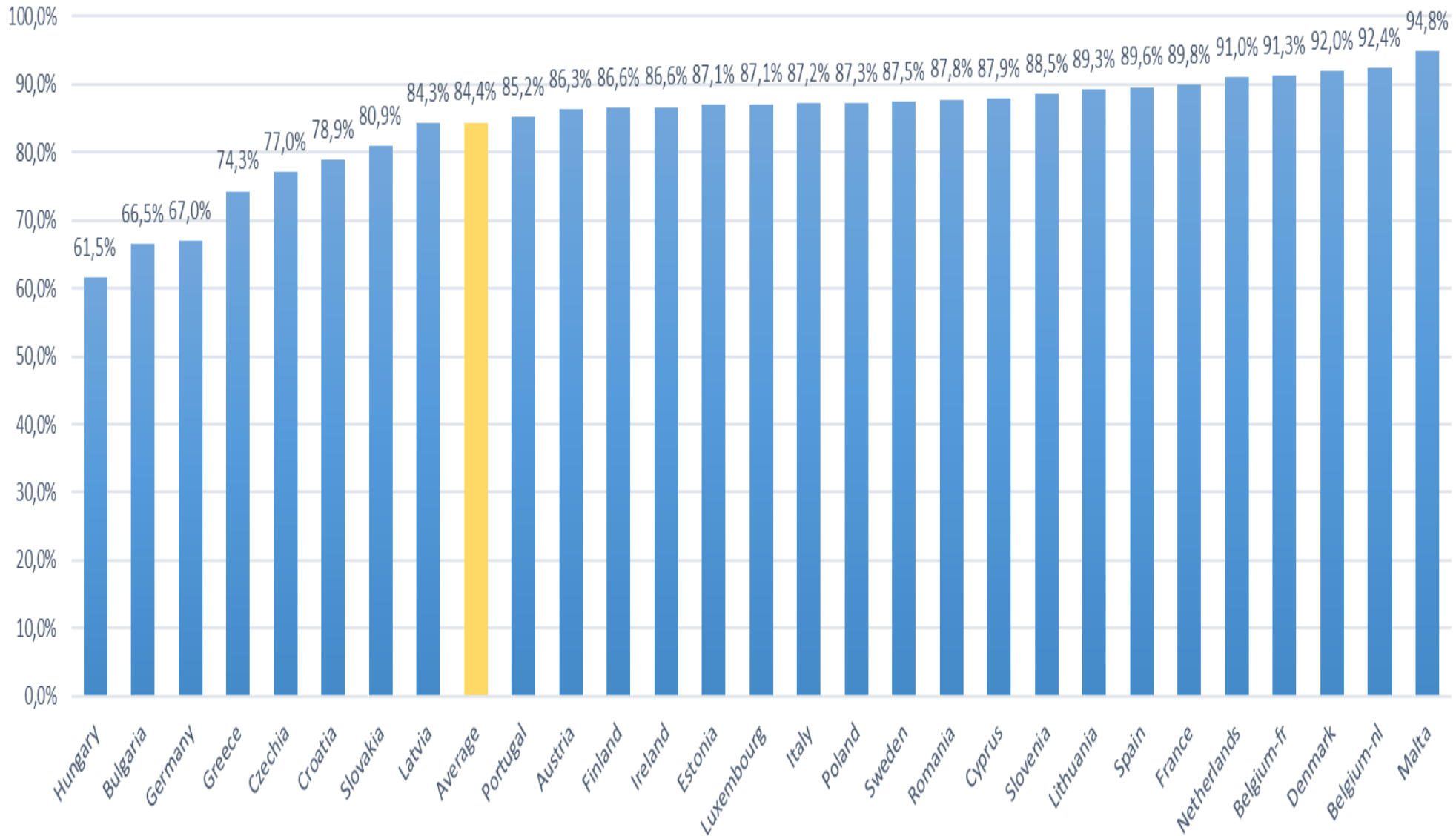
ECTS

Literature indicates ECTS recognised as a major achievement

- Linked to wider structural reforms, modernisation of HE and to paradigm shift from teacher- to learner-centred approach (key principle of EHEA)

- ECTA places student at centre of educational process by using learning outcomes and workload in curriculum desihn and delivery.

- Create and document flexible learning pathways – allowing greater learner autonomy and responsibility

- ECTS supports other priorities of EHEA:
  - ➤ Faciliates recognition of prior learning, higher level of completion and wider participation in LLL
  - ➤ Closer link between educational programmes and societal needs, world of work
  - ➤ Promotes mobility within an institution or country, country to country, between different educational sectors and contexts of learning (FNFIL)
  - ➤ Systematic links: recognition of qualifications and ECTS

ECTS

The ad hoc Working Group on the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide expanded the list of benefits that ECTS conveys:

➢ ensures transparency of programmes and the related workload and protects students from overloaded programmes;

➢ promotes student and graduate mobility for study and work;

➢ helps build trust, transparency and cooperation between HE systems;

➢ emphasises learning outcomes and related assessment;

➢ facilitates flexible learning pathways, lifelong learning and the use of new methods of learning, teaching and assessment; and

➢ underpins the shift to programmes developing skills and competences relevant to societal needs (SRWG, 2014).

A further benefit of the ECTS identified in the literature has been to encourage individual countries to consider their own internal credit transfer arrangements. Interestingly, in some cases, the Erasmus-related ECTS has made credit transfer between HEIs in two different countries easier than that between two HEIs within the same country

Recognition and ECTS / CTS

E-Manual of the European Area of Recognition (EAR).

http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/index.aspx

This manual is part of the EAR It contains standards and guidelines on all aspects of the recognition of foreign qualifications and provides the credential evaluators from the ENIC-NARIC Network (www.enic-naric.net) with a practical tool to assist them in their daily recognition work.

- 16 chapters about recognition topics: Credits (8th)
  - Interpretation of credit systems, the accumulation and transfer of credits, as well as interpretation of grading systems.

Chapter 8: Credits, grades, credit accumulation and credit transfer

Consider the following:
- Does credit system reflect:
  - Learning outcomes
  - Workload
  - Both learning outcomes and workload
- Who assigns credits?
  - What quality measures exist?
- Are the credits part of larger credit transfer system?
  - How are credits transferred?
- At what level have credits been achieved?
  - Difference between bachelor and master?

Interpret credits obtained

Determine the workload of the qualification or the separate learning achievement

Consider the following:
- Regard grades in context of education in which qualification / learning has been achieved.
- Use grades merely as an indicator of a student's academic performance in general

Interpret grades achieved

Determine the quality of learning achievenements and rate the performance

Chapters of the e-Manual EAR

eManual

- 1. SCHEMATIC OUTLINE
- 2. TRANSPARENCY AND INFORMATION PROVISION
- 3. ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE
- 4. AUTHENTICITY
- 5. PURPOSE OF RECOGNITION
- 6. DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT
- 7. QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS
- 8. CREDITS
- 9. LEARNING OUTCOMES
- 10. SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES
- 11. ALTERNATIVE RECOGNITION
- 12. REFUGEES
- 13. NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNING
- 14. TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION
- 15. JOINT PROGRAMMES
- 16. NON-RECOGNISED INSTITUTIONS
- 17. DIPLOMA AND ACCREDITATION MILLS
- 18. SOURCES
- 19. GLOSSARY

ECTS and EQF

- **Referencing criterion 3**: The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.

- **ANNEX V EQF Recommendation**

Principles for credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

- The EQF and national qualifications frameworks or systems, by using the learning outcomes approach, should better support individuals when moving (i) between various levels of education and training; (ii) within and between sectors of education and training; (iii) between education and training and the labour market; and (iv) within and across borders. Without prejudice to national decisions to (i) make use of credit systems; and (ii) relate them to national qualifications frameworks or systems, **different credit systems, where appropriate, should work together with national qualifications frameworks or systems to support transitions and facilitate progression.** To this aim, credit systems related to national qualifications frameworks or systems where appropriate, should respect the following principles:

    1. Credit systems should support flexible learning pathways, for the benefit of individual learners.
    2. When designing and developing qualifications, the learning outcomes approach should be systematically used to facilitate the transfer of (components of) qualifications and progression in learning.
    3. Credit systems should facilitate transfer of learning outcomes and progression of learners across institutional and national borders.
    4. Credit systems should be underpinned by explicit and transparent quality assurance.
    5. The credit acquired by an individual should be documented, expressing the acquired learning outcomes, the name of the competent credit awarding institution and, where relevant, the related credit value.
    6. Systems for credit transfer and accumulation should seek synergies with arrangements for validation of prior learning, working together to facilitate and promote transfer and progression.
    7. Credit systems should be developed and improved through cooperation between stakeholders at the appropriate national and European Union levels.

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Recognition: New developments, issues

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EU-wide initiatives

➢ Automatic mutual recognition (AMR) of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications (general, vocational) and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (Council Recommendation 2018)

- • Horizon for full implementation: 2025
- • Monitoring of progress: different pace among EU MS. Different understanding of automatic mutual recognition, especially that it is not automatic admission.

➢ European approach to micro-credentials (Council Recommendation 2022)

Underpinnings and tools of AMR

➢ NQF and EQF

➢ Europass platform and common database of qualifications (20 EQF / 16 EU MS have connected): https://europa.eu/europass/en/find-courses

➢ Bologna transparency tools: European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)

➢ NARIC network

➢ New digital tools supporting recognition

ECTS

➢ ECTS are included in the national legislation of 18 Member States, and only partially embedded in IE, CZ, DK, SK, HU, SI, LT, LV, SE.

➢ The implementation of the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles is fully monitored by the national quality assurance agency in 7 systems only .

03

Concept note NVCTS: some aspects

Chapter 1.5: key orientations for future NCVTS

- Orientations to be drafted upon first discussion of this first version of the Concept note with HEC. Indicatively the orientations concern the headings:

  - NCVTS as an instrument supporting lifelong learning

  - NCVTS as an instrument supporting programme design, delivery, and monitoring

  - NCVTS – for mobility and credit recognition

  - NCVTS – working together with quality assurance

  - NCVTS – working together with the NQF

NCVTS supporting LLL and inclusion

- The role of NCVTS in facilitating lifelong learning (LLL) and social inclusion, open learning opportunities and the recognition and experience needs to be acknowledged and defined in policy and practical application. With the rapid transformation of technology, new mega-trends such as digital and green skills, emerging jobs with hybrid skills, and new organisation of work (incl. remote and hybrid work), learning at all levels needs to continue changing and adapting to provide adequate responses to large scale needs in upskilling and reskilling of the population of all demographics / workers - which are indispensable in this decade of unpredictable dynamics and changing roles.

- **Elements to be considered:**

  - **LLL – open learning modalities**

  - **Recognition of prior learning and experience – social inclusion**

- Higher education needs to enhance **the mix of learning modalities and forms**, **promote parity of esteem of all modalities of learning**, opening-up to flexible learning opportunities, including blended learning, Open Educational Resources, work-based learning, apprenticeship, vocational pathways, individual learning pathways, self-directed learning, remote learning, online learning and assessment, and others. The strength of NCVTS is that it can be used in the different LLL contexts, applying the same principles for credit allocation, award, accumulation, and transfer, based on workload.

- Higher education institutions should be competent to **award credits for learning outcomes acquired outside the formal learning context** through work experience, voluntary work, student participation, independent study, provided that these learning outcomes satisfy the requirements of their qualifications or components. The recognition of the learning outcomes gained through non-formal and informal learning should be automatically followed by the award of the same number of credits attached to the corresponding part of the formal programme.

- Recognising non-formal and informal learning helps make higher education institutions more socially inclusive. Widening access opportunities for learners from professional life and a range of non-traditional learning environments helps make lifelong learning a reality. Institutions should be particularly open to the recognition of vocational education and training.

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NCVTS supporting programme design, delivery and monitoring

- From an institutional perspective, designing a programme means planning a curriculum and its components in credits, indicating learning outcomes and associated workload, learning activities and teaching methods and assessment procedures/criteria. The institutional credit framework should cater for the needs of different programmes and support inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches.

- **Different elements need to be considered:**

  - the programme context,

  - programme profile,

  - programme learning outcomes,

  - programme structure and allocation of credits,

  - learning, teaching, and assessment

  - monitoring of credit allocation

NCVTS for mobility and credit recognition

- Credit transfer and recognition in general take place both in degree mobility and credit mobility. Successful learning mobility requires academic recognition and transfer of credits. Recognition of credits is the process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another institution satisfy the requirements of one of the programmes they offer. But given the diversity of programmes and higher education institutions, an open and flexible approach to the recognition of credits obtained in another context, including learning mobility, is therefore recommended, based on compatibility of learning outcomes rather than equivalence of course contents. Institutions should make their recognition policies known and easily accessible.

- **<u>Some elements to be considered:</u>**

    - Degree mobility

    - Credit mobility

    - Institutional rules and regulations

    - Grade distribution and grade conversion

# NCVTS: working together with QA

- The contribution of NVCTS to quality enhancement in higher education institutions needs to be defined in policy and practical application. The primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with each institution. Internal quality assurance involves all procedures undertaken by higher education institutions to ensure that the quality of their programmes and qualifications meets their own specifications and those of other relevant bodies such as quality assurance agencies. External quality reviews undertaken by quality assurance agencies provide feedback to institutions and information to stakeholders. Quality assurance principles and processes apply to all modes of learning and teaching (formal, non-formal, informal, new modes of learning, teaching, and assessment).

- **Elements to be considered:**

    - The Quality assurance policy needs to consider aspects related with the credit system, such as programme design, student-centred Learning, teaching and assessment and student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

    - Good practice in using the credit system will help institutions improve the quality of their programmes and their learning mobility offer.

    - The application of NCVTS should be quality assured through appropriate evaluation processes (e.g. monitoring, internal and external quality reviews and students' feedback) and continuous quality enhancement.

    - Monitoring and evaluation should consider relevant indicators of NCVTS effectiveness and take account of the circumstances of mobile students and recognition, and finally the representation of students in quality assurance processes and NCVTS.

    - Accessible NCVTS documentation should contribute to achieve the goals of quality higher education and transparency of information for all users. Such documentation may include online updated information on the courses and their credits, and the overall academic environment of the higher education institutions.

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NCVTS: working together with NQF

- NCVTS and the NQF share profound and systemic concepts and bonds. The linkage between the measure of learning (credit system) and the level of qualifications in the NQF is vital and the upcoming reflection and co-creation of NCVTS will offer a strategic opportunity to shed light and develop a compatible and shared vision and approach, linking the two fundamental policy instruments (NCVTS and NQF) and generating perspectives for the permeability / articulation across levels and between sub-sectors of the NQF, which the country aspires to achieve.

- Elements to be considered:
  - **On the Mauritius NQF side**: A) Is the NQF legislative-regulatory framework fully supportive and enabling a CTS? B) Are the gaps clear and the relevant solutions identified? C) Roles, interactions and collaborations between relevant bodies – clear and accepted, and supportive of a closer cooperation NQF-NCVTS? D) Review of the SADCQF alignment report (Criterion 3) – prepare; E) Register of qualifications and credit value.
  - **On the side of HEC and HE sector**: A) Follow-up steps to this consultation and concept note; B) Reactivate the NCVTS Commission to support the roadmap; C) Involve students and some employers in the consultation; D) Disseminate information, wider awareness raising.
  - **On the scope of NCVTS**:
    - Which levels and sub-sectors of education and training / NQF?
    - Key issues to be addressed by the NCVTS?
    - Objectives and functions of credit system…?
    - Contribute to reforms ? Which ones?
    - Build and capitalise on existing practise, systems (all all levels – providers, national policy) and stakeholders' views and suggestions
    - Relation to regional and international frameworks and networks

Summing-up

- Credit system: is one of the components of a wider (qualifications) system and of a national Skills policy. It does not work well in isolation.

- Define the expected objectives and benefits of NCVTS and also the approach & indicators to monitor and measure progress and identify / address bottlenecks

- Buy-in at all levels is key: national / macro and local / institutional and micro; teachers and learners

- Information and guidance for learners / candidates is essential to stimulate demand

- Credit transfer: to be based on QA - for transparency and trust

- Balance: regulation vs flexibility in use / application

- Balance: change towards a different CTS – cost vs benefit
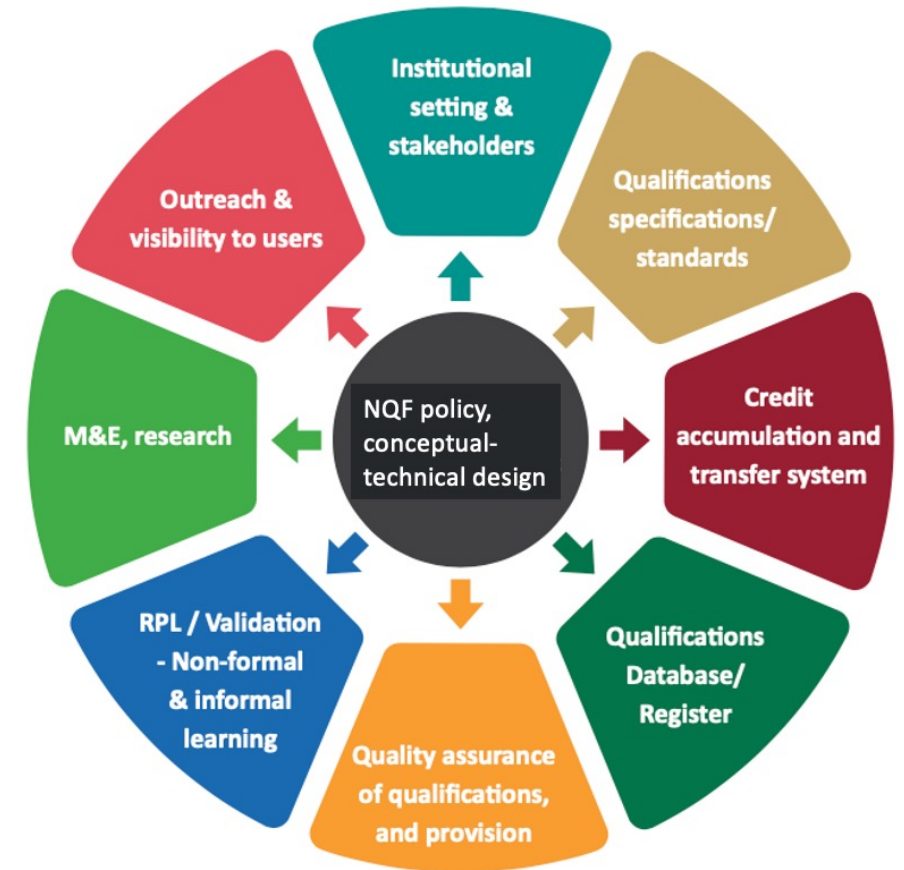
PPT of Webinar 1 (7/Nov 2022)

Mauritius NCVTS

Mauritius has put in place several enablers of the NCVTS, in particular:

1. In the legislative domain - the Higher Education Act 2017 is the major policy basis for development of the NCVTS. The Act establishes the Higher Education Commission (HEC). https://education.govmu.org/Documents/Documents/HE%20ACT%20.PDF

2. The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of the Higher Education Commission. https://www.hec.mu/pdf_downloads/StrategicPlan/HEC_SP2022_2025.pdf

3. In the governance area – a NCVTS Committee

4. At the technical level: report and recommendations - 'Proposals for the NCVTS' (8 December 2021)

5. At the qualifications system level: the Mauritius National Qualifications Framework (MQF). http://www.mqa.mu/English/Pages/default.aspx

Mauritius NCVTS (2)

Section 18 of the Higher Education Act specifically addresses the development of the NCVTS:

1. The (Higher Education) Commission shall develop and issue a National Credit Value and Transfer System to recognise qualifications and units by awarding credits.

2. The units referred to in subsection (1) shall have credit value which shall be equal to such hours of learning as the Commission may determine for the purpose of obtaining a qualification by a learner.

3. The credits awarded under the National Credit Value and Transfer System shall be transferable in such manner as the Commission may determine.

The Higher Education Commission's Strategic Plan 2022-2025
- Defines five strategic themes, of which the 3rd is directed to **Resilience ("Strengthening the resilience of the higher education system through internationalization and enhanced student experience")**.
- In Strategic theme 3 – 4 Objectives:
  - 1. Reinforce the internationalization of Higher Education
  - 2. Increase access and inclusiveness
  - 3. Enhance Technology-enabled Learning
  - 4. Foster student mobility and pathways. *Development of the NCVTS* is one of the two key actions pegged to this objective.

Mauritius NCVTS (3)

<u>Mauritius NQF: Different approaches and practices to credit systems apply in Mauritius – excerpt from the alignment report NQF-SADCQF</u>

"Qualifications under the TVET strand on the NQF carry certain credits according to established credit value range for specific levels. One credit under the NQF carries a weightage of 10 notional hours. Other sub-sectors have their own internal credits systems.

At General Education level, there is presently no credit system in place given there are only few qualifications at that level.

At Tertiary level, though a harmonised credit system needs to be put in place, each University has its own internal credit system. Provision has already been made for a National Credit Value and Transfer System in the Higher Education Act 2017. This would harmonise the credit rating process in the Tertiary Education sector and same metric will be used to calculate the volume of each Qualification Type at every level.

In the long term, there is a plan to harmonise all the discrete credit systems under the NQF with a view to implement a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System.
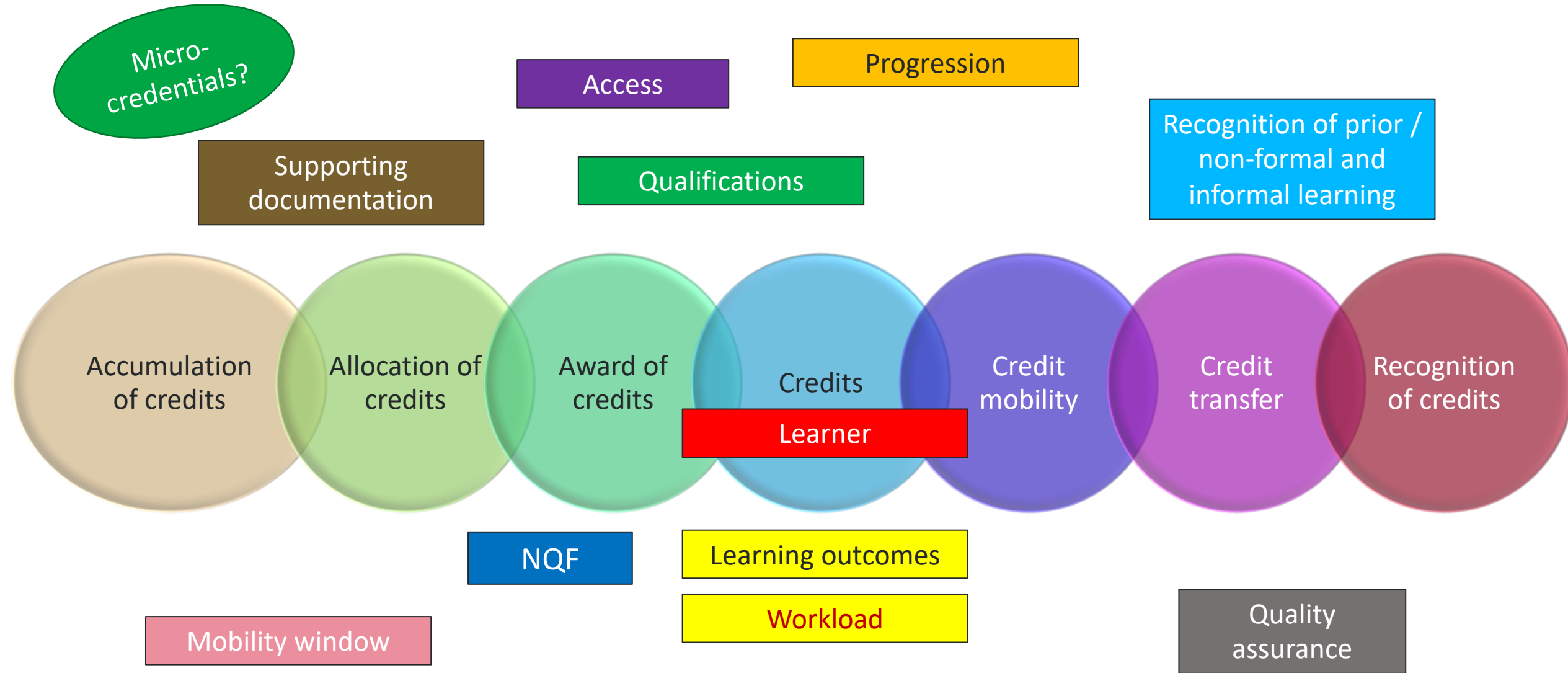
The credit system under the NQF is being applied at TVET level only and harmonization in the Tertiary Education with the NQF credit system is foreseen."

- *Source: MQA, Alignment Report (2022): 50*

02

Credit systems: brief overview

Credit systems: key words / functions

ACQF

Micro-credentials?

Access

Progression

Supporting documentation

Qualifications

Recognition of prior / non-formal and informal learning

Accumulation of credits

Allocation of credits

Award of credits

Credits

Learner

Credit mobility

Credit transfer

Recognition of credits

NQF

Learning outcomes

Workload

Mobility window

Quality assurance

Credit system

A credit system is a systematic way of describing an educational programme by attaching credits to each of its components, based on learning outcomes.

Makes study programmes easier to read and compare for all students, local and foreign and as such, it facilitates mobility and academic recognition.

ECTS enhances the flexibility of study programmes for students.

Some definitions: SADC

SADC-CATS Guideline, 2021

South Africa, SAQA

SADC-CATS Guideline (2021)

- Credit: The amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning. Credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.

- Credit accumulation: The totalling of relevant credits required to complete a qualification or a part-qualification.

- Credit transfer: The vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part-qualification on the same or a different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions. Credit transfer is the key to successful study mobility. Education and training institutions may make agreements which **guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits**.

- 'Credits' means the amount of learning contained in a qualification or part-qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to ten (10) notional hours of learning. (SAQA, 2021).

- 'Credit transfer' means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part-qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions. (SAQA, 2021)

- *Source of these definitions: SAQA. 2021. Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework. (as Amended, 2021).* https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2021-04/Policy%20and%20Criteria%20for%20Credit%20Accumulation%20and%20Transfer%20within%20NQF-2021.pdf

Some definitions: Europe

Credit (EQF Recommendation)

- 'Credit' means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes. (EQF, 2017).

- 'Credit transfer' means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context. (EQF, 2017)

  - *Source of these definitions: EQF Recommendation 2017.* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1

Credit (ECTS)

- ECTS credits express the volume of learning based on the defined **learning outcomes** and their **associated workload**.

- 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent, which normally comprises a number of educational components to which credits (on the basis of the learning outcomes and workload) are allocated. ECTS credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.

  - *ECTS users' guide 2015*, Publications Office, 2017, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/87192

Cases of credit systems – regional

ECTS	ASEAN CTS	Africa: PAQAF. HAQAA, ACQF	SADC-CATS
• Start: Bologna declaration (1999) • EHEA: 48 countries (2000) • ECTS Users' Guide (2015) • ECTS documentation • EQF referencing: criterion 3 – Learning outcomes, validation non-formal and informal learning, Credit systems • European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual – module 8 on use of ECTS • Effective implementation in all EHEA	• AECTS: compatible with ECTS and other CTS. • Platform AECTS (for intra-ASEAN mobility and ASEAN-EU mobility) • SHARE Handbook (AECTS) • 3 different sub-regional systems • Degree of implementation varies	• African Credit Transfer System: planned and first steps (conference in June 2021) • ACQF: Guideline on Validation of Learning • ACQF: Referencing criterion 2	• SADC-CATS Handbook (2021, adopted) – implementation at early stage • SADCQF: Alignment criterion 3

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Sources, literature on Credit Systems

- SADC CATS Guidelines (2021)
- ECTS users' guide 2015, Publications Office, 2017, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/87192
- ASEAN: SHARE Handbook, 2018
- EHEA, The Bologna process implementation report 2020 (Ministerial conference Rome, Nov. 2020) https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c90aaf32-4fce-11eb-b59f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-183354043 -
- https://www.study.eu/article/what-is-the-ects-european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system
- https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system
- https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process?
- https://www.mastersportal.com/articles/1110/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-american-university-credit-system.html
- https://microcredentials.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/D3_3_MicroHE-Users-Guide-1.pdf
- https://www.enic-naric.net/page-ECTS
- http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/Chapter8/introduction.aspx
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595633/Credit_transfer_in_Higher_Education.pdf

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03

SADC: overview

Overview of National Qualifications Frameworks in SADC

Stage: Early thinking	Stage: In development and consultation	Stage: NQF approved, implementation started	Stage: Advanced implementation, reviewed / in review	Aligned to SADCQF
Union of Comoros Democratic Republic of Congo	Madagascar Malawi Tanzania (Higher education QF approved; more information needed)	Angola Eswatini Lesotho Mozambique Zimbabwe	Botswana Mauritius Namibia Seychelles South Africa Zambia	Seychelles South Africa Mauritius

Credit accummulation and transfer (CAT) in SADC

- **CAT systems contribute to lifelong and life-wide learning, to flexibility of learning pathways, to mobility and progression of learners, and to full personal development of learners.**

- **1. Many SADC countries have included references to CATS in NQF legal acts and other education system legislation.**

  - ❖ But only a few have adopted legal texts, implementation policies and guidelines that specifically apply to CATS. According to the information collected in 2021 for SADCQF study, these countries are Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and more recently also Eswatini, Lesotho and Zambia.

- **2. "Credits" means the amount of learning contained in a qualification whereby one (1) credit is equated to <u>ten (10) notional hours of learning</u>.**

  - ❖ Countries explicitly adopting this principle are Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique (in TVET qualifications framework), Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

  - ❖ Some exceptions: Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar

Status of CATS: some cases

South Africa:
- CAT policy and criteria updated and in implementation
  - SAQA. 2021. *Policy and criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the NQF (As amended, 2021)*.

Zimbabwe:
- ZIMCATS approved and in application in higher education
- All higher education programmes are designed based on ZIMCATS. This contributes to harmonization of programmes and qualifications in higher education.
- CAT has not yet been applied in programmes of primary and secondary education; nor in programmes of TVET and Polytechnic Colleges.

Status of CATS: some cases

Eswatini:

- **Policy and Guidelines on Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) were approved in 2021. Apply to:**

  - Programmes accredited by Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC).
  - All **Higher Education and TVET qualifications** on the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF)
  - Individuals who may want to transfer their credits to HEIs in Eswatini.
  - Curriculum design.
  - Stakeholders who support higher and TVET education in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Mozambique:

- Higher education: CAT legislation adopted and in implementation
  Decree nº 32/2010 created the "National System of Credit Accumulation and Transfer" (SNATCA), in accordance with requirements of the Law nº 27/2009 on higher education.
  - 1 credit = 25-30 notional hours
  - Total number credits in 1 full-time academic year : 50-60
  - Total workload per academic year: 1500 hours. Exceptionally for some programmes: up to 1800 hours
- TVET
  - 1 credit = 10 notional hours

SADC-CATS Guidelines (2021)

ACQF

The implementation of the **Southern African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (SADC-CATS) is a critical point of departure toward full implementation of the SADCQF**. Against this background, SADC has developed the CATS Guidelines to facilitate greater student mobility in the region, providing a framework for establishing credit transfer arrangements and, in this way, expanding opportunities for **mobility for SADC citizens, not only between countries but also between various institutions and education levels**. **All SADC Member States are therefore encouraged to adopt these Guidelines and develop national CATS policies, principles and guidelines**. The adoption of CATS at national level will serve as a valuable reference for education and training providers in developing and implementing their own CATS at institutional level". (*SADC-CATS Guidelines: 2*).

- **The purpose of the SADC-CATS Guidelines is to:**

a) Support the development of **national policies** on CATS in SADC countries.

b) Enable **enhanced learner/student mobility** in the Region.

c) Provide a framework for **establishing credit transfer arrangements** in the Region.

d) Serve as a valuable reference for education and training providers in developing and implementing their own CATS at institutional level

e) Support the design, description and delivery of **programmes, making possible the integration of different types of learning in a lifelong learning perspective.**

f) Achieve greater harmonisation of education and training within the Region to promote **mobility, recognition and transparency of qualifications**.

g) Promote regional integration especially in relation to quality education.

h) Achieve a possible reduction in the circulation of fraudulent qualifications in the Region.

i) Contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the SADC Protocol, the Addis Convention and the SADCQF.

j) Achieve **easier comparability and verification of qualifications that students obtain from different countries in the Region.**

k) Improve articulation **within the different NQFs and the world of work**; and

l) achieve easier movement of students from one programme to another or from one institution to another within the same country, and between countries." (*SADC-CATS Guidelines: 6*)

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SADC-CATS Guidelines (2021)

ACQF

The SADC-CATS Guidelines recommend the following scenarios:

- A one-year Certificate of Diploma (SADCQF Level 5): 1200 notional study hours = 120 credits.

- A three-year Bachelors' Degree (SADCQF Level 7): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits.

- A one-year Bachelor Honours Degree (SADCQF Level 8): 1200 notional study hours = 120 credits.

- A four-year Bachelors' Degree (SADCQF Level 8): 4800 notional study hours = 480 credits.

- A five-year Bachelors' Degree (SADCQF Level 8): 6000 notional study hours = 600 credits.

- A two-year Masters' Degree (SADCQF Level 9): 2400 notional study hours = 240 credits.

- A three-year Doctoral Degree (SADCQF Level 10): 3600 notional study hours = 360 credits."

(Source: *SADC-CATS Guidelines: 12)*

04

EHEA - ECTS

What is ECTS

- **ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer**, based on the principle of transparency of the learning, teaching and assessment processes. Its objective is to facilitate the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and student mobility by **recognising learning achievements, qualifications and periods of learning**.

- **Main uses of ECTS**
    1. Transferring between universities
    2. Studying abroad (e.g. an exchange semester at a different university)
    3. Applying for further study (like a Master's or PhD)

- **ECTS Key Features:**
    - ✓ learning outcomes
    - ✓ Workload
    - ✓ Allocation of credits
    - ✓ Awarding credits
    - ✓ Accumulation of credits
    - ✓ Transfer of credits
    - ✓ **ECTS documentation**
        - ✓ The use of ECTS credits is facilitated and quality enhanced by the supporting documents:
            - ➤ **Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate**
        - ✓ ECTS also contributes to transparency in other documents such as the Diploma Supplement.

What is ECTS (2)

What are ECTS points?

- ECTS points, or ECTS credits, indicate the required workload to complete a study programme, or a module within a study programme. ECTS points *only* **indicate workload; they do** *not* **indicate a grade.**

- Generally, each year of full-time study (or work, where applicable) is worth 60 ECTS credits. Usually this is divided by modules.

- ECTS points of modules are summed up to indicate the total workload for a study programme:
  - ➤ **Bachelor's or undergraduate degrees** typically range from 180 ECTS (3 years full-time) to 240 ECTS (4 years full-time).
  - ➤ **Master's degrees** typically range from 60 ECTS (1 year full-time) to 120 ECTS (2 years full-time).
  - ➤ It's not as easy to say exactly how many credits a **PhD programme** will be made up of, due to their flexible-length work load.

How do ECTS credits convert to study hours?

- A year of full-time studies at university level is generally worth 60 ECTS credits, and defined as equal to 1,500 - 1,800 hours of study work. This means **1 ECTS is equal to between 25 to 30 hours** (with the UK being one exception). The exact number of hours is different from country to country. A few examples:

- **Austria**, **Ireland**, **Italy**, **Malta**: 60 ECTS = 1,500 study hours → 1 ECTS = 25 study hours

- **Finland**, **Lithuania**, **Sweden**: 60 ECTS = 1,600 study hours → 1 ECTS = 27 study hours

- **Netherlands**, **Portugal**: 60 ECTS = 1,680 study hours → 1 ECTS = 28 study hours

- **Germany**: 60 ECTS = 1,800 study hours → 1 ECTS = 30 study hours

Conversion:

- Between UK credit points and ECTS credit points is simple: **2 UK credits are equivalent to 1 ECTS credit**.

- The factor between American and European credits is usually 2, i.e. **1 U.S. credit point equals 2 ECTS credit points**.

What is ECTS (3)

ECTS Users' Guide

- ✓ **Learning outcomes** are statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes at a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification.

- ✓ **Workload** is an estimation of the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments. The correspondence of the full-time workload of an academic year to 60 credits is often formalised by national legal provisions. In most cases, workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, which means that one **credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work**. It should be recognised that this represents the typical workload and that for individual students the actual time to achieve the learning outcomes will vary.

- ✓ 7 sections + Important Annexes

- ✓ Sections provide technical advice and orientation. Main themes:
  - ➢ ECTS for programme design, delivery and monitoring
  - ➢ ECTS for mobility and credit recognition
  - ➢ ECTS and LLL
  - ➢ ECTS and quality assurance
  - ➢ ECTS documentation

- ✓ Annexes, e.g.: grade conversion, programme profiles, learning outcomes

EHEA: ECTS workload structure degree programmes

- There is no single model of degree programmes. Yet, in the majority of the EHEA countries, the most common structures are those of 180 ECTS workload programmes for the first cycle and 120 ECTS credits for the second cycle.

- The most common combined (first and second cycle) workload corresponds to 300 ECTS credits – a model that is found in around three-quarters of all EHEA countries.

  - In the eastern part of the EHEA, the most common workload is often more substantial, corresponding to 360 ECTS credits. This is mainly due to a higher workload for first-cycle programmes.

05

ACQF

CONCEPTUAL TECHNICAL DESIGN OF ACQF

ACQF is underpinned by Quality Assurance

Transparency and Trust in Qualifications
Includes processes and procedures to ensure qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet high standards

› **Metaframework:** translation device for referencing, comparison, cooperation between different NQFs

› **Comprehensive scope:** all levels, modes of learning

› **10 levels:** whole continuum of education and training

› **Level descriptors** expressed as learning outcomes

› **Domains of learning:** Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility

› **Learning outcomes orientation** supports:

- Improve **transparency and comparability** of qualifications of different national systems

- **Transparency and credibility of RPL** and validation of outcomes from experience, access to quality RPL

- **Application of credit accumulation and transfer systems** in different academic and vocational pathways.

  - *Access, learning progression, lifelong learning, flexibility,*

  - *In design of qualifications: facilitate transfer of components of qualifications*

REFERENCING NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS OR SYSTEMS TO ACQF

ACQF aims at **connecting** the national (and regional) qualifications frameworks of the community of African Union (AU) member states. This core function is based on the process of **referencing to ACQF.**

Referencing: process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF following criteria and procedures.

At **national level,** referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework or system to identify areas for reform and improvement

At **continental level and between countries,** referencing to the ACQF of a significant and increasing number of national qualifications or systems leads to the creation of a common area of trusted qualifications and enables the transformative potential of the ACQF for the continent.

Outputs of ACQF development project (2020-2022)

- **ACQF Policy Document**

- **10 technical and synthesis Guidelines**
  - ✓ **Guideline : Validation of Learning (including CATS)**

- **10 Training Modules**

- **ACQF-2: support to implementation**

⟷

- ACQF Website

- Analysis, research: ACQF mapping study collection, feasibility study ACQF, study and handbook on Competence-based training (TVET), study on links ACQF-AfCFTA

- Capacity development programme and Learning Management System (LMS)

- 2 "Training Weeks"

- 15 Peer Learning Webinars and 5 jointly with AQVN

- 5 Advisory Group meetings

- Work together with RECs: SADC, EAC, IGAD

- Work with countries on NQF development

- Many participations in international conferences (UNESCO, EAC, IGAD, SADC, CINFERFOR Central America)

7 main areas of activity

"ACQF creates mutual trust"

Areas - as per ACQF Policy Document

Referencing NQF / NQS to ACQF

Support **Recognition of Prior Learning**

ACQF **Qualifications Platform and MIS**

Qualifications: common profiles for priority sectors AfCFTA / continental integration

Capacity development

Networking and cooperation

Analysis, monitoring and evaluation

Credit systems in the ACQF context

ACQF Referencing criteria	
1	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the ACQF.
2	The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on **learning outcomes principles** and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to **credit systems**.
3	There are transparent processes and procedures for including qualifications in the NQF or for describing the place of qualifications in the NQS and information on qualifications is accessible, trustworthy and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications.
4	The national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the national qualifications framework or system and is consistent with the principles of quality assurance of the African Continental Qualifications Framework.

ACQF: Guideline 4 – on CAT systems

7 principles

- **Principle 1**: CATS should be formulated with a view to promoting learner mobility across sectors, levels and types of qualifications by eliminating duplication of learning.

- **Principle 2:** *Systems and procedures developed in institutions to support CAT should be transparent, fair, flexible and easy to use*

- **Principle 3**: *Decisions regarding credit transfer should be timely, academically defensible and equitable, and based on learning outcomes.*

- **Principle 4**: *Credit awarded in recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning is of equal standing to credit awarded through formal learning.*

- **Principle 5**: *In line with the concept of institutional autonomy, CAT should not affect the authority of a receiving institution to make decisions about the admission of learners*

- **Principle 6**: *Credit recognition and credit transfer should not undermine the academic rigour or integrity of the qualification into which the learner is accepted.*

- **Principle 7:** *Institutional commitment and cooperation is central to the optimal functionality of CATS.*

- **Principle 8:** *CATS and its procedures should be subject to rigorous quality assurance measures.*

ACQF: Guideline 4 – on CAT systems (2)

Annex:

➢ **Translation of study / work hours into credits (10h – 25-30h)**

➢ **CATS Implementation stages**

CATS Implementation stages

- Stage 1: Establishing an Administrative Structure for the CATS

- Stage 2: Providing Information to Learners

- Stage 3: Processing Applications for Credit Transfer

- Stage 4: Decision Making and Approval of Applications

- Stage 5: Documentation and Record Keeping (focus on Quality assurance of CATS)

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (10)

Several CTS in ASEAN: different concepts and uses

AUN-ACTS:

- ASEAN-3 (+Japan, South Korea, China)
- 30 member Universities
- ACTS grading scale
- Student centred

UMAP-Asian Academic Credits

- Asia-Pacific region
- 428 participating Universities
- 1 AAC = 38-38 h student workload

SEAMEO-RIHED Academic Transfer Framework (ACFTA)

- In development
- Greater Mekong Subregion
- 24 participating Universities
- Government led initiative
- Reciprocity principle for sending and receiving students

AECTS: ASEAN Europe Credit Transfer System

- Project SHARE: developed the AECTS and its tools (2016-2018)

- Mobility tools

- Learning agreement

- University Course catalogues: with programme and course description with learning outcomes

- **Handbook (2018)**

- Tested

- Compatible with ECTS

- Online Platform: https://www.share-asean.org
  - Mobility converter and other tools

SHARE AECTS Platform

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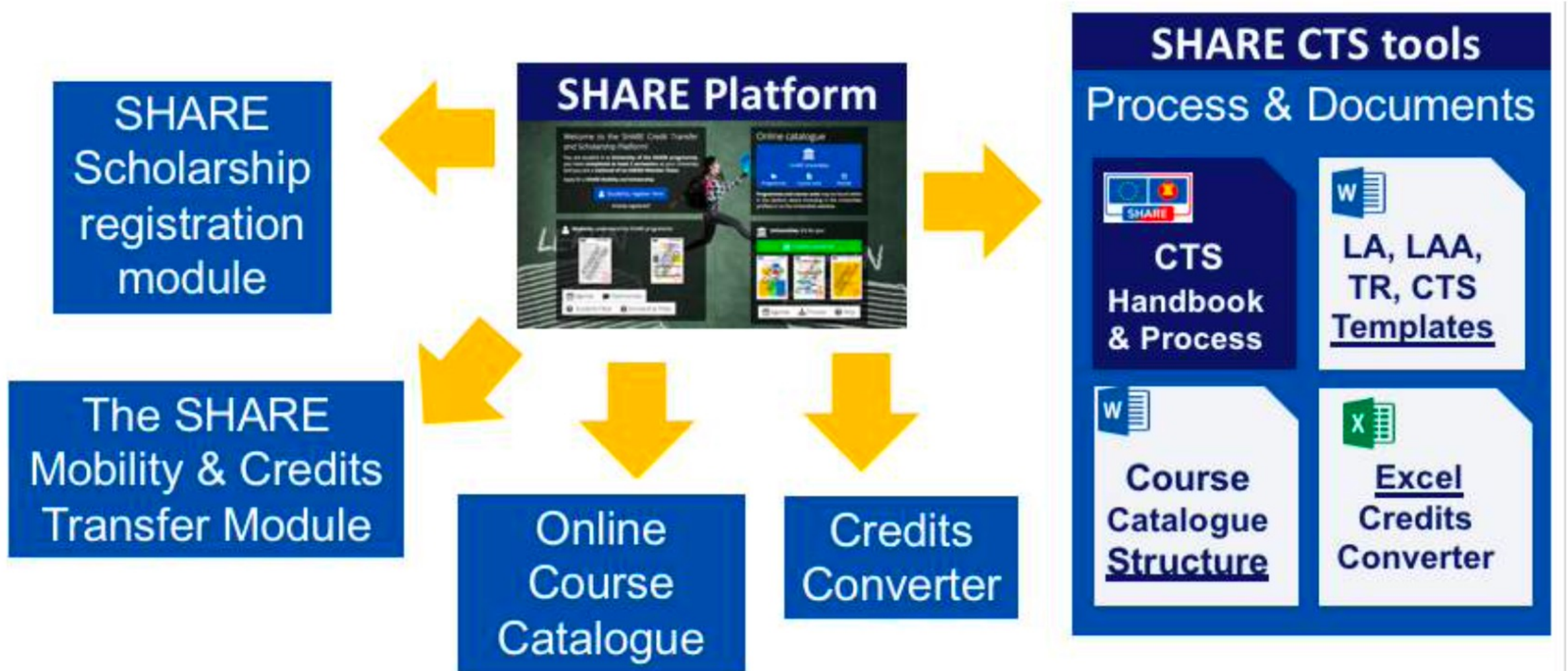
SHARE common CTS for student mobility: aligned with ECTS

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Source: AECTS Handbook, pg 18
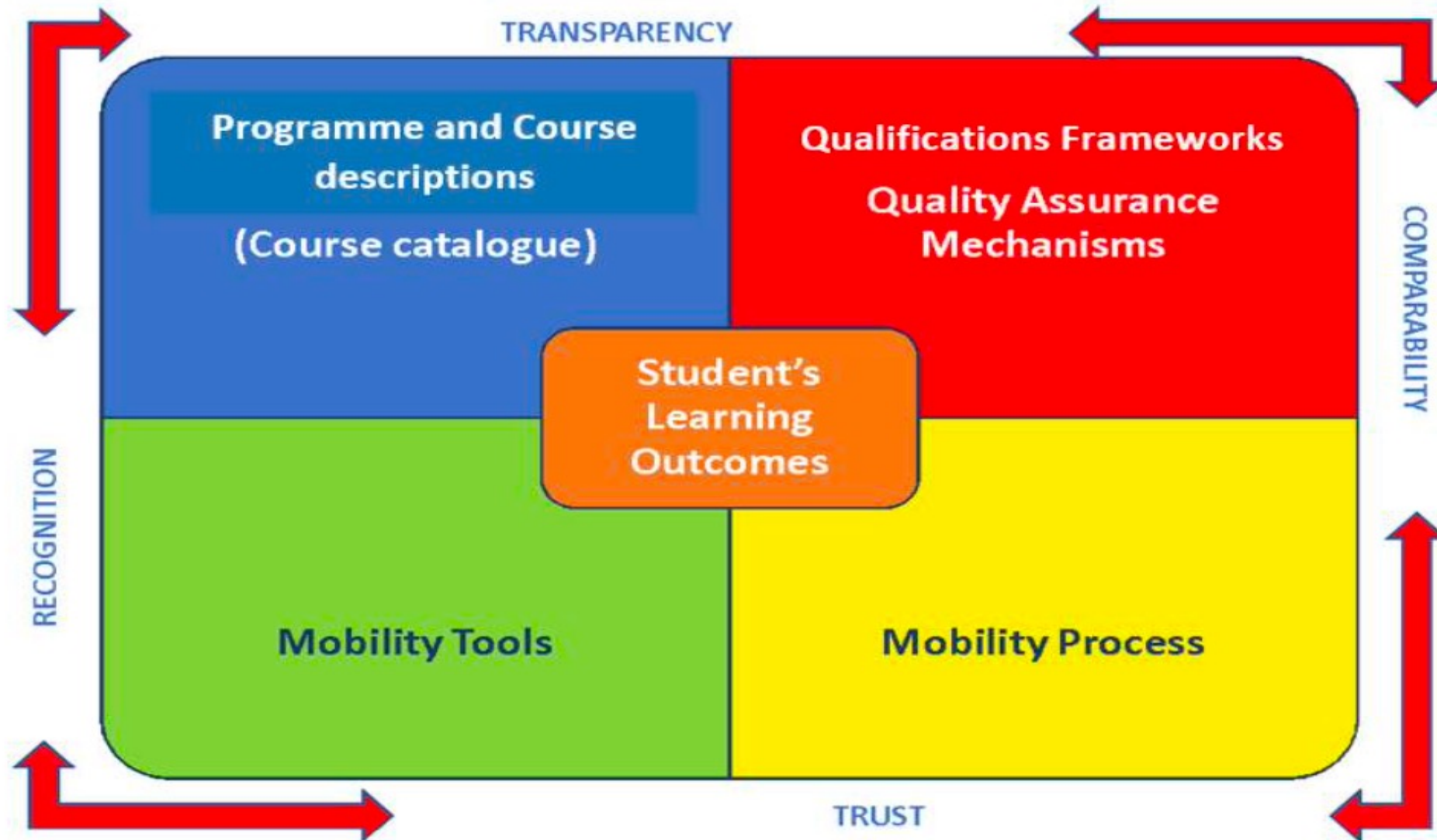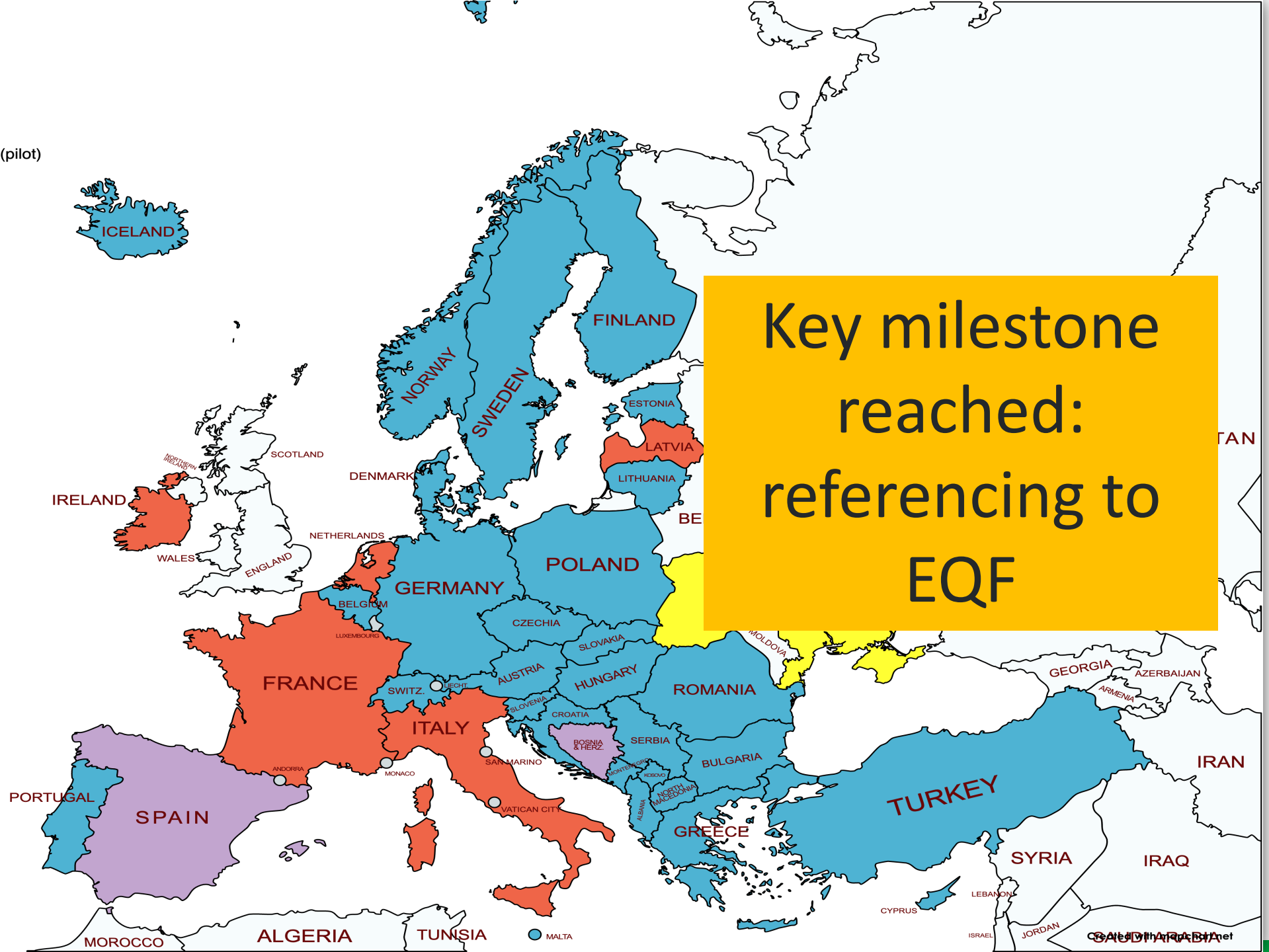
Reference: further reading

07

EQF: main milestones

Legend:
- Referenced to EQF
- Updated referencing
- Not yet referenced
- Comparison with EQF (pilot)
- Not EQF participants

38 countries

Key milestone reached: referencing to EQF

Other key Milestones - reached

Objective	Achievement	Countries
EQF levels on qualifications documents (upon referencing to EQF)	33 countries on diplomas, certificates (out of 36 referenced countries)	BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, CY, FI, LT, LV, MT, NL, HU, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE
EQF levels on qualifications databases	23 countries	
Transparency of information on NQF: inclusion in the tool to compare NQFs / EQF	30 countries	
Transparency of information on NQF: connecton of national registers to publication of qualifications in Europass platform	18 countries	BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, HU, PL, PT, SI, SE

Micro-credentials

Lifelong learning is essential

Access the video

An effective culture of lifelong learning is key to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in society, the labour market and their personal lives.

It is essential that people can access **quality and relevant education and training, upskilling and reskilling throughout their lives**. Lifelong learning opportunities should be part of the long-term strategy of education and training institutions to improve their responsiveness to the fast-changing needs of employers and learners. This would enable a more diverse body of learners to upskill and reskill.

Higher education institutions, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, adult learning providers and other providers of micro-credentials, including employers – need to cooperate and integrate the latest research findings in the design and update of learning opportunities.
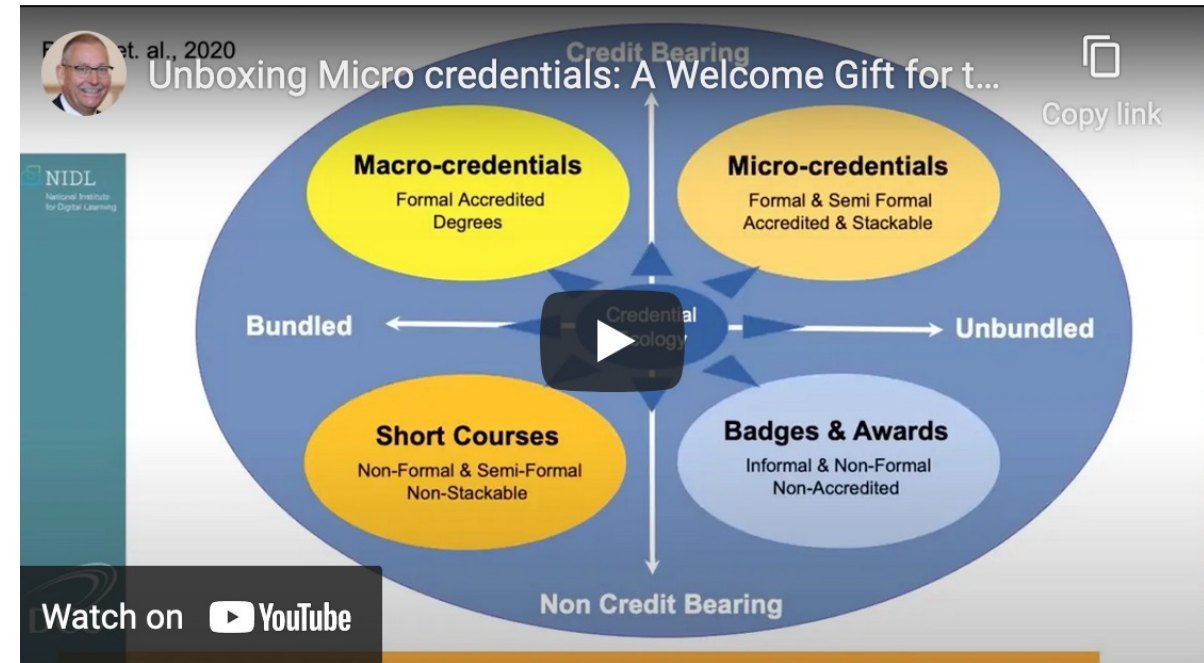
Potentialities of micro-credentials

Micro-credentials can help **certify the outcomes of small, tailored learning experiences**.

They make possible the **targeted, flexible acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences** to meet new and emerging needs in society and the labour market and make it possible for individuals to fill the skill gaps they need to succeed in a fast-changing environment, while not replacing traditional qualifications.

They can, where appropriate, complement existing qualifications, providing added value while not undermining the core principle of full degree programmes in initial education and training.

Micro-credentials could be designed and issued by a variety of providers in different learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal learning settings)

Access the video

Micro-credentials: elements of a definition

The number and diversity of micro-credential offerings have expanded substantially in recent years, accelerated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Micro-credentials hold promises and challenges.

- Existing definitions (from OECD, European Commission, UNESCO, Australian Government) point to key characteristics of micro-credentials:
  - ✓ **Referring to learning over a limited time and/or in a specific area**
  - ✓ **May form part of or add to formal qualifications**
  - ✓ **Potentially 'stackable' over time, adding to individual learning careers**
  - ✓ **Given their limited size and focus, more flexible than traditional qualifications**
  - ✓ **Based on assessed learning**
  - ✓ **Frequently delivered in a digital form**.

Australia National MC framework

ACQF

The Australian Government (2021) adopted the **National Micro-Credentials Framework**, **which uses the following definition:**

- A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) award qualification, that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of an AQF award qualification.

What can constitute a micro-credential?

- TVET skill sets or units of competency.
- Modularised, assessed components of existing higher education curriculum or subjects.
- Industry learning that is assessed (such as vendor certifications, professional learning).
- Other forms of assessed learning or competencies (e.g. Vocational Education/Higher Education /Industry courses not currently accredited by a regulatory authority, and those by other providers).

What does not constitute a micro-credential?

- Unassessed learning or courses, including work-integrated learning without an assessment.

- Badges which are obtained through participation only (i.e. without an assessment).

- Formal qualifications within the AQF and macro-credentials, including diplomas, certificates and master's degrees.

EU: Recommendation on European approach to micro-credentials for LLL and employability: 10 principles

"Use micro-credentials, where appropriate, as a tool to strengthen and complement existing learning opportunities, increase participation in lifelong learning"

1. Quality
2. Transparency
3. Relevance
4. Valid assessment
5. Learning pathways

6. Recognition
7. Portability
8. Learner-centred
9. Authentic
10. Information and guidance

Adopted 16/06/2022: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0627%2802%29

Micro-credential Observatory

The Research Observatory on Micro-credentials (ROM) is a NIDL initiative in partnership with the ECIU University. The aim is to provide a curated and regularly updated collection of major reports, policy initiatives and research-related publications on the growth of micro-credentials in higher education and lifelong learning more generally.

- NIDL Activities

- NIDL Research

- Major Policy Initiatives

- National & International Reports

- Useful Reading: Articles, Books & Papers

- Events, Conferences and Webinars

- Microcredentials *Sans Frontières* Network

National Institute for Digital Learning

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- Many articles published in 2022: https://www.dcu.ie/nidl/micro-credential-observatory

ACQF

Thank you!

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